A Companion to African-American Studies

Edited by
Lewis R. Gordon and
Jane Anna Gordon

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A Companion to
African-American Studies

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To Toni Cade Bambara, George Houston Bass, John Blassingame, Sylvia Boone, Barbara Christian, St. Clair Drake, Tim Hector, June Jordan, Ed Love, Jim Murray, and Claudia Tate

All Warriors of the Spirit and Former Keepers of the Flame,
Souls of Fire, Never, Ever to be Forgotten

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Preface and Acknowledgments

This book appears as a stupendous collective effort, as a chorus of voices each giving form to unique but related concerns. The process of its preparation, however, has been beset, at every stage, by obstacles of every kind. Initially reluctant to take it on at all, we were eventually persuaded by our editor Jayne Fargnoli, who very wisely enlisted David Theo Goldberg to contact us. In spite of having already taken on too many obligations, we agreed and, after having drawn up a wish list of contributors, soon set about writing to them to see if they, too, might feel compelled. We were delighted when so many authors, driven by such a range of commitments and from a rich diversity of experiences and many disciplinary fronts, said that they would write for this volume. And as the pieces came in, we were humbled. The essays were not only composed by people from whom we had already learned so much, who had, through their own efforts, created the terrain in which we might thrive, but they also reflected a sense that they were writing for something historic; that they had, proverbially, sought to rise to the occasion. And rise they did. They each brought to their prose a set of gnawing commitments and concerns that undergirded and spoke through their more specialized work. In them were footprints and sweat, frustration and endurance, a vision of an alternative way of doing and being in the world, more honest, more truthful, and more courageous.

The many individuals who helped us at various stages of this project embody these values. The contributors, for instance, gave us feedback on our introduction and offered discussion throughout on the organization of the text as well as words of affirmation, sometimes in the form of many hours of telephone conversation. For that, we formally thank each of them. We were also assisted by a community of local friends and students. Laurie Mengel made sense of opaque and mysterious computer problems, and she, Yvette Koch, Gabriel Mendes, Sarah Petrides, Terrence Johnson, Miguel Segovia, Neil Roberts, Gina Rourke, and Kenneth Knies offered their ongoing critical comments and suggestions at various stages of the project. Kenneth Knies, along with Yvette Koch, also helped us to compile a lengthy bibliography, working between different computer programs that ren-

dered key features of the other programs invisible. We also thank Ms. Donna Mitchell, Ms. Sheila Grant, and Ms. Gail Tetreault both for their friendship and clerical help, Hal Roth for simply being a good friend and fellow fighter over the years, and our wonderful colleagues and mentors in Africana Studies at Brown University and Political Science and the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania – Anani Dzidzienyo, B. Anthony Bogues, Myron Beasly, Lundy Braun, Paget Henry, Rhett Jones, James T. Campbell, Joy James, Nancy Jacobs, Dotty Denniston, Karen Baxter, Teodros Kiros, Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf, Clarice Laverne Thompson, Claudia Milian Arias, Sakeena Young-Scaggs, Alonzo T. Jones, and Steven Pennell; Amel Ahmed, Cheng Chen, Jennifer Coleman, Kathy Hall, Ellen Kennedy, Anne Norton, Andrew Norris, John Puckett, Rogers Smith, Bob Vitalis, and Kahlil Williams – for their encouragement and commitment in times both good and bad. Our colleagues at the Institute for Caribbean Thought and the Department of Government at the University of the West Indies at Mona, Jamaica, and those in South Africa also deserve mention – in particular, Sir Rex Nettleford, Rupert and Maureen Lewis, Brian Meeks and Patsy Lewis, Clinton Hutton, Barry Chevannes, Ralph Premdas, Carolyn Cooper, John Bewaji, Mabogo More, Nombulelo Nomvete, Neil Roos, Richard Pithouse, and Ashwin Desai. Marilyn Nissim-Sabat and Clevis Headley have been of great help as ongoing interlocutors, insightful critics, and precious friends in hard times. We also received much inspiration from Everet Green, who, along with Leonard Harris and Lucius T. Outlaw, has done tremendous work with the Philosophy Born of Struggle conferences over the past decade. In addition, we thank Drucilla Cornell and Cornel West for their enthusiasm for, and agreeing to evaluate, the manuscript, and Drucilla for important exchanges during a period of great difficulty. And, finally, we would also like to thank Catherine Spoehr, the former Provost of Brown University, for her contributions to the formation of one of the most unique experiments in the study of the human condition: Africana Studies at Brown University. Her departure from the post in 2001 led to a shift in administrative priorities that marked the end of an era that culminated in that program's becoming a department. Our colleagues within Africana Studies have continued to hold the line, building a vision of the field, the significance of which has reached far beyond the confines of that university and has excited a generation of young scholars who seek to devote their own lives to helping to continue such a project.

As we were finishing the final stages of the manuscript, preparing for the free time that would come with its completion, we had not realized that our lives would change suddenly and permanently; that in a series of senseless and violent instants, our beloved mother and mother-in-law, Yvonne Patricia Solomon Garel, would be gone. Much time and effort are made of reconciling survivors with the loss of those they love, of reassurances that there is a reason for such sudden departures, even if we cannot fully comprehend them; that the person whom one loves so much is not really dead. What is trying about death is that the spirit of the person whom one loves so *is* gone; that what gave it life was its embodiment

in a finite and perishable body, the death of which extinguishes what seems not to be encased and limited by it. And there is no comfort, only a challenge: to continue on in spite of a life radically transformed and, in so doing, to give breath to what it is that made the death so unbearable. Our mother occupied the places where loving, fighting, wisdom, and courage must meet, where picking one without the other is to fall beneath the requirements of each. And it is in this spirit that we lovingly submit these pages, themselves filled with ways of being that seem always to be under tireless attack.

To the living – our children Mathieu, Jenny, Sula, and Elijah Gordon; our surviving parents Jack Garel and John and Jean Comaroff; brothers Josh Comaroff, Robert and Mark Evans, and Joseph Garel; sister Lori Garel; and Aunt Lola Blair, Cousin Faith Saget, and Aunt Audrey Rossi – we say, simply,

“אנחנו אהב אתם”

Jane and Lewis Gordon
Providence, Rhode Island

Note on the Text

In our effort to present a nuanced set of discussions on African-American Studies, we found ourselves encountering the problem of capitals and hyphenations in such words as *black* and *African American*. Our general rule is to use a capital in the former where it refers to nationhood and a hyphen in the latter when it is used as an adjective. Many of the authors use these terms singularly to speak of nationhood and others simply to refer to race. We decided to let each rule work within the confines of each chapter as long as they are consistent. Thus, some chapters will only use capitals for *Black* and *White*, and others will refer to *African American* as a noun.

Our method of citation involves references to the large bibliography at the end of the text. We add a first-name initial to all citations and an additional middle-name initial to authors' names where there are more than one author with the same first initial and last name.

Introduction
On Working Through a Most Difficult Terrain

Lewis R. Gordon and
Jane Anna Gordon

Imagine heaps of indigenous bodies, covered by swarms of vultures, piled so high that they served as a marker for Spanish vessels approaching the shores of sixteenth-century Hispaniola. Among passengers disgusted by such a sight and encroaching smell was Bartolome de las Casas (1484–1566), the first ordained priest to visit the New World, whose stirred soul subsequently beckoned first King Ferdinand and then Charles I and Pope Paul III to take action against the looming genocide of such precious multitudes. Although the church had the formal mission of saving souls – a rationalization that often accompanied the conquistadors' urgent search for gold – its power also stood with the crown on an edifice of great wealth that would be jeopardized by a decree abolishing forced servitude in the region. So it was decided by Spanish authorities in 1517, with the influence of Las Casas's *Historia de las Indias* (1516), that forced labor would be drawn primarily from Africa, where there were people of the right physical countenance who held no claim to the New World and whose darkness of skin suggested a darkness of soul. Such a position gained popularity, in spite of the presence of darker-hued crew members at the beginning of Spanish and Portuguese exploration and colonial efforts, and so, too, began the debates, theories, and swan-songs to the ever-evolving, inevitably creolized world marked by the adjective "new."[1] That unfolding narrative and its critical interpretation are the stuff of which the study of Africa in America and *African America* is made, and its study, *African-American Studies*, struggled forth, although its formal introduction as an organized *academic* production of knowledge began in 1967 at San Francisco State University, when a group of poets, novelists, and playwrights, Apostles of the Black Arts and Black Aesthetics Movements, dared to announce that the dark lives on which their work was built offered the dignity of their souls.

The academic "field" according to some proponents, "discipline" according to others, has gone through a variety of conceptual transformations as it moved from "Black Studies" to "Afro-American Studies" to "African-American Studies" and now "Africana Studies."[2] The most recent designation – "Africana" – is a

function of the presence of researchers on Africa and the Caribbean in many of even the most US-focused programs and departments. We decided to use "African-American" in the title, although the diasporic significance of the term "Africana" is the one we prefer, because "African-American" is still the term used by most programs, and, as some of the essays in this volume will show, the question of "African-American" versus "Africana" or even "Black" is one of ongoing contestation.

Scholars in African-American Studies have also debated the question of method and scholarly rigor from its inception, and they have moved through foci on social scientific approaches to explorations in the humanities and now, in some instances, to the life sciences, such as biology, medicine, and epidemiology. A tension has existed, however, that is unique to African-American Studies. More so than even political science, and regardless of its scholars' intent, African-American Studies is an *intrinsically* politicized unit of the academy. It appears so because of the history of its institutional development and the constantly contested status of its subject matter: namely, people of the African diaspora. African-American Studies emerged out of the political hotbed of radical US politics of the late 1960s, a politics that marked a decisive shift from the integrationist aims of the Civil Rights Movement to the assertive and self-affirming claims of the Black Power Movement and its offspring, the Black Arts Movement and the Black Aesthetic Movement.[3] Proponents of Black Power saw their task as economic, political, and pedagogical. The last took the form of black communities seeking control over their own and their children's education, which led to discussion not only of the *form* and *structures* of that education but also its *content*.[4] We could call this effort the goal of *decolonizing the minds of black people*.

The project of decolonization met early critical reception.[5] There was, for instance, the age-old debate over the appropriateness and desirability of black separatism and black integrationism. The outcome had implications for the *scope* of the project of mental decolonization. It was immediately apparent, in such groups as the Black Panther Party, that decolonization of black minds required and produced a body of literature and pedagogical practices the consequence of which was the liberation of white and brown minds.[6] This was so because of those activists' stance of ideological critique: if white supremacy is an *ideological imposition* (that is, a kind of forced false consciousness) on the minds of Americans, then its eradication would constitute the emergence of truth. The result of this assessment of American society was a renewed understanding of what W. E. B. Du Bois called *double consciousness*. Although initially raised as a problem of dual membership or an anxious "twoness" of the lived reality of American blacks, the circumstances of the 1960s brought to the fore the doubled vision, and correlative doubled reality, of contested truth. Mainstream sites of knowledge production faced a demythologizing and demystifying challenge, wherein their claims to universality and legitimacy often rested on a hidden premise of white normativity. The Black Power Movement brought to the surface the reality of

conventional education as a training in Eurocentrism and white normativity. How could such claims to universality and legitimacy be valid when they relied primarily on Europe as the lit torch of reason and colonization as its movement?

The double reality that people of the African diaspora knew and lived was that there was always more to the story of history and its "underside," its "modern people beneath modernity," and to the movement of reason and truth.[7] In a nutshell, conventional education told a story of black inferiority marked by delusion, short-sightedness, imitation, servitude, and diffidence, and the movement of whiteness as a beacon of clarity, prescience, creativity, freedom, and courage. Black people of the modern world *knew* and *lived* a different story. Could, many seemed to ask, most white people survive a single day living in black people's shoes? One could imagine the sense of betrayal that emerged as many students – black, white, and brown – began to look into the history of the human species and discovered that the contributions of dark peoples were significantly more than presented in the colonial narratives, from Leif Erikson's voyage in 1001 and Columbus's voyage of 1492, to the founding of the Plymouth settlement in 1620. Whatever racial background the student may have, it is his or her expectation that the teacher should do his or her best to offer the most truthful portrait of reality available. We call this the *pedagogical imperative*. It is a moral code, the violation of which is a betrayal of the implicit trust or, one could say, "ethics" of the teacher–student relationship. The Black Power Movement made it clear that the US educational system, from the then-budding preschools and more formal kindergarten through to the doctorate of philosophy, was infused with racial logics whose absence was rare. Although this argument can be found in the much earlier *Négritude* Movement in the Francophone Americas of the 1930s and 1940s, its Black Power formulation had a peculiarly Pan-African impact, which included the multiracial Black Consciousness in the South African thought of Steve Bantu Biko in the early 1970s.

As might have been expected, this criticism of mainstream pedagogy led to defensive measures on the part of many US schools and universities. They needed to show that they were somehow institutions *of* a racist society but not racist institutions. The formation of the first Black Studies programs emerged, then, by individuals taking on the task to teach that which dominant educators claimed either did not exist or wasn't relevant or, in few instances, was already being taught. Added to this climate of conflict was another factor: most American institutions of higher learning, short of historically black ones, refused to hire black researchers and artists, and many of their departments still refuse to do so.[8] A task of Black Studies programs then became that of hiring faculty of color in predominantly white institutions. Although an academic enterprise, Black Studies found itself quickly embroiled in an extra-academic, political controversy: the affirmative action debate. There are ironic dimensions to this debate, since in some universities African-American Studies departments are the only academic units that don't hire their faculty on the basis of race, as witnessed by the history of whites and Asians teaching in those departments. Four high-

profiled instances are the Harvard, Yale, Duke, and Brown programs, which employ white, East Indian, Arabic, Native American, and Latino, in addition to African-American, Afro-Caribbean, and African faculty.

Thus, African-American Studies is an academic program that produces knowledge about Africana peoples – their cultures, politics, history, thought, artistic expression – and the unique problems posed by such study, which include discourses on Africana peoples by non-Africana peoples, while negotiating its political relationships with such communities and the nation. The complex history of Africana peoples in the modern world leads to several challenges when they become the subject matter of academic study. Before the formation of Women's Studies and Ethnic Studies programs, it stood as the only academic unit on campuses that received constant criticisms for being "too academic" and "too political."[9] This continues to be the case. Scholars and artists in African-American Studies find themselves having to demonstrate their *academic* and *artistic* credentials and mission to their university administrations more than do their white colleagues (because of being dubbed "political"), while having to defend themselves *politically* to their students and off-campus communities (because of being dubbed "too academic"). There are manifold contradictions here. Some scholars relate (as the following pages will attest) that some university administrations patronize African-American Studies departments as if their faculties don't hold *scholarship* as their primary mission. Such scholars thus find themselves offering their scholarship to administrators who are "surprised" that the work is scholarly. And still others, in spite of demonstrating the scholarly nature of their enterprise, discover that administrators may see their programs as opportunities to diversify the faculty of their campus and are thus disappointed when they offer, say, a top white or Middle Eastern scholar in the field as a potential job candidate.

The community contradiction is on the level of *expectation*. On the one hand, there is a regularly voiced call for the cultivation of intellectuals. On the other hand, there is the suspicion of intellectuals *qua* intellectuals. This suspicion might be a feature of mass politics, as Ortega Y Gasset observed in *Revolt of the Masses* (1994), which would mean that anti-intellectualism among African Americans is perhaps more indicative of their *Americanness* than of anything else. We will leave the question of the *cause* here, since many of the chapters in Part I of this companion reflect on various dimensions of this pressing question. What is clear is that the demand for scholars in African-American Studies not to be academic reveals a contradiction in expectations. The importance of the truth their scholarship may offer is held subordinate to political demands that may militate against the conditions of discovering such truth. This is not to say that truth must be incompatible with such high aims as freedom and liberation. We do mean to say, however, that the determinations of the best routes to such aspirations are not always, if ever, known in advance, and that the situation of the scholar in African-American Studies is one of a constant tug-of-war in a world that wants the fruits of his or her academic work while simultaneously wanting him or her not to be academic.

Although this book appears as part of the Blackwell Companions in Cultural Studies Series, it should be borne in mind that its scope is broader than the formulations of the study of culture developed by the influential New Left critics E. P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, and Stuart Hall, the latter of whom, with Richard Hoggart, brought Cultural Studies to the international stage through his leadership of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham, UK.[10] Their important work is echoed by many of our authors, especially Hazel V. Carby and William Hart, but others also focus on conceptions of studying culture that emerge out of alternative sites of knowledge production and, as we find in Sylvia Wynter, to questions of human study that demand a critique of the notion of culture as a focus of study. A critical question in African-American Studies, in other words, is the nature of its relationship to Cultural Studies and any other approach to human studies. The variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary portraits of the study of black folks that emerge in this text is a testament to the many other critical approaches available.

This work is a *companion* to African-American Studies. It is not an encyclopedia, wherein summaries of central figures and concepts are outlined by experts in the field. It is, instead, an exploration of unsettled questions, of themes that should accompany reflections on African-American Studies. The demands – historical, political, and philosophical – on African-American Studies suggest a story untold. It is with that realization in mind that we decided to let the field or discipline "speak for itself." Thus, we solicited reflective essays from scholars who participated in the first thirty years of building the formal academic study of the African diaspora. Most of this group of essays comprise Part I of the volume. The essays submitted reveal the continued presence of the slave narrative as a motif of African-American testimonials. In some instances the theme of the plantation as a geopolitical site of racist authority manifests itself as a metaphor in their depictions of American academic institutions. There are also themes of the risks faced in asserting their humanity and the legitimacy of their intellectual projects that bring to the fore the demands of freedom in ways similar to Frederick Douglass's classic depiction of his fight with Covey the slave-breaker in his autobiographies.[11] In many ways, the slave narrative's depiction of the importance of literacy in the struggle for freedom continues in these authors' reflections on their struggles.

We then contacted a group of young and mid-career scholars who have been thinking through the future of African-American Studies, and we asked them to formulate the unique challenges to African-American disciplinary formation posed by and to their generation. We decided to avoid the standard model of outlining the questions and categories, such as the usual rubrics of "black conservatism," "liberalism," and "radicalism," or along dictates of "separatism," "integrationism," and "exceptionalism." We made this decision, again, for the sake of making the field speak for itself. Thus, when the chapters were submitted, the organizing schemes emerged from the thematics of the contributors. We organized each section in Part II according to classic phrases that exemplify those

themes. Since some of the first group of scholars focused more on such dynamics in their contributions, their chapters are included in Part II as well. We organized each section in Part II according to classic phrases that exemplify those themes. We also noticed the emergence of two kinds of commitments to the production of knowledge, what we may call epistemological models, with a growing tendency in African-American Studies exemplified by two groups that receive description and criticism from the authors in this text.

The first group comprises the *internationalists*. Such scholars look at African-American Studies as a global enterprise. It pertains to the entire black diaspora as both an object and source of study, and its reach extends not only across the geographical globe but also the temporal one – where the history of the African diaspora is ultimately no less than the history of the human species. Thus their goal is to organize knowledge of at least 220,000 years of *homo sapiens sapiens*' existence and thereby stimulate a shift in humanity's consciousness wherein it is able both to recognize and face its exclusively dark-hued past. In more contemporary terms, the internationalists attempt to make the connections between things African and the entire human world. Thus, African-American Studies always becomes "black *and* . . ." to illustrate the African dimension of creolization processes, whether with indigenous America or Asia. The philosophical question of whether scholarship can in principle avoid any universalistic impulse is explored in the essays in Part II and the concluding section.

Critics of the internationalists argue that every intellectual project requires a limit on its scope. The limit leads to a "grounding" of the project, which, in academic terms, means *specialization* and *methodology*. We call this second group the *localists*. Although internationalists are not antipathetic to specialization and the rigors of method, localists regard them as too "broad" in the scope and formulation of their projects. They prefer a more traditional disciplinary point of departure "anchored" by concrete accumulations of data, whether they be archival, oral historic, ethnographic, economic, or demographic. Localists thus prefer scholarly identities such as "a specialist in African-American history of the 1960s" or "a specialist in recent African-American literary theory" or "a specialist in recent African-American politics." For them, African-American Studies is a group of specialists collaborating with each other to construct their piece of the larger picture.

Localism is not limited to specialization and methodology. There are also nationalist localisms and regional localisms. Nationalist localism emerges when a particular group within the African diaspora ascends from an individual scholar's focus to the *department* or *program*'s focus. In such programs, African-*American* studies means the study of blacks who are descendants of people enslaved in the US and whose religious cultural formation is Baptist and Anglophone and whose migration practices took them in post-slavery years from the south to the urban centers of the northern United States. Such localists tend to forget Canada as part of North America and the strong historic mixtures of black and Native American peoples, and they treat the Caribbean, Latin American,

and continued influx of African and Asian influences as foreign. For them, the term "black community" often literally means the brothers and sisters down the street or at best within the neighborhood of their US university.

Regional localism tends to refer to cities and states, islands and continents, and it can at times appear to be broad in scope. The emergence of Black Atlantic Studies is one example. That version tries to focus on the so-called Black Atlantic culture that emerged in modernity, which makes African-American Studies an academic enterprise whose foci are the people of the modern world understood as a function of the Atlantic slave trade. The significance of the Arabic slave trade and slavery along the East Indian Ocean, or the many creolizing practices in Africa itself and the connection of East African cultures to those central and west, north and south, fall to the wayside in this approach.

There is, however, a kind of localism that goes against the grain of localism as we have thus far articulated it. Consider the following from Michel Foucault's reflection on his own work:

> When I say "subjugated knowledges" I am also referring to a whole series of knowledges that have been disqualified as nonconceptual knowledges, as insufficiently elaborated knowledges, knowledges that are below the required level of erudition or scientificity. And it is thanks to the reappearance of these knowledges from below, of these unqualified or even disqualified knowledges, it is thanks to the reappearance of these knowledges: the knowledge of the psychiatrized, the patient, the nurse, the doctor, that is parallel to, marginal to, medical knowledge, the knowledge of the delinquent, what I would call, if you like, what people know (and this is by no means the same thing as common knowledge or common sense but, on the contrary, a particular knowledge, a knowledge that is local, regional, or differential, incapable of unanimity and which derives its power solely from the fact that it is different from all the knowledges that surround it), it is the reappearance of what people know at a local level, of the disqualified knowledges, that made the critique possible. (Foucault 2003: 7–8)

Foucault goes on to argue that such an approach challenges conceptual domestication and thus relates to the dominating systems of knowledge as "insurrectionary." From this perspective, a critique of the previously discussed forms of localism, especially those rooted in so-called traditional disciplines, is that they enter African-American Studies as a project of domestication. This consequence can be avoided through reversing the order of legitimation – that is, by making the traditional disciplines function as what Foucault calls "tools" instead of ends in African-American Studies. It is clear that the very project – indeed, the very *notion* – of Black Studies is an adventure into the struggles over the suppression and liberation of "subjugated knowledges." This conclusion suggests that it is not necessarily the case that internationalists and localists must stand on opposing fronts. Both could meet by situating their disciplinary and methodological commitments in their greater commitment to the unleashing of the subjugated knowledges that constitute African-American Studies. Although we have used

Foucault's formulation, the black intellectual project of liberating subjugated knowledge has been a feature of black intellectual production from the dawn of resistance to the dehumanization of black peoples in the modern world.[12]

We should like to add to the debate between internationalists and the Foucauldian consideration that being international is not the same thing as being international*ist* and being local is not the same as being local*ist*.[13] An international problem could be addressed in a highly localist fashion, especially regarding audiences for whom it is most relevant, whereas a local problem could be addressed in an internationalist way with claims to audience and concepts beyond the immediate interests of the local community or field of inquiry. This distinction usually leads to a historic reality: the latter is often of wider enduring interest, whereas the former is often appealed to as the smaller contributions on which the larger ones rest. A key example is W. E. B. Du Bois's *The Philadelphia Negro*. Although a study of a local population, the concepts and analyses he drew from his study were internationalist in tenor. The absence of contemporary relevance of the localist scholars' research in Du Bois's day cannot be used as a criticism of them because their aim was not to address scholars across the ages beyond being accurate representations of their present. Any act of liberating them as "subjugated knowledges" requires transcending their being locked in their time by the fact of their "appearance" in the present. Although the debate will continue, it is clear that the relationship of these two approaches may also be more dialectical than their proponents may be willing to admit. It is clear that many of the contributors to this volume share our position.

Although internationalism and localism are the predominant epistemological commitments, both face the growing impact of what we call *market nihilism*, the tendency or temptation to view scholarly and political interests as primarily functions of market forces. Scholars who take such a view will study whatever the market demands, and that is whatever is most profitable at the moment. It is thus not necessarily the case that they are committed to what they study. What is important is that it will lead to an excellent position in the academic job market and that the various avenues of academic production – whether research, publishing, lecturing, or institution-building – prove lucrative. This means that exemplars of this group are perpetually "on the market." While it is not an independent epistemological commitment like internationalism and localism, market nihilism is already showing signs of competing with them as an independent category, as universities increasingly pressure scholars to generate research that garners external funding. Scholars outside of the funding juggernauts often find themselves vying for other than scholarly means of demonstrating their marketability. The result is unfortunate, since market-motivated scholars often, though not absolutely, ignore the dictates of scholarly rigor and take advantage of the demagogic demands of race politics to produce texts and oral performances that are often popular (whether for or against black people) and low in sophistication on the one hand, or overly obtuse for the illusion of expertise and shallow in substance on the other. The presentation of evidence and commitment

to truth are often absent in work motivated by market nihilistic tendencies, and in fact such work is at times defended through a postmodern stand wherein theory, truth, and evidence are rejected in advance as unfashionable or silly.[14] Nihilism abounds here because of the incoherence of being "committed" to the market itself. Think of the paradox of the market itself sometimes not being marketable. In a less extreme variation, the market exemplifies a form of relativism in which ideas function more like measurements of the stock market. In the context of a politicized field or discipline such as African-American Studies, market nihilists offer a completely relativized portrait of racial reality while at the same time serving as race representatives and at times even "authentic" experts on the African diaspora. The white world, in other words, will have its domain, and these scholars will have theirs. As E. Franklin Frazier and Frantz Fanon observed in the 1950s and 1960s, such a group, which Frazier characterized as a "lumpen-bourgeoisie," depends on racism with its Manichean distribution of labor and value for its marketability, which means that the *value* of such scholars' work depends on commonplaces that do not, in the end, upset prevailing racial consciousness and cultural capital.[15] The presence and impact of their work are evident in the misrepresentation of African-American Studies that dominates popular culture and on the African-American Studies shelves of many *university* bookstores, where serious scholarly works versus popular journalistic portrayals unfortunately stand, in some instances, as a genuine *minority* voice.

These criticisms of market nihilism and market nihilists do, however, come upon a limit in an important respect. Market nihilists remind us of the *industrial* dimension of the academy, that in the end there is a "bottom line" to be met and that many American and European institutions will only work with scholars who study black people on the condition that it will be profitable. That is why such scholars are expected to sell more books than their non-African-American Studies counterparts in the publishing industry, why they are expected to do more work than their counterparts on university campuses, and why such scholars experience greater pressures of professional performance than scholars in other disciplines and fields. More, their attention to the bottom line leads, in their view, to the development of employment for scholars in the field, and their market challenges raise the standards of living for black scholars in a world that does not complain about white scholars who receive higher pay for less work, both in quantity and quality.

Although some African-American Studies programs tend to have more members of one of these groups than of the others, most programs have a mixture of internationalists and localists, and some market nihilist variations of both. It is also not unusual to find these tendencies embodied in a single individual at different stages of his or her career. Most scholars begin their career with a dissertation that grants them specialization of discipline and subject matter, and they often expand their analysis – whether by comparison or extension – to determine their global significance. They might be affected by market forces throughout, from the initial dynamics of seeking employment, to main-

taining employment in mid-career, and subsequent efforts to render their projects successful, or simply to protect whatever they have built up over the years. It should, however, be borne in mind that the commitments exemplified by these groups are not necessarily endemic to African-American Studies, but may be features of professional knowledge production in our time. They appear more starkly in African-American Studies, however, because of the politicized environment in which such research takes place. Tension tends to emerge from a postmodernist perspective, for instance, where there is no room for a dialectical relationship between localism and internationalism beyond the conflict between localism and "imperialism."[16] Internationalism simply *is*, from that point of view, a universalization or "totalization," a forcing of reality under a standard that distorts it. The philosophical question of whether *scholarship* can in principle avoid *any* universalistic impulse is explored in many of the essays in Part II of this volume, but especially so in those of the concluding section of Part II.

The reflective essays that comprise Part I offer strong testimonies against and in support of internationalism and localism. Paradoxically, it is not marketable for market nihilists to *espouse* market nihilism; hence, no scholar in this volume explicitly refers to him or herself as fundamentally driven by such forces. However, some scholars in Part I do describe some of their colleagues as clearly guided primarily by market forces, and in chapter 10 Hazel V. Carby provides prescient criticisms of the opportunism and market dynamics that attract white intellectuals to lay claim to "discovering" black ones. Because we did not choose scholars on the basis of their political commitments, but instead on the basis of their reputation or growing reputation in their fields and the diverse range of African-American Studies programs they represent, we thus have the unique result of a collection of writings by scholars who are both friends and foes. In the spirit of letting the field speak for itself, some of the scholars have written highly critical statements on the effect of their adversaries in the field's or discipline's development, and others have done the same with regard to the academic institutions that served as context for their reflections. In some cases, the result is an epic narrative with added tales of sullied heroes and catastrophic disappointment. Others reveal *Sankofic* tales of looking back in order to move forward.[17] And more, there is the sober optimism of bold efforts to change the world of reason itself.

The essays in Part II and the concluding section explore a wide range of issues from the humanities and social sciences through to the life sciences, but they do so through a constant critical awareness of the task of developing the epistemological and phenomenological challenges posed by their work. We say *epistemological* because they are attempting to expand not simply the quantity of knowledge, but the *kinds* of knowledge and the *conditions* and *location* of knowledge in their work. We say *phenomenological* because every essay raises the problem of *consciousness* and its role in the constitution of intellectual work and in the transformation of worldviews. Instead of summarizing each chapter, we have decided to highlight some features that we've noticed that are persistent and new.

Our first observation is that the undisputed, most influential intellectuals in the development of African-American studies are W. E. B. Du Bois and Frantz Fanon. The main reasons for their influence are (1) the enduring significance of double consciousness as a feature of black studies and (2) the role of social diagnostics (in Fanon's term, *sociogenetic* analysis) in the study of black people. Other central issues emerging from these two thinkers are (3) the uniqueness of problems with regard to the study of black folk, and (4) the complexity of normality and its sociogenesis. Many of the scholars in this volume also credit Du Bois with producing the foundations of, or being a pioneer in, ethnography, epidemiology, urban stratification theory, critical race theory, Pan-African Studies, African-American philosophy, theories of methods in the human sciences, interdisciplinary methodologies, black ethnomusicology, and more. From Fanon, they work through metaphilosophical questions, social psychology, psychoanalysis, social diagnostics and transformation theory, dialectics of recognition, semiotics, problems of method, critical race theory, cultural critique, and more. In addition to Du Bois and Fanon, pioneers like Anna Julia Cooper (especially because of her theories on human value and linguistics), Toni Cade Bambara (her creative juxtaposition of the humanities and social sciences), Barbara Christian (her prescient use of poststructuralism in the formation of black feminist literature in African *Diasporic* Studies), and Houston Baker, Jr. (his creative defense of the poetics of black popular culture) emerge with enough frequency and appreciation to suggest that what counts as foundational and essential for scholars in African-American Studies is radically different from the portrait of the field that appears in such mainstream publications as the *New York Times* and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Our next observation, both from Part I and Part II, is of the shifting nature of the *subjects* of African-American Studies. The range of human communities and disciplinary problematics advanced in their study suggests an extraordinarily creative and diverse community of intellectuals, many of whom exemplify the forefront of knowledge in their fields. Such topics as epigraphicalism, jazz consciousness, Africana existential foundations of slave pedagogy, African-American poetics and historicism, dialectics of double consciousness and borderland theory, African-American Queer Studies, and post-European and postcontinental reason, to name just a few, indicate an unusual level of intellectual vibrancy. African-American Studies is, in other words, exemplifying Anna Julia Cooper's efficiency theory of value; its scholars are producing in quantity and quality far more than is invested in them.[18]

The high achievements of some of the top scholars in African-American Studies should, in many cases, elicit profound respect from their colleagues in other disciplines; however, the Fanonian adage of reason leaving rooms when blacks enter seems to prevail.[19] The theme of being considered "crazy" for expecting not to be treated like wards but instead as having an equal right to membership and respect at the table of academic recognition and institution-building surfaces throughout the many reflections in Part I, especially in Houston

Baker Jr.'s reflection on his experience of participating in the founding of the Yale African-American Studies program.[20] The charge of being crazy is also attributed to white scholars who are committed to African-American Studies and work on the level of colleague with black faculty, as Robert Paul Wolff's effort at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst attests.

Finally, many of the authors affirm the importance of institutional support by university presidents or high-ranking officials such as a provost in the development of African-American Studies programs. In an environment where black folk and their supporters are considered crazy, and at times "dangerous," it is important that power intervenes as a voice of reason with a very big institutional stick. As Martin Kilson shows, the liberal public stance of Derek Bok masked a deliberate limiting of resources allotted to Harvard's Department of Afro-American Studies from 1971 to 1991, and it was Neil Rudenstine's proactive 1991–2001 effort, which involved providing economic and institutional resources for the program and public political support (in Kilson's words, "political muscle"), that provided the infrastructure for that program's contemporary renown. For most programs, the reality is one of building programs in the trenches, under very hostile conditions of little interdepartmental collegiality and a lack of administrative support from high university officials. There is an environment in which African-American Studies is "tolerated" at best, even in some places where African-American Studies faculty constitute the institution's and the nation's most influential scholars.

The perseverance of scholars, artists, and public intellectuals in African-American Studies in the midst of so many obstacles brings us to concluding this introduction by reiterating that familiar pearl of wisdom voiced in black communities across the globe: could their white counterparts (in this case, "white" disciplines and their departments) have survived such challenges? This companion is a testament to what it means to produce knowledge under extraordinarily hostile conditions.[21] The list of recently deceased scholars to whom this work is dedicated consists of only two individuals who did not die below the age of sixty. Death for many came by way of hypertension and cancer, and for others through circumstances of severe social isolation that made them vulnerable to exacerbated consequences from minor illness. The struggles and circumstances faced by such people inevitably lead to the question, why should the rest of us go on?

The answer comes from what many in the African diaspora immediately recognize as "the ancestors," people who dedicated their lives to building foundations for a better future. It is frightening to think of what the world would be like today had our ancestors abandoned their calling. The scholars to whom we have dedicated this volume have now joined that honored community. It is only fitting that we close our introduction with words from one of their greatest spokespersons:

> Let then the Dreams of the dead rebuke the Blind who think that what is will be forever and teach them that what was worth living for must live again and that

which merited death must stay dead. Teach us, Forever Dead, there is no Dream but Deed, there is no Deed but Memory.[22]

Notes

1 It should be borne in mind that Las Casas eventually renounced all slavery. It took the thought and political efforts of the court historian Ginés de Sepúlveda, premised upon Aristotelian notions of "natural slaves" and "natural masters," to provide the prevailing ideology of expansion through conquest and enslavement (see, for example, chapter 9, this volume). For discussion of slavery in the Caribbean, see Shepherd and Beckles, *Caribbean Slave Society and Economy* (2000), and for discussion of the Spanish conquest and their treatment of the indigenous peoples, see Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America* (1984). Recent research has also introduced a twist in the story of Africa and the Central and South American regions. Paleoarcheologist Walter Neves of the University of São Paolo has uncovered 50,000 year-old human artifacts and 9000–12,000 year-old skulls that, after forensic reconstruction, revealed that those people were "negroid" in appearance. Neves and his colleagues argue that these people were part of the Australian Aboriginal groups who migrated to Australia 60,000 years ago. They further argue that their descendants were conquered by northern groups of Asiatic peoples between 9,000 and 7,000 years ago, during which they suffered near extinction save for the few hybrid descendants that have survived over the millennia in such places as Terra del Fuego on the southern coast of South America. This research suggests an interesting consideration for the question of African-American Studies. Although the notion of "America" or "the Americas" is meaningless during those paleolithic times, it raises interesting questions about the impact of early African and African-descended cultures on the geographical terrain that has come to be known as such. It also raises profound questions about the subsequent histories of conquest, making the tragedies of the New World more old than new. See Neves and his colleagues' groundbreaking work (Neves and Pucciarelli 1998; Neves, Powell, and Ozolins 1999; Neves et al. 2003).

2 Molefi Asante adds "Africology" at the end of this list as beyond Africana. See his reflections in chapter 2 of this volume, where he also challenges the "field" versus "discipline" distinction as a function of ongoing academic struggles for resources. Discussion of the name for this branch of human inquiry emerges in nearly every essay in this volume.

3 We focus here on Black Power and its philosophy of education. The contributors to this volume present many reflections on the Black Arts Movement and the Black Aesthetic Movement. For further reading, see especially S. Wynter (2005).

4 Classic statements on this subject are Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton's *Black Power* (1992: 9–10, 148–71) and C. L. R. James's "Black Power" (1992: 362–74). See also Peniel E. Joseph's excellent history, "Dashikis and Democracy" (Joseph 2003). The question of a philosophy of education is addressed in the work of Stephen Haymes (2005), but see also J. Gordon (2001: ch. 2, "Black Power").

5 See, for example, the two issues of *The Black Scholar* 31, 3 (Fall–Winter 2001) and 32, 1 (Spring 2002) devoted to "Black Power Studies" and J. Gordon (2001: ch. 3, "White Power").

6 See, for example, Huey P. Newton's *Revolutionary Suicide* (1973: ch. 22, "Raising Consciousness"). Cf. Jean Genet's reasons for his involvement in the Black Panther Party, in Edmund White, *Genet: A Biography* (1993: 523).

7 See the Argentinean philosopher, theologian, and historian Enrique Dussel's *The Underside of Modernity* (1996) for the first formulation and Cornel West (1996: 128) for the second.

8 This reality is lost in the "past discrimination" rhetoric of affirmative action policy. The actual practices of American institutions of higher learning raise the question of *continued* discrimination against blacks.
9 Kenneth Knies (2005) characterizes these academic units under the term *post-European sciences* to emphasize their promise as sites of new epistemic possibilities. With regard to at least African-American Studies being "too political," perhaps two developments over the past thirty years best illustrate this assessment: (1) it is well known that Black Studies programs and departments have been targets of the US counterintelligence program's (COINTELPRO) interventions and surveillance, and (2) the conservative charge of "political correctness" is almost synonymous with Black Studies and subsequently Women's Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Queer Studies programs. See the testimonies in the reflective essays of Part I of this volume, as well as Churchill and Wall (2002) and O'Reilly (1989).
10 There are many histories of cultural studies that can be consulted, but see especially David Morley's introduction to Morley and Chen (1996).
11 For discussion of the dialectics of freedom manifested in Douglass's narratives, see L. Gordon (1999b; 2000b: 41–61).
12 This is a theme in many of the chapters of this volume, but see especially those in Part II.
13 We would like to thank Kenneth Knies for this observation in discussions of these concepts.
14 Consider, for instance, the etymology of "theory," which is the Greek word *theoria* (to view). The relationship of this word to another Greek word, *theos* or *theus* or *Zeus* (all of which mean "god"), reveals the kind of viewing this concept involves. Should one be able to see the world as a god or God would see it, one would see the way things are; one's view would, in other words, be identical to *the* truth.
15 See Frazier (1957a) and Fanon (1963). Both criticized this group in their time as changing no infrastructures because they lacked genuine capital, yet they were able to accumulate great wealth in their work of mediation between white and black communities.
16 Grant Farred (2003) has edited an excellent collection of discussions on the question of a local versus imperial globalism dynamic, under the title *Reconfiguring the Humanities and the Social Sciences in the Age of the Global University*. The title of Ricardo D. Salvatore's article in the same collection illustrates our point: "Local versus Imperial Knowledge: Reflections on Hiram Bingham and the Yale Peruvian Expedition." For an exploration with striking similarity to ours on the contemporary university and which brings together our three categories of internationalism/globalism, localism, and market nihilism, although not under those titles, see Walter D. Mignolo's article in Farred (2003): "Globalization and the Geopolitics of Knowledge: The Role of the Humanities in the Corporate University." And for a collection of essays with an avowed international commitment *against* an imperial conception of knowledge, see Carole Boyce Davies et al., *Decolonizing the Academy: African Diaspora Studies* (2003).
17 *Sankofa* is an Akan word that means "return and get it." It is symbolized by a bird stretching its neck to its back while moving forward. Its message is that we must reclaim our past so that we can move forward.
18 See Cooper's classic essay "What Are We Worth?" in Cooper (1988).
19 "Reason was confident of victory on every level. I put all the parts back together. But I had to change my tune. That victory played cat and mouse; it made a fool of me. As the other put it, when I was present, it was not; when it was there, I was no longer" (Fanon 1967b: 119–20).
20 Ralph Ellison provides a wonderful allegory of this craziness in the fiasco at the Golden Day bar, where a group of well-educated "crazies" produce mayhem on their day out from the sanitarium, in chapter 3 of his classic novel *Invisible Man* (1995).
21 In addition to the daily obstacles posed by hostile institutions, most of the contributors to this volume have experienced death threats, hate mail, or hate calls, often for doing such

"crazy" things as insisting upon fair treatment and equal respect as academics, doing research that expresses the humanity of black people, or simply being present as faculty on their campuses in the course of their career. Receiving such threats has unfortunately become a mundane feature of teaching in African-American Studies in North American and European universities. For a sociological study of this phenomenon, see Feagin, Vera, and Imani's *The Agony of Education* (1996).

22 From the concluding paragraph of *The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois* (1968).

PART ONE

Stones That Former Builders Refused

CHAPTER ONE

On My First Acquaintance with Black Studies: A Yale Story

Houston A. Baker, Jr.

Looking for *Peyton Place*, Finding Urban Blackness

When my wife and I arrived in New Haven in the summer of 1968, the temperature felt like 100 degrees Fahrenheit. The sun showed no sign of relenting, even though it was mid-afternoon. This was New England? Where were the breezes and delicious blue skies? Where were the streets of *Peyton Place* (a popular television series at the time)? Where was the show's star, Ryan O'Neal, and the cast of complex white people with whom he was always in conflict? We had secured jobs in New Haven, and during final days of graduate school in Los Angeles, we had anticipated the landscape of beauteous hills, white-steeple churches, and bright streams that awaited. But what did we know?

I grew up in Louisville, Kentucky, and lived in southern California and Edinburgh, Scotland during my graduate school years. I logged only two sojourns in New England during adolescence, attending summer camps in the Berkshires and visiting Williamstown and Boston, Massachusetts.

Imagine, then – if you can – the awe, confusion, fascination, and anxiety that claimed us as we entered New Haven on a sweltering August afternoon by way of the Hill Community. The Hill Community was decisively urban, and indisputably black. Summer heat notwithstanding, people were on the move. Black men, women, and children sauntered, swayed, jumped double-dutch, and hustled on every steamy corner. "Holy cow!" I thought. "Where is Ryan O'Neal?" Aretha Franklin's recent hit blasted from the open doors of homes and windows of passing cars: *You better think! Think! Think about what you're trying to do to me!*

We were agog, bug-eyed, overwhelmed by this sudden immersion in the summer rounds of black life. A marathon drive into New Haven had rendered us fatigued, grimy, and more than a little "doofus" in appearance. (The length of our drive I shall shortly explain.) Weary and stupefied, we must have seemed

like bourgeois rubes – a long way from home. Which would explain why everyone to whom we put the question answered in precisely the same way:

"Uh, excuse me, can you tell us how to get to Yale University?"

"No, brother, I don't know where that is. Anybody here know where that is? Flex, you know where Yale is? Peaches, where's Yale? No, man, we can't help you. I think it's over that way." Head shaking, low grunts and random pointing accompanied their collective response.

Of course, we soon discovered how to get to Yale. But New Haven's one-way streets – where no crystal streams flowed – and our weary failure of concentration caused us to overshoot the mark. We found ourselves once more surrounded by urban blackness. Had we gone full circle? Not at all. We had simply driven smack-dab into the middle of New Haven's Dixwell Community. Summer smells and sounds once more engulfed us. Fried egg-and-cheese sandwiches, mangoes peddled by street vendors, an improbable stack of sugar cane braced against an old cart. We definitely knew now we were "back East." (Howard University as my alma mater, and the Washington, DC neighborhoods of my wife's birth still made the East our "permanent address," despite our travels West and abroad.)

In Dixwell, black men in mock battle feigned complex karate moves, and one shouted to another with nick-naming eloquence: "Stitch, I know you don't think you 'bout to slide away from here with *my* change in yo' pocket to pay Shorty!"

Once we had made our passage through Hill and Dixwell and arrived safely at Yale, we knew the university was, in undeniable ways, merely the "white fixings" of New Haven – sandwiched inescapably between two robust slices of black urban life. And no, we certainly were *not* in Peyton Place.

Why our drive was overly long and what New Haven "modeled" of urban/American geographies

It was I who made the navigational mistake. I failed completely to notice the fancy insert tucked neatly between two folds of the *AAA* map guiding us from Los Angeles to New Haven. On the last morning of our trip – as my family used to say, "before prayers" – we learned that we were twice as far from New England as we had thought. A marathon drive was ahead in order to keep the appointments we had scheduled in New Haven. We thus met the town with our best sensory intelligence compromised. We had just crossed America in five blistering days, covering 2,400 miles on little sleep, scarcely observing the passing mesas, mountains, and monotonous cornfields. Geography was not our forte on that road trip.

Still – having acknowledged navigational shortcomings and cartographical gaffs – it is nevertheless accurate to say we were savvy enough on that simmering afternoon of arrival to recognize we were in a new geography – a space of restless black demographics and altering time and motion. We instinctively recognized the Hill and Dixwell communities as zones of distinctively black urban possibility. (After all, we both had read and explored some urban sociology with Professor G. Franklin Edwards at Howard University.) The "long hot summers" of the

earlier 1960s and the concentrated Black Power urban politics of the later part of that decade were not entirely unknown to us. (How could they be, with the *Panther Paper* hawked on every urban corner of the United States, and the white, male media relentlessly heaping concerted abuse on Black Power and its advocates like Stokeley Carmichael?) We were tangentially aware, then, of black-city prospects in the United States, even if we had no shrewd "analysis" to offer when we first encountered New Haven. It was obvious (almost from the simplest observation) that a change was gonna come – a conversion experience, for good or ill.

Prescient, dedicated men and women of the 1960s, far more sophisticated and knowledgeable than we, resolutely believed in New Haven. They beheld the town . . . declared it an energetic nexus of cultural ingredients, and named it a "model city" and urban forecast of a *New America*. The black-and-white, town-and-gown urbanity of New Haven attracted Saul Alinsky and Model Cities, Ford Foundation capital and executives, Rockefeller and Mellon arts money. The town was, after all, allied in its "zones of urban connection" with New York and expanses of the Northeast Corridor. If an urban idea "played" in New Haven, it was likely to have a crack at a "good run" in Manhattan.

Proponents of New Haven as a model city and possibly an urban Mecca of a New America were both confirmed optimists and idealistic advocates of change. Alinsky – in words not focused specifically on New Haven but, I think, relevant here – captures the spirit of those idealists when he writes: "The people of America . . . are a people creating a new bridge of mankind *in between* the past of narrow nationalistic chauvinism and the horizon of a new mankind – a people of the world. Their face is the face of the future."

New Haven was positively situated for revolution. Its deeply hybrid urban energies might have morphed into brilliantly innovative plans of action and an invaluable body of knowledge to inform and guide a deindustrializing and chauvinistically "racialized" America to a better future. Alas, that did not happen . . . but, I am getting ahead of my story. Let me go back to our arrival.

Though we had no hint of it when we arrived – and certainly had no extensive urban studies education or black revolutionary zeal under our belt – we had, at least, found our way (not without navigational mishaps) to a place where there were young and fiercely intelligent blacks striving both to read and to shape the future in positive ways from their Yale/New Haven base.

At Yale, for example, a tireless cadre of black undergraduates had grasped the exemplary, or "model," possibilities of New Haven. Their number was pitiably small (14 black undergraduates entered Yale College in 1968, swelling the university's Negro ranks exponentially beyond its traditional racial "tokenism"). But they were colossally imaginative. They set themselves the task of transforming Yale/New Haven into a source and venue for the creation and launch of one of the most ambitiously conceived Black Studies programs in the United States. Courageous and brilliant, these young black men believed Yale was obligated to establish a functional and productive relationship of knowledge formation and resource sharing with the black urban sectors between which it was ineluctably

sandwiched. They had vigorously read an emergent discourse of "Black History," and were knowledgeably aware that Yale's familiar, venerated curriculum was full of "black holes." Certainly, they were as obsessively wedded to a 1960s brand of American radical democracy as were many middle-class and educated blacks just coming off the "We Shall Overcome" bandwagon. So they trusted a great deal in the perked-up, dress-down-Friday "chic" of left-leaning white men at Yale. They accepted them as mentors. They sometimes even called them "friend." With rare exceptions, they did not have much commerce with ordinary Negroes. Hence, they were, for good or ill, precipitously akin to Dr. Du Bois's "Talented Tenth." Nonetheless, they played the game with vernacular confidence, and this enabled them to convince whites in power at Yale that a change was needed . . . indeed, a change was *gonna* come!

We drove into New Haven on a summer's day, geographically unsophisticated and dazed at the sight of urban possibilities. We had come to assume our first jobs – I as an instructor of English at Yale. My wife was to serve as an itinerant Speech and Language Clinician in the New Haven Public Schools. We had virtually no notion of what we would be compelled to navigate as young "black professionals" joining the "Yale Family" in the "model city" of New Haven, a town on the cusp of what certainly passed for a "revolution." Summer was noisily coming to an end. Yale students were filling "Old Campus" dormitories and suites of various residential colleges. We spruced up our tiny apartment, filled our bookshelves with sturdily recognizable titles, and hunkered down for the opening bell. We had no time in our new posts to watch *Peyton Place* or become better acquainted with Ryan O'Neal. From Yale student windows there floated on the night breeze: *You better think! Think! Think about what you're trying to do to me!*

Of the Character of the "1,000 Male Leaders" We Encountered at Yale

The Yale faculty norm in 1968 was white men in tweeds and casually expensive shoes. The undergraduates were young white men in various stages of life address. They were "into" books and studies, "the revolution," "consciousness altering," or – frequently and noisily – "their cups." One of the Yale mottos signaling the specialness of the institution indicated that the student body consisted of "1,000 male leaders." The race of these leaders was not specified, but a quick visual check revealed an absence of color.

Friday afternoons at Yale, among the "leaders" of the late 1960s, featured busloads of "sister school" white girls arriving as guests for the voracious young Yale matriculates. The late 1960s was also an era in which the jacketed-and-tied students of Yale's Branford College transformed cookouts prepared and served by the kitchen "staff" into drunken free-for-alls, complete with catapulted rounds of prime meat and grilled vegetables flung at faux-medieval college walls. Crushed oranges, grapes, and apples spurted their juices on the college walkways

as they fell beneath the fun-loving heels of casually expensive shoes. It was a happy Bacchanalia of well-to-do whiteness under the influence of alcohol and all-American privilege. (How could I, or anyone, say to them, "People in India are starving!"? They knew that.) Ah, the young "leaders" at play!

The "Master's Beer Party" unfolded in the dim, chilly bowels of Branford College, with low lights, girls from the "sister schools," and black music resonating from expensive built-in speakers. Protocol at the "Master's Beer Party" demanded that the "leaders" drench one another (and the girls) with glasses, bottles, pitchers, and buckets of beer. They staggered around in rivers of ale until they dropped, or – especially the girls – were dragged off like mannequins.

The great, happy benefit to us – even if we were witness to the constant of banality and waste of white American affluence – was that, as resident fellows of Branford College, we only had to pay $50 a month rent. And that sum included free long-distance minutes on an in-apartment telephone! (Hey, it was way better than *Sprint*.) For a black man and woman in America during the 1960s to be able to walk to work (at Yale!), pay minimal rent for an above-average apartment, and enjoy free long-distance minutes – this was, as Wordsworth once put it, "very heaven."

It is also true that when the "1,000" were not wastefully at play – indeed, when they entered classrooms where I worked – they were more seamlessly brilliant, assured, and eloquent than any students I have since met. I know there is (if one is fortunate) nostalgia associated with the memory of a first job, but on the brilliance of my first university students, I stand resolutely by the judgment that they were inimitably talented. Those were different times. And as I think about the "rudeness" of their extracurricular lives I know it as compensatory behavior.

Still, I think it was the white "privileged roughness" of Yale's "leaders" when outside the classroom that motivated the dedicated, fit-though-few black undergraduates at Yale to dream there was (surely, surely) a better model of knowledge formation and undergraduate life to be had. One can imagine silent, numinous black prayers ascending in Yale black residence cells: "Please, Dear Lord, do not make me as you have made them. Do not let me become that kind of leader." (Here now is a hard thought, to be sure: in this millennium, we are, alas, forced to recall that *W* is a "leader" alumnus. No wonder, I now think, the blacks prayed as they did.)

Armstead Robinson, Craig Foster, Donald Ogilvie, Glenn DeChabert, Michael Johnson, and others believed, I think, that some project in "blackness" might relieve, if not redeem, the unrelenting white banality, waste, and arrogance marking so much of Yale's extracurricular calendar. Armstead and the others were, if nothing else, *serious* brothers. I remember Armstead (who died much too young) coming to our apartment in Branford College and chiding me (like he was a black neophyte god in baggy dashiki topped by a wild hairdo) for not being "down" with the "vision" of Black Studies he had worked so brilliantly to put

on the Yale table. It is absurdly funny now, but it was meaningful then as a red flag across my bourgeois bow – my naive belief in black academic individuality, white American evaluative fairness, and my ability to work pointedly on my own for the progress of "the Negro."

Black Studies seemed to promise black undergraduates at Yale cultivated coalition with radical white allies, intriguing new reserves of "better ideas," and possibilities for a transmogrification of Yale/New Haven life in general. Of course, this promise was the function of a very different type of leadership from that exemplified by "beer party" whites.

What "Model" of Black Studies Makes an Urban Difference?

Surely, then, in the late 1960s Yale/New Haven was indubitably a Black Studies construction site. However, the big question remained: "What model of Black Studies will best serve the university and America at large?"

The first covenant of what might be accomplished was limned by the symposium on Black Studies organized by black undergraduates, in coalition with well-resourced and influential white allies. The symposium produced a volume titled *Black Studies in the University*. By the time my wife and I were on board in New Haven, a number of constituencies at Yale seemed eager to transform the best wisdom of *Black Studies in the University* into a tangible Black Studies program. Stunningly, I was invited to serve on the Black Studies planning and advisory committee, chaired by the eminent anthropologist Professor Sidney Mintz, who went on to co-found the famous department of anthropology at Johns Hopkins University. One might well query: Why was it "stunning" that I was invited to serve?

Well, there were at least two things – my age and my experience – at odds with the invitation. I was 25 years old, and I had absolutely no Black Studies expertise or experience.

During my graduate days at the University of California at Los Angeles, I met Addison Gayle, Jr., as a classmate. Addison had studied, marched, debated, and protested with a varied array of New York leftists (black, white, and Puerto Rican) during his student days at the City College of New York. He had studied black literature and culture with James Emanuel, and was bent on writing an MA thesis on J. Saunders Redding's memoir, *On Being Negro in America* (1951). When I met Addison, he was busily (in the great American vein of self-invention) shaping a persona as a black, pipe-smoking, tweed-wearing, affected-accent, existential intellectual, sojourning among western "provincials" for a season. "Why, Ole Man," he once said to me, "You *kant* even get the Sunday *New York Times* delivered to your door in this God forsaken place!"

Addison was from Newport News, Virginia, and trying vigorously to forget it. Ten years older than I, and a fast reader, he became perhaps the most respected

and admired critic of the "Black Aesthetic" of the 1960s. Even at UCLA, and with that dumb accent, he seemed a serious and worthwhile mentor for a country boy from Kentucky like me. He told me what black books I absolutely had to read, steering me to Baldwin and LeRoi Jones, Richard Wright, and, of course, Saunders Redding. He was sternly didactic about the incumbencies of black life and the responsibilities of black intellectuals in the United States. Frequently, though, he interrupted his eloquently existentialist formulations as one or another of those wishful white "California girls" sauntered by, giving him a nod, accentuating further the swish of her tight skirt or contoured jeans. (The *Beach Boys* did wonders for such committed sun-seeking young women and citizens of LA with their jaunty songs of the flower-power era!)

What was "stunning" about the invitation for me to serve on the Black Studies committee at Yale, therefore, was that my only "university" training in Black Studies was Addison Gayle. Understandably, then, I was anxious for real wisdom. I wanted to prepare myself to make a real contribution. What were the most elegant models of Black Studies to be investigated? What preparation did I require to be a first-rate committee member at Yale? Even, a leader?

An anecdote suggesting I could have worried less and simply "racialized" my invitation to serve

The angst and seriousness I brought to the question of Black Studies "qualifications" and models might have been allayed had I spoken immediately to the chap who occupied the Branford College apartment just above us. He was English, white, disaffected, and a resident in Branford by dint of the spousal dole. His wife had the full-time job. She was a nice American woman, dead plain in her dealings with the world. She was also a first-rate British Victorianist and a loyal member of the English department faculty.

I was quietly minding my own business one day, some *Jackson Five* playing, with the hall door of our apartment open to catch a breeze, when this chap stepped inside. Quizzically and uninvitedly, he surveyed our "stuff," and seemed eager to talk. I greeted him casually, and he said:

"Houston, old man, I suppose you know there was controversy about your coming on board?"

"What? No, man, I don't know anything about *controversy*. What are you talking about?"

He said: "I *mean* . . . you know – *you* know what I really mean. I mean you do know *why* you are here, don't you?"

Uh, HELLO!!!

Yes, indeed, I could answer that one. I was teaching three sections of murderous introductory courses, seldom leaving Sterling Library between classes, reading every scholarly secondary source in sight to keep up with my colleagues and to do a first-rate pedagogical job for the "1,000 leaders," with respect to texts such as the *Orestean Trilogy* of Aeschylus. I had foolishly and youthfully said

"yes" to approximately one hundred and eleven committees – from Masters of Arts in Teaching to Hill House High School/Branford College collaboration. I never ate leisurely. My wife and I seldom saw each other. We exchanged incomprehensible, fatigued grunts as we watched the 11 o'clock news and then plopped wearily into bed. She arose before daybreak, and I followed shortly thereafter. It was a test of our still-forming marriage even to be at Yale, among undergraduates who (for one entire year) never so much as said "hello" to my wife as she moved daily across the Branford College courtyard.

O, HECK YEAH!!!

I knew why I was in this place called "Yale." I was working unbelievably hard to make a career go of it and not get caught napping on the job. I said as much to the "chap."

"No, no, no, old man!" he wagged a finger at me. "That's not what I'm talking about. Everybody works hard here." He continued: "I think you must know what I'm talking about, old man. You're here because you're a Negro. That's it, you know. You're a black man. You never would have gotten the nod if you weren't a Negro."

"O, *that*," I said. "Yeah, my Mom let me know that when I was born. How's your mother? And can you find your way out alright?"

Tragedy

I learned some years down the line that the "chap" committed suicide. I hope it was not out of morbid obsession with "Negro Affairs," or affirmative action. I hate the fact of his painful death. He was convinced that I needed to do *nothing* in order to maintain "place" at Yale but be "racial." I wish that I had comfortably been able to enact his parochially dogmatic, myopic, and rudely cavalier ideas about "Negroness" being the key to permanence and success at Yale. Being a "race hustler" might have preserved my eyesight and energy levels far better than the Type-A anxieties and efforts I brought to my younger academic nights and days.

Maynard Mack, Black Networking, and the Virtues of Consultation

Whatever other "qualifications" I, in fact, possessed, I was undoubtedly invited to serve on the Black Studies committee *because* I was a Negro PhD. But, I was a Negro PhD with a difference. Professor Maynard Mack had boldly and unflinchingly hired me! (O, shades of Mark Twain.) Maynard Mack was an academic "star" before the academic "Star System" had even been born. He targeted and personally recruited (in London, no less), me. And that's a fact.

Professor Mack – a shrewd star and savvy academic entrepreneur – was connected to publishers, media, and circuits of influence without academic parallel.

I was not only his young black "ace," but also a quickly "networked" Negro in New Haven. Immediately upon our arrival in New Haven, my wife and I began making friends with extraordinary black people. We ate dinner with community activists, black Yale graduate and professional students, New Haven Public School teachers and counselors, and assorted (and always captivating) black, east coast, self-declared "revolutionaries."

The late 1960s in New Haven were crowded, busy, complicated, demanding, and hugely informative; it was a fine time to be alive and well in New England. Complementing other New Haven constituencies were black faculty at Yale who represented the cream of a fairly exclusive crop (meaning, of course, that black PhDs in traditionally all-white institutions were *extremely* rare in 1968). There was Ken Mills in philosophy and Roy Bryce-Laporte in sociology and anthropology, Arna Bontemps and Austin Clarke in English, John Clark in psychology, Carmen DeLavallade in drama, Richard Goldsby in biology, James Comer in psychiatry . . . and visitors . . . Sylvia Boone, Paule Marshall, Geoffrey Holder, and others. It was "high times" for black intellectual enterprise in the world of Yale/New Haven.

There existed, then, a brilliant *local* cadre for consultation *vis-à-vis* an effective "plan" for Black Studies in the university. There had, of course, been the earlier Yale symposium. But I needed to make my own inquiries. I was young, cocky, and had not attended the symposium. Not that anyone black at Yale had invited me to come . . . but still, I had not attended.

In my consultative mode, I also went national, putting in a call to Addison Gayle, and listening for an hour as he regaled me with tales of his life, loves, and labors in the Big Apple. Afterward, I telephoned friends and associates in Los Angeles, consulting a number of black people at UCLA. A mini-revolution had occurred at that university while I was writing my dissertation abroad at the University of Edinburgh. After the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Vice Chancellor Charles Young met student and city demonstrators and demanders with an alluringly handsome chest of treasures: money for curricular revision, community programs, scholarships, new hires, space, and staff.

An ugly and ignominious Los Angeles black militancy quickly tried to hijack the treasure chest. The black UCLA students (abetted by the Black Panther Party) resisted the black militant clowns, but the students did not, of course, possess a great deal of political sophistication. But even in the face of black militant thug life and gun-toting paramilitarism there still was ample reason to predict that "Black matters" (including student and first-rate faculty recruitment) at UCLA would make headway. That hope took a serious blow when the Black Panther Party's John Huggins and Bunchy Carter were shot to death on the UCLA campus in 1969, allegedly by members of the militant organization *Us*, led by Ron Karenga.[1] From the perspective of at least one person present during the formation of Black Studies at UCLA, Charles Young's "treasure chest" was in reality a white Pandora's Box. Of the murders of Carter and Huggins, Elaine Brown writes: "The bodies of Bunchy and John were still lying

in the meeting hall [after the fateful 1969 Black Student Union meeting in Campbell Hall at UCLA to plan for Black Studies]. They had fallen in such a way that their fingers touched . . . To escape [the assassinating gunfire], students had trampled them" (E. Brown 1992: 167).

From my various "consults" locally and nationally (some of them more hair-raising than others) I extrapolated a set of basic requirements for Black Studies in the university. I considered myself intellectually and ideologically equipped to attend the first meeting of the Yale Black Studies committee I had been invited to join.

Requirements for an effective and empowered program of Black Studies in the university

1 It is not in the interest of *the people* to allow a program called "Black Studies" to exist, unless the program is "autonomous" (i.e., independently black owned and operated, possessing the same "departmental autonomy" as traditional university disciplines).
2 A *program* in Black Studies represents only a brief, inaugural sortie in the journey toward full departmental status. Hence, even at the *program* level, the project must be endowed with significant fiscal resources (i.e., guaranteed, long-term apportionments from the university's operating budget). It is imperative, as well, for the *program* to have chief oversight of its own fiscal resources.
3 Black Studies must have access to *all* prerequisites that mark departmental status in the university. Such prerequisites include: authorized and budgeted new hires, fully resourced and centralized physical space and adequate staff to manage it, fellowship and scholarship support for graduate and undergraduate students, and the right to manage the tenure and promotion of its faculty.
4 Black Studies must articulate – and set programmatically in action – an agenda that expands the boundaries and definitions of "legitimate" academic work and knowledge to include outgoing concern for the black majority, that black majority's life chances, and the enhancement of that black majority's urban existence in the United States of America. This requirement was often deemed the "community" component or the "black community" orientation of Black Studies. And where Yale/New Haven was concerned, it would have meant a collaboration and commitment of resources sufficient to ameliorate town–gown alienation, as well as allotment of space for an ongoing "forum" in which a *new knowledge* – a new "regime of truth" – would be formulated, debated, and put in the service of a revised academic enterprise at Yale/New Haven.
5 An effective and empowered Black Studies program must commence work with a graduate research arm and a "diasporic" component in place. Thoughts of an Afro-American Studies PhD, in other words, must never be *after-*

thoughts. And Africa, South America, and the Caribbean must all constitute – from the outset – relevant areas of intellectual investigation for Black Studies.

6 An efficacious Black Studies program requires top-down, *protected* status – something akin to ecological sanctions surrounding endangered species. The peculiar irony, of course, was that the "species" of Black Studies had not yet been born. The translation of this protective clause often resulted in Black Studies reporting to the president or provost, and not to (lesser) deans. The somewhat bizarre humor (in both a Renaissance and a comedic sense) of the top-down caveat reads out for me today like the posturing of that black man in Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi* who demands of a saloon-assembled crowd: "Do you know who I is?" Well, of course, it turns out he is the lead stoker on one or another of the famous Mississippi steamboats and proud of it. Which seems to me today akin to: "We Black Studies folk report to the provost!" A prideful locution that leaves aside questions of whether there is ever anything of a paradigm-shifting moment to "report."

On the fate of my knowledge and handling of the requirements

Having ascertained specified requirements, I felt my knowledge of Black Studies was more than adequate for its purpose. Which was, of course, to be a leading black "stoker" on the Yale Black Studies committee. I was emboldened (surely a function of brash and cocky youth) to think that I *owed* it to Black Studies to assume a "leadership" role. Boldness is often the servant of absurdity.

I had not even been introduced to the principals in Yale's extensive process of Black Studies formation – from those 14 black undergraduates, through to Professor Robert Dahl, Sterling Professor of Political Science, and first head-of-committee for Black Studies formation. Armstead, Donald, Glenn DeChabert and others in the forefront of the process could have strolled by me on Church Street or Whitney Avenue without my recognizing any of them – by name or face. I had not (as already confessed) attended the symposium mounted by the Black Student Alliance. And, further, I had been in town for only three months. Remember, I couldn't even find Yale when I first got to town.

(It is important, as a twenty-first-century afterthought, however, to note that my hiring occurred in the winter of 1968, and no black person, student, organization, committee, or assembly ever graced mine or my wife's life via telephone, letter, telegram, or other available means of communication. We were not welcomed to Yale, assisted upon our arrival, or even spoken to by any black faculty member or Yale black student whatsoever. One might ask then – in a certain hard retrospective reading of events – if Yale's black students were as much out of control of their destiny in 1968 and as naively "revolutionary" and politically "un-black" as the UCLA'ers who, in one report, "trampled" the bodies of John Huggins and Bunchy Carter?)

Though my youth produced illusions of "leadership," it did not make me stupid. Even with the requirements in hand, I knew I could not go it alone.

I recruit allies in the implementation of requirements

I telephoned two fellow Black Studies committee members – Professor James Comer and Dean Paul Jones (a recent Yale graduate) – and asked them to come to a "working lunch." Jones and Comer agreed to meet me at the Branford College dining hall on the afternoon before the meeting. The three of us showed up wearing jackets and ties, though not, I think, casually expensive shoes. We collectively shook our heads in dismay at how paltry the resources seemed that were going to Black Studies at Yale. (No "treasure chest" here.)

We wondered, aloud and as a small group assembly, why a "white man" (Professor Mintz) had been designated to lead "black" planning efforts.

We talked, collaboratively, of the needs of "our people" in urban America and particularly about how desolate were the conditions of the New Haven Public Schools, conditions our brother, Dr. Comer, was working to rectify. Finally, on the fundamental and non-negotiable requirements of a Black Studies program at Yale (many of which were nowhere discernible in the "plan" before us) we were in accord.

"So," I said, "We are agreed that we won't sign off on or endorse any plan that does not include all the requirements?"

"That sounds right to me!" said Comer.

Jones extended his palm, and said: "Right on!" I slapped his hand, feeling the unity.

The meeting

I showed up *sharp* for the Black Studies committee meeting. I mean I was *pressed* from my stocking-cap-disciplined hair to the tips of my heavily shined Florsheim blacks. I winked at Comer/Jones, seated myself at the impressive, polished conference table in one of those sumptuously lead-paned, chair-railed, and wainscoted spaces of Yale College.

Professor Mintz was decidedly not *pressed*. He had on a short-sleeved summer shirt and slightly rumpled khakis. His hair was not especially well attended. What was most in evidence was his "cocky conviviality." Something on the order of: "Whose natives these are, I think I know." He began the meeting, and did not stop speaking. He informed us of the status of the long-range "plan" for Black Studies and how our black "colleague," John Blassingame (whom I had known as a history professor when I was at Howard), was the greatest "young" black historian known to mankind and working on a groundbreaking book before taking up his designated post in the yet-to-be-voted-upon Black Studies program at Yale. He continued, saying his own "colleague," Dr. Roy Bryce-Laporte, was going to be an enormous boon to the new program and was an "amazing" scholar in formation. He waxed

eloquent about the timeliness of the Black Studies project at Yale and shared anecdotes with us about his own fieldwork in the Caribbean. And, last . . . finally, he lifted from his fog of self-absorption and inquired: "Any questions?"

I was on my feet faster than Muhammad Ali on Sonny Liston, saying: "Having read the plans and consulted with 'the people,' we blacks on this committee do not feel the current Black Studies plan meets the minimum requirements for a first-rate program in the university. We therefore demand [it was, of course, fashionable in the 1960s to demand, from Free Speech to Attica] autonomy, independence, tenured faculty, and a proper research and community component for the Black Studies program at Yale. We also demand a budget commensurate with the goals of the program, and space in which to house it. We demand a program sufficient to address the black urban needs of 'the people' of New Haven and the United States as a whole. Furthermore [and here, I was totally improvising and way beyond the 'groundings' with my brothers of the day before], we demand *black* leadership of the present committee."

It came out in a single breath. I was proud to have stoked the meeting.

On the effects of Black "unity" and the Negro's articulation of Black Studies requirements

Professor Mintz was all flush and flabbergast. He was a'sputter, caught without map or compass. Clearly, I was not the "Negro" (or native) he had expected. In fact, I suspect I was a "Negro" he had never seen before. At least, he seemed stunned beyond measure. The traces of his arms visible below the hems of his short sleeves, to the tip of his forehead, were deeply flushed. His bottom jaw was down around his chest. His eyes flashed white-hot confusion.

I do not remember precisely what happened next. I know Mintz had the presence of mind to say something – angrily, yet imploringly – to Comer/Jones. Which was, cool, right? Because the brothers and I were on the same black page, right? "Unity!"

Comer/Jones said, in effect: "The opinions expressed by that breathless Negro over there (nodding toward me), do not represent the dual sentiments or assessments of Comer/Jones. Sid, my Man, you know we have been on board from the beginning of this Black Studies work and think we are headed in the right direction to achieve truly great things at Yale."

Holy cow! I was definitely "bowling alone." As Ralph Ellison might have written the scene: Jack the Bear and the black Brothers Restrum had put me in a serious sling.

Professor Mintz said: "This meeting is adjourned!"

Aftershocks

When I arrived at Branford College after the meeting (a 15-minute walk, at most), there was a note on our apartment door: "Please come and see me immediately. Signed: T. E., Dean of Branford College." I made my way downstairs and across

the courtyard, to the office of "T. E." He was no older than I. He had recently graduated from Yale and was now serving as an Ivy League apparatchik, while he dreamed up a way to roll over his undergraduate capital as ice-hockey-and-beer-partying nerd into meaningfully salaried employment in Manhattan. He opened his office door at my knock and began breathlessly by saying: "What did you do to Sidney Mintz?"

"What are you talking about?" I asked.

"Sid called a few minutes ago," said T. E. "He was furious! He asked if you were . . . well, CRAZY?"

"Hold up, T. E., just hold the hell up," I said. "He asked you *what*? If I was CRAZY?"

T. E.: "He asked if we had experienced any problems with you. He even suggested we should kick you out of the college before you hurt someone. He wanted to know if you were CRAZY."

On the White Requirements of Black "Craziness" *vis-à-vis* Black Studies

Wow! I had *stood up* in a meeting – truly, I suppose, a "revolutionary" act in the staterooms of Ivy League whiteness. I had spoken breathlessly in the tones of Black Power and "the people." I had tried (truth to tell) to sound like a Black Panther, although I was a black PhD recruited by Maynard Mack to be a British Victorianist for the English department at Yale. I had indicated that what was being proposed as an adequate Black Studies plan at Yale was flawed, bogus; perhaps inspired by goodwill, but still *not* allowing requisite thought or resources to possibilities of a black-urban/university paradigm of praxis and knowledge. I *was* young and cocky . . . but CRAZY? Where did that come from?

All of this swirled through my mind in T. E.'s office. And, obviously, the matter has never to this day gone away, or successfully resolved itself into a non-haunting presence *vis-à-vis* white "planners" for the management and study of "blackness."

The semiotic field and cast of characters from that autumn afternoon at Yale – in one form or another – have played themselves out at myriad sites of white authority, "philanthropy," power, and academic "planning" (on behalf of the "Negro") during multiple decades of my life and times in the American academy. It was a proleptic metonym, one (if one were at Yale) might say.

When a carefully thought, fully consultative, black-majority-interested, urban-oriented, deeply institutionally invested Black Studies project – overseen and independently managed by black men and women – is forcefully enunciated by *pressed*, confident, and thoughtful black academics (people who *know*, mind you, who they are), the all-purpose white charge of CRAZY leaps like fire from public address systems of white power in the United States of America. This is my belief.

What's the good news? Or, how *crazy* really came to signify in New Haven

Good news! My wife and I were *not* kicked out of Branford College. However, *no one* at Yale, or in New Haven, was even remotely able to foresee precisely how CRAZY would, in fact, come to town-and-gown by the spring of 1970.

Those Americans-of-the-Future whom the authorities (and wackos like the white, undergraduate "Tories" at Yale) deemed CRAZY arrived at the "construction site" of Yale/New Haven in force in 1970. They included: the Black Panthers, Jean Genet, Abbie Hoffman, Dr. Benjamin Spock, and approximately 15,000 other revolutionary May Day participants assembled on the New Haven Green. They were intent on a new view of Yale, a transformation of New Haven into a realistic example of a model city, and the transmogrification of the United States as a whole into a land that would abhor imperialism and give the "Negro" a fair shake. Professors Dahl and Mintz . . . and all the best laid strategic plans for Yale blacks that had been formulated prior to May 1970 contained no real hint of this CRAZY. For it was the force that through the "greening of America" made New Haven commons sing of a New America in that springtime long ago.

Aftermath and Forecast for Millennium

By the fall of 1970, Afro-American Studies was firmly established at Yale. But – and everyone *must* know this – it had not come into being *solely* as an effect of Ford Foundation sponsored symposia, eager and accommodating black undergraduate efforts, Comer/Jones "brokerage blackness," or white anthropological cocky conviviality. No, Black Studies at Yale was *instituted* effectively and powerfully by men and women who were black, urban, street – and downright brilliantly organically intellectually funky CRAZY. Polite, placating, and palliating white men in tweeds and casually expensive shoes there were, but even they dressed differently for May Day.

The founding of Black Studies at Yale was a combination of hyper-American black urban realism and a serendipitous Ivy League non-conformism of New England vintage. (Perhaps a throwback to those nineteenth-century days when the likes of Thoreau and Emerson chose class treachery on behalf of a black, enslaved majority in the United States.) Black Studies at Yale found its most successful and forceful inaugural breath as a function of the CRAZY convergence of thousands and thousands of uncowardly men and women from diverse sectors of the American polity. There were exploding bombs in downtown New Haven, a Yale chaplain who was not afraid to take religion into the fray, and the cry everywhere of: "The ultimate solution is black revolution!"

Why, then, does one white, Yale emeritus professor now remember it all as follows? Listen: "In an age of unruly protests, they [black undergraduates

campaigning for an end to the lies of the Yale curriculum and the banality of white extracurricular excess] used polite diplomacy, reason and research."

And how does one erstwhile black undergraduate "revolutionary" recall Black Studies matters at Yale? Listen: "We knew that our [black students'] best weapon was intellect. We made a strong rational argument that stood on its merits."

How soon we forget!

No wonder Professor Mintz labeled *me* CRAZY. I suspect he had precognition. He knew that by the twenty-first century everyone would remember reason, intellect, cocky conviviality, diplomacy, and "can't we all just get along" as the big winners in the establishment of Black Studies at Yale – a program, of course, that missed the boat altogether in fulfilling minimum requirements for a paradigmatically new knowledge and active intervention in the ever deteriorating conditions of black urban America . . . just around the corner, on both sides of Yale.

Remembering . . . The Brewster factor and meditating what might have been

It was not a Yale professor, as all must know, but a soon-to-be American ambassador to the court at St. James who best understood the implications of "black" and "CRAZY" in the United States and at Yale during the spring of 1970.

President Kingman Brewster famously proclaimed – even in the midst of struggle and with Yale "development" revenues dramatically declining – "I am skeptical of the ability of the black revolutionaries to achieve a fair trial anywhere in the United States." (O shades of today's private prison-industrial complex and deteriorating black zones of urban confinement!) Right on, Kingman! Two observations seem in order.

First, I believe Yale became a decidedly "urban university" in that revolutionary moment of Black Studies formation that was May Day, 1970. If Kingman Brewster had been, say, a Black Panther and in charge of Black Studies at Yale (on the order of, say, a vastly more radical and canny "Charles Young") then the whole of Yale and New Haven would be a far better and safer urban venue and place of knowledge formation than it is today.

But CRAZY did not triumph, and within the past decade and a half, drugs, alcohol, murder, and mayhem of a decidedly deindustrialized American variety have come *from* Yale/New Haven – not as effectively researched (based in Black Studies) conundrums, but as daily realities of a "city neglected" – a magnificent intellectual opportunity lost.

Second observation. In that moment of possibility that was Black Studies formation at Yale, many black academics privileged to be on board made a career shift to the eternal study of the lives and work of men and women of "color." We gave up, as it were, "aestheticism," "reason" (in its white guise as intellectual terrorism), and the triumphalism of white Western "modernity." I think this shift of intellectual focus in the lives of so many academics has – during the past

three decades – affected the American academy in profound ways. At the very least, a traditionally all-white American academy has been compelled in three decades to see – let us not be too grandiose – at least, DIFFERENCE as a legitimate ground for serious intellectual investigation and challenging scholarly enterprise, where it once beheld CRAZY.

Only a story

The foregoing ruminations are just a story. They are memoir, which is always self-referential and subject to historical and empirical correction. Memory is an involuntary muscle – it cannot help presenting its bearer in what is, perhaps, a far more complimentary light than he deserves.

And yet . . . my notion – all these many seasons past Yale/New Haven – is that if you asked any one of a randomly chosen, say, 100, members of the urban black majority in the United States where to find a Black Studies program actively enhancing the life chances of the *black majority*, he would respond: "Nope. I don't know what you're talking about. I don't know where that is." This *hypothetical* represents, I think, both a reality and a challenge. At its most basic level, it signifies there are many miles to go and awful quantities of work to be done.

We have made gains. Black Studies is as real today as rain – and as enduringly influential among progressive academics in America as the earth itself. Nevertheless, we still have to guard our whole enterprise and personal being against the charge that we are CRAZY when we strive to act on behalf of, and with the best interests of, the black majority in mind.

Today, navigational mistakes are far too costly. The map is in our hands, and we must read it correctly on behalf of a beleaguered majority. Any Black Studies program that strays from the urban black majority course is not worthy of the name "Black Studies." That is my belief. And this is only my story . . . years away, and far down the line from Yale.

Note

1 *Us* was founded by Maulana Karenga, who also founded the Kwanzaa holiday, whose work in social ethics includes the development of a communitarian philosophy of black pride and unity. For a study of *Us*, see S. Brown (2003) (eds.).

CHAPTER **TWO**

Sustaining Africology: On the Creation and Development of a Discipline

Molefi Kete Asante

Origins

The Black Studies revolution of the late twentieth century profoundly impacted the curricula of most institutions of higher education in the United States (J. Conyers 2003). Taken together with the infusion of students of African origin, the nuancing of traditional curricula, the development of departments, programs, and centers in African-American Studies, the activism of committed African-American intellectuals, and the presence of multinational Africans as faculty, the academic life at American colleges and universities at the top of the twenty-first century is a quantum leap from what it was at the beginning of the twentieth century. No previously created discipline, such as anthropology, history, sociology, political science, or psychology, remains unaffected by the revolution that brought Black Studies into existence. Each field or discipline in the social sciences and the humanities has been transformed by the questions and issues raised by what I believe was at its base a part of the African-American nationalist tradition to bring about a more equitable society.

"Black Studies" was a term that grew out of the political and academic climate of the 1960s (K. Bankole 1995). When students at San Francisco State campaigned in 1967 for courses that reflected the experiences of African people they called for "Black Studies," since so much of the curriculum was essentially "White Studies" parading as if it were universal. Merritt College students in Oakland, California were at the same time agitating for more black faculty and African-American history courses. Harold Cruse stated it quite succinctly in the early days of the discussion: "In the absence of black studies the demand for black studies is unavoidably a radical innovation from the outset" (H. Cruse 1969: 19). The electric spirit of revolution in the classrooms had struck a nerve with the organic community struggles for equality carried on nationally by African Americans. Motivated by the political, social, and economic ideas of self-

determination and self-definition, students influenced by the rhetoric of the *Us* movement and the Black Panther Party, whatever their own differences, were united around the establishment of Black Studies. Almost simultaneously the movement caught on nationally and chapters of Black Students Unions were created to express the pent-up intellectual and political energy felt by African-American students.

The immediate academic aim was to create the opportunity for "a black perspective" in the American academy in social sciences, arts, and humanities. A number of names emerged to describe the course of study and group of subjects under the umbrella of "Black Studies." Among the more popular names were "Afro-American Studies" as in the UCLA Center for Afro-American Studies; "Africana Studies" as in the Cornell University Department of Africana Studies; "African-American Studies" as in the Temple University Department of African-American Studies; "Africa World Studies" as in the Miami University Africa World Studies program; "African Diaspora Studies" as in the PhD program at UC Berkeley; and "Africology" as in the Department of Africology at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. A few departments, such as Ohio State University and California State University, Long Beach, retained the title of "Black Studies" into the new century. Increasingly, and for critical reasons, the term "Africology" has gained recognition as a name and objective of our intellectual pursuit. This is not to say that it is the last name by which our practice will be called. In other fields the process of naming has followed a similar path. Communication was previously called Human Communication, Communication Studies, Communications, Speech Communication, Speech, Speech and Drama, Rhetoric, and Oral English! Thus, we must not err in assuming that our search for identity is peculiar and unique.

Setting the Agenda

During the early days of the campaign for Black Studies the most critical need was for faculty guidance about the courses being proposed. Students often developed syllabi, courses of study, and bibliographies and presented these to the various deans as indicative of what could be the core of Black Studies. But the list of faculty who could assist the students was limited. Eventually, as we shall see, this led to the issue of who would teach Black Studies courses. Most major universities had a few token blacks who had been on campus prior to the Civil Rights era, but many of these faculty members did not relate to the curriculum innovations sought by the students. They were comfortably ensconced in their ivory towers and often felt that the students were radicals at the gate who would threaten their safe chairs.

At UCLA, the Harambee Club took the leadership in 1966 to compile a list of possible faculty and courses that could be taught at the university level. Similarly, students across the nation met day after day, night after night, in the

most intense drive for academic freedom at the curricular level in the history of American education. No movement for curricular reform had ever been so widespread and so thoroughly universal in its intellectual commitment as the Black Studies movement. Its energy came directly from its organic link with the people who were experiencing persistent white racial domination in the classrooms, just as the masses of blacks were experiencing a similar ideological oppression in the society. The students were not theorists who had studied at some elite graduate school; most were undergraduate students or graduate students who were the first generation of college students in their families. They could not afford to "mess up" and yet they knew that they would be "messed up" if they accepted into their brains the white racism that was being taught to them as if it were universal knowledge. They reacted strongly as one nationalist block with a political drive that was demanding, and they were ultimately heard. Their pursuit, and ours even now, was for a discipline that would begin its study with African people as subjects rather than objects (M. Asante 1998).

However, many young people were lost in the tumult that accompanied the birth of the new field. When students completed their tomes of syllabi and bibliographies they would often march to the offices of the university leaders with their work in one hand and a list of demands in the other. They wanted, *inter alia*, additional black faculty members, black cultural centers, lecture programs of outstanding black scholars, and sensitivity classes for white faculty members. The institutional leaders, often seeking to protect the status quo, were quick to call the police to the campuses. Many African-American students were arrested during that period and some were given unfairly long sentences. They remain the heroes of the struggle for equal education and their legacies are in the thousands of students who have been taught in African-American Studies.

A Search for Faculty

The incipient movement outpaced the number of faculty members who were available to teach the courses. This proved to be a critical issue, one that has continued to shape and in some senses to distort the field. The terminal degree for most academic disciplines is the doctorate. While there were hundreds of African Americans with this degree in the 1960s, the overwhelming majority of them taught at predominantly black institutions in the South. The only other source of African-descended doctorates were continental Africans who had been educated in the United States, Africa, or Britain. African Americans entered the predominantly white institutions of higher education in large numbers in the late 1960s, but it would be several years before Black Studies departments would have the benefit of their education, and even then there would be inherent theoretical and philosophical issues. Eager to attract and hire African-American professors, many universities hired continental African professors because they were available and qualified for appointment to the university though not neces-

sarily qualified intellectually to teach from "a black perspective." This proved to be a challenging action both for the professors and the students who had campaigned for their hiring. In the first place, the emphasis on the race of the professors to be hired led African-American students to a dead-end when some black professors, continental and diasporan, were less knowledgeable and conscious than some white professors (M. Asante 1988). Insistence on biology always leads to a misunderstanding of the cultural, social, and psychological experiences that are necessary for empathetic relationships. One might say that biology, at some point, is important for medical reasons, but it is not defining in terms of who should teach African-American Studies. The continental Africans with doctoral degrees had often been trained by white professors with very little appreciation of the history of African Americans. This meant that the continental Africans had to be quick studiers in the African-American experience in order to be successful as professors in Black Studies. They had to abandon the attitudes of some of their white professors and adopt a consciousness that was African American. The scores of Africans who did so were exceptionally brilliant in the classrooms. Some were heroic and memorable, such as the late Boniface Obichere, a Nigerian by birth, who taught me African History at UCLA. Some made this change quite easily and others found it rather difficult. The problem was often that the continental professors had not taken on the issues of the African Americans and fell victims to the same racism that the students had complained about prior to their hiring. Indeed, some continental African professors found the task too daunting and opted to join more traditional departments.

In some cases the universities, desperate to find faculty, sought to employ African Americans who were degree-less or who did not have the terminal degree although they had other degrees. This meant that significant community activists could teach in their own fields of expertise and achievement. Among the prominent individuals who came to lecture at universities under those circumstances were Sonia Sanchez, Bayard Rustin, Gwendolyn Brooks, Eldridge Cleaver, Amiri Baraka, Margaret Walker, Charles Fuller, and numerous others. Some major universities, to gain African-American professors, even raided the faculties of predominantly black institutions such as Howard, Fisk, Tuskegee, and Hampton. Arna Bontemps, nearly retired, left Fisk to join the faculty at Yale University, for instance.

The General Revolution

There have been three movements for academic enrichment within the general revolution initiated by the Black Studies revolution. Each movement was pegged to one of the terms for the academic field: Black Studies, Africana, and Africology. Furthermore, each of these movements had as its political objective the freeing of the minds of the students so that they might reflect on the vast and diverse universe of knowledge usually omitted in the academy.

The Black Studies movement

The Black Studies movement, called also Afro-American Studies, did not arise out of a primordial *nun*, but rather from an organized group of ideas that formed a core philosophy for use in confronting the status quo in education. There was a powerfully raw energy to the creation of the Black Studies movement. It was unlike any other transformation in the American academy. Groups of students from various colleges, acting simultaneously, almost as if they were collectively programmed, passed through the same processes in order to establish Black Studies on their campuses. First, it was necessary to define the missing links in the institutional chain of delivering information. Subsequently, the students would have to insist that those links could be supplied with information and scholarship. Finally, the students would have to oversee the initiation of the programs to assist the institutions. All over the United States, from Boston to San Francisco, from Detroit to Miami, the African-American students projected their vision. In the end, when the dust had settled, African-American students had opened most of the doors at major American universities to the new Black Studies field.

What constituted the Black Studies movement? Like the Black Power movement and the Black is Beautiful campaign, the Black Studies movement was a move for self-definition, self-determination, and mental liberation. In this regard it was in line with the most radical elements of the contemporary objective of securing for African Americans a more positive place in the curriculum. By its projection as "Black" the movement suggested its ethnic and cultural energy, and by its use of the word "Studies" indicated its intellectual component. This was new and different because never before had "Black" and "Studies" been used in the same term. Most white Americans could not conceive of anything "black" being connected to anything intellectual. In answering the basest of questions from the white community about the nature of the intellectual study, Black Studies "closed the mouths" of the nay-givers.

One of the defining moments in the Black Studies movement was the publication of Maulana Karenga's *Introduction to Black Studies* (1979) in its first edition. When this book was published the field had its first serious attempt to draw the boundaries of a new area of study. It stated precisely how the field should be conceptualized, discussed, and projected. One could no longer assume that the field of study did not have precursor ideas, a core of intellectuals, and approaches to phenomena that constituted a whole new area of inquiry. The book immediately created a stir in the field because until its appearance no one had conceived of Black Studies in such a holistic fashion. Karenga organized the field into seven key areas: history, mythology, motif, ethos, social organization, political organization, and economic organization. These divisions were possible within the context of the Kawaida philosophy that had been the foundation for the creation of numerous self-defining experiences in the African-American community.

Africana Studies movement

Riding on the tide created by Black Studies, the African Studies movement was carried to new shores in the academy in the early 1980s. However, this movement was not of a different species than Black Studies; it was in fact a new name for Black Studies. The National Council for Black Studies was the first professional organization in the field and it had increasingly referred to the field by the name "Africana," so that by the mid-1980s there were a good number of departments with that name. The aim was to make the field more academic and less political by changing the name of the departments around the nation. The Africana Studies movement was initiated by members of the Cornell University faculty who were among the first to adopt the name Africana Studies for their department. The name was quickly adopted by other departments in the Northeast of the United States and soon spread to the Midwest because of the popularity of the professors from Cornell. Seeking to offset any criticism, the faculty who subscribed to the utility of the name "Africana" presented two arguments for its acceptance. First, Africana was meant to embrace the African world. Secondly, it was intended to depoliticize the study of African phenomena. As such, Africana was meant to be a step away from confrontation, that is, black versus white. To say "Africana" was more than saying "African American"; it was a statement about the nature of the African experience in the world. This meant that the scholar could embrace the Caribbean, South America, and the African continent as a part of the field of study. Indeed, Black Studies that had been limited to the African-American experience was now enlarged to include African issues on the continent, political upheavals in South America, literary developments in Haiti, and numerous other issues. One could just as easily research and discuss the Esie stones of Nigeria as one could the meaning of economic liberation among African Americans in Stone Mountain, Georgia.

This new Pan-African emphasis had been granted a dynamic legitimacy by the international group of scholars that James Turner had assembled at Cornel University. With a politically conscious and socially aware faculty the Africana Studies department at Cornell University forged ahead with a vision of the field that was to capture most of the departmental names within a decade-long struggle for recognition.

The Africological movement

The Africological movement, emerging in the mid-l980s, was transgenerational and transcontinental in scope. In my book *Afrocentricity* (written in 1980 and revised several times since) I had spoken of a discipline of "afrology." This term was refined to "africology" by the University of Wisconsin professor, Winston Van Horne. I have since employed his term, using the definition I once gave afrology, that is, "the Afrocentric study of African phenomena," at his insistence that the term had the same meaning as "afrology."

Temple University's doctoral program established in 1987 quickly adopted the new movement as a way to advance a disciplinary approach to the area of study. Since departments are not disciplines, what remained to be done in the field was to address the question of creating a discipline. This was not merely the announcement that a department had changed its name, but that it had an entirely new way of viewing the aggregation of courses as a unity, with perspective, location, methods of analysis, and paradigms specific to the field. Africology as the Afrocentric study of African phenomena was more than an aggregation of courses about African people. One could find at a number of institutions a list of courses on African subjects, but it was only when there was a discipline, as defined by philosophy, methods, and orientation to data, that one could *speak* of a discipline. Africology was being used to signal that there was no longer a field, but a discipline of study. It had become fashionable to speak of Black Studies or Africana Studies as a field of study with numerous disciplines contributing to the study of African people. This was based on the old ethnic studies or area study model. For the Africologist, this was a dead-end model that would not lead to the growth of the study of African phenomena, or to the advancement of scientific methods. The reason this was so had to do with the fact that science could only expand if researchers were able to think outside of the traditions. This was not about to happen with Black Studies scholars who had not committed discipline suicide, that is, who had not abandoned their traditional or doctoral areas of study. Thus, to think outside of the box, so to speak, one had to believe that there was enough in the study of African phenomena, meaning in the United States and everywhere else where African people exist, to warrant strong methodological and philosophical study.

Africologists repeat the dictum that a department is an administrative project, not an intellectual project. Although it takes intelligence to organize a department so that the administrative functions of the faculty members can be carried out, the real intellectual discourse is around philosophical orientations and theoretical emphases that create a discipline. It is clearer today than ever before among scholars who articulate the Africological movement position that there are numerous interests, such as social work, social institutions, literary studies, historical experiences, psychological questions, and linguistic issues, but only one discipline. Those who accept this view are growing in numbers as well as in influence. Fundamental to this project is the belief that Cheikh Anta Diop was correct to argue that until Africans dare to connect Ancient Egypt to the rest of Africa there could be no true interpretation of African history. Diop understood the significance of examining the classical civilizations of Africa as a prelude to any discourse on anything African. Other scholars followed, even demonstrating the interconnectedness of Nubia to Kemet and the rest of Africa (M. Monges 1997). Separating the study of African culture or civilizations by the Atlantic Ocean is a peculiar saline demarcation that does not exist in any real sense. Thus, to speak of a Black Atlantic makes no real intellectual sense when you assume that Brazil, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Jamaica, and Panama do not have anything to

do with Africans in England or the United States. Indeed, all Africans on both sides of the Atlantic are inextricably joined by a common experience and a common cultural response, however tailored the response is to specific histories. Diop was the first African to articulate so powerfully the necessity for our linkage. Such clarity on the part of the late Senegalese scholar made him – alongside W. E. B. Du Bois – the greatest intellectual of the twentieth century (R. Rabaka 2003). When Diop died in 1986 he had already become the single most important historian of ancient Africa and consequently the patron of a new historiography that would elevate the writing of African history to another level of Afrocentricity (M. Keita 2000; C. Diop 2003).

Issues of Theory and Method

The challenge to Africologists in the postmodern era is to devise ways to explore African phenomena that avoid the worst pitfalls of Western theories and methods used to examine African life (V. Okafor 2002). This means that the source of the theories must be in the historical and lived experiences of the African people wherever they appear in the world. Congruent theories of African phenomena have symmetry to African life. This does not mean that we cannot learn from theories developed in other places, but rather that symmetry to one's own phenomenological history is a better way to view reality (D. Poe 2003). I think that the issues of method are similar. You cannot stick your head in the sand and assume that the methods often used by non-Afrocentrists in an effort to predict and control our behavior can be readily applied to our phenomena without modification.

To examine theory and method is to confront the problem of Western science's attempt to bifurcate the study of human experiences. In most departments of Africology we are faced with deciding whether we are in the social sciences or the humanities. Here we are at Eshu's crossroads, presented with a choice. If we claim to be social scientists, studying the nature of human behavior, we wonder about our interests in the creations of human beings – in art, literature, and music. If we claim to be in the humanities, then we are left asking questions about our interests in how African people survive under the pressures of racist brutality and discrimination. So we are caught between the Limpopo and the Zambezi: if we cross the first we leave behind the Great Zimbabwe and if we cross the second we also leave behind the Great Zimbabwe. The resolution of this issue can only come from our own cultural center. As we stand on the pinnacle of the Great Zimbabwe, we must see our world going out to the various ends but not being defined by one or the other.

All departments of Africology should have the ability to articulate both interests as a part of the philosophical project. In the first place the study of African phenomena for us does not subscribe to the Western division where you separate behavioral-type studies from creative-type studies. Our concentrations in Cultural

Aesthetics or in Social Behavior is intended to suggest that what passes for social sciences includes far more than psychology or sociology and what passes for arts and humanities includes far more than writing and dancing. All human behavior is a creative product and all human creations are evidence of human behavior. Therefore, we cannot and should not be boxed into choosing one side or the other; we do both and our discipline is one whether or not for administrative purposes a university wants to keep us in social sciences or humanities.

Afrocentric metatheory is the leading approach to the examination of African phenomena. This metatheory exists as a place in which Afrocentric theories can be generated to deal with practically any issue in the African world. A study by Ama Mazama of the way Africans have created language in the Americas is an example of how a scholar can creatively position the Afrocentric theory. Mazama is convinced that the language of the Africans of Guadeloupe is an African language, not some bad French (A. Mazama 1997). She writes of a first measure for understanding the relationship of the Africans in Guadeloupe to Africa this way:

> La premiere consiste réfuter le mythe du vacuum linguistique et culturel dans lequel nos ancetres se seraient trouvés en arrivant dans les Caraibes afin de démontrer, au contraire, la continuité historico-culturelle qui existe entre l'Afrique et les Caraibes, ainsi que je m'y suis attachée dans ce livre. La deuxiéme mesure prendre est l'identification de la composante africaine des langues caribéennes. (A. Mazama 1997: 124)

> The first [measure] consists of refuting the myth of a linguistic and cultural vacuum in which our ancestors found themselves at their arrival in the Caribbean, and then to demonstrate, to the contrary, the historical-cultural continuity that existed between the Africans and the Caribs; that's what I am attempting here in this book. The second measure taken is to identify the African elements of Caribbean languages. *(Editors' trans.)*

An Afrocentric theory is one that is constructed to give Africans a centered role in their own phenomena. It is an attack on marginality and peripheralization of Africans. There can be as many Afrocentric theories as scholars seek to create, all operating within the same general Afrocentric framework. While the Africologists can explore the relationship of other theories to the phenomena of Africans, the *sine qua non* of the africological adventure is Afrocentricity.

Living with Athens and Rome

Our confrontation with the social sciences and humanities occurs because the American academy was essentially defined with a Greek or Roman head at the beginning of all academic knowledge. Since African-American Studies departments exist within American academies they are victims of the categories of

Western society. Each of the Western liberal arts, comprising the core of the humanities, is accredited to either a Greek or Roman founder. For example:

Arithmetic:	Pythagoras
Geometry:	Euclid
Music:	Tubalcain
Astronomy:	Ptolemy
Logic:	Aristotle
Rhetoric:	Cicero
Grammar:	Priscian

Unfortunately, some Africologists have often bought into this system of thinking, which prevents them from examining the records that exist before the Greeks and the Romans. The earliest philosophers in the world were African philosophers. The names and works of Imhotep, Ptahhotep, Kagemni, Amenemhat, Amenomope, Akhenaten, Merikare, and Duauf must be studied in our departments in order to gain a clear conception of the origin even of Western ideas about the liberal arts (M. Asante 2000).

A similar situation exists in regards to the social sciences, technically a newer area of human study than the liberal arts. When one looks, for example, at the origin of sociology, one will normally be driven to European scholars (Weber being the most prominent in contemporary times, though it has not always been so). But the Africologist must raise the question of Du Bois's *The Philadelphia Negro* (1996a/1897) as the first real urban sociology in the world. This is not so much a methodological issue as it is a historical fact, but nevertheless it reorients our thinking about sociology. We can do this with our study of psychology and biology as well. When Western scholars conceived of some of these social sciences (e.g., anthropology, biology) they were trying to define ways to suggest the superiority of white people.

The discipline of Africology, that is, *the Afrocentric study of African phenomena*, is grounded in the principles of *Maat*. Those ancient African principles seem to hold for all African societies and most African people transgenerationally and transnationally. The principles of *Maat* are said to include harmony, balance, order, justice, righteousness, truth, and reciprocity. What the Africologist seeks in his or her research is the pathway to harmony and order in society. This is why the ancient people of Kemet called this concept *Maat*. This is not about observing and experimenting in order to control your behavior; rather, it is about making humans whole.

When I wrote the proposal for the first PhD program in African-American Studies in 1987 at Temple University I had to keep uppermost in my mind the fact that African intellectual traditions were not anti-people. In fact, the doctoral program in African-American Studies had sought to reiterate the influence of a people- affirming program. Writing and defending a program that was considered to be different from the usual university development fare had its

disappointments and rewards. I understood precisely what we were up against when the proposal went to the Graduate Committee of the College of Arts and Sciences. Not only were there people with Neanderthalian ideas, but also some who did not want to see any challenge to the hegemony of European education, even if it meant that they would be less educated if they did not know the information. They were in bliss in their ignorance. They would soon be confronted with a proposal that met the university's requirements in every way. Furthermore, I was a professor who was more published than any of my white colleagues and had created two previous graduate programs: the MA in Afro American Studies at UCLA and the MA in Communication at State University of New York at Buffalo. I soon had a parade of white professors tell me why they could not approve the MA and PhD in African-American Studies at Temple. The argument, whether from History, English or Sociology, was the same argument: there was no guarantee that the program was going to be a quality program. What this meant to me was that they were concerned that the principal faculty handling the courses and the program would be African American. Of course, their objections had nothing to do with quality, since our faculty was more "qualified" than some of those raising the objections. Emma Lapsansky from the Dean of Arts and Sciences office went so far as to write a two-page letter decrying the establishment of an "intellectual ghetto" on campus. My response to her was pointed: the entire university was already one big intellectual ghetto and I was only trying to open it up. When the first 35 graduate students entered the university in the fall of 1988 they changed forever the nature of education at predominantly white institutions in America. But they changed something else as well: the intellectual basis for African-American Studies. The only way that I could justify the creation of a doctoral program was that we were teaching something that was not being taught anywhere else. This meant that those of us who worked in the department had to commit discipline suicide from our old doctorates and work feverishly to flesh out this new discipline that was not African-American history, not African-American literature, not Women's studies, not African-American sociology, and not Studies in Racism.

We confronted the turf wars with other departments and won on the merits of what it was we were doing. We found the energy and the time to write the texts and establish the sequences that would demonstrate that we were as much a discipline as any other group of scholars. The process is not over; it has really only just begun. In Africology it ought to be possible to point to texts that are written by scholars in our field, not in literature, English, sociology, and history, as significant for our graduate students. We are doing more in this regard with the annual Cheikh Anta Diop Conference, student conferences, Nommo symposia, the publication of fundamental works such as *The African Intellectual Heritage*, and the editing of numerous journals. Our achievements have often come without the official support of the university community; in fact, in some instances we have had to sue the university to treat us fairly. At Temple University one of the most significant professors in the creation of the Afrocentric circle of scholars

has been Ama Mazama. She is an African Caribbean, native of Guadeloupe, who was educated at the Sorbonne, and she became the first translator of Afrocentricity into French. As the organizer of the Nommo symposia at Temple University she has maintained an Afrocentric edge to the intellectual discourse in African-American Studies. There is no way that the work of Afrocentricity could have been pursued without the steady hand of Ama Mazama on both the legal and intellectual agenda of the department. When the dean of the college of liberal arts appointed to our department an avowed English professor, Joyce Joyce,[1] as chair, although she had received only two votes from a faculty of 12, it was Ama Mazama who challenged the university's action and won the case in court. The dean had made a direct affront to the Afrocentric intellectual idea, choosing to appoint as chair someone who did not accept our developed vision of the discipline or our cultural mission. Indeed, we were burdened with someone who did not know our discipline, its history, its theoretical positions, or its commitment to intellectual democracy. In my judgment, scholars should forever be pleased that Ama Mazama showed courage, intellect, and scholarship by placing our resistance on the moral high ground. In one respect, her integrity and commitment to the discipline saved Temple from losing the cutting-edge theoretical and methodological work that was being pursued by graduate students.

The pursuit of Africology is nearly completed but will not be truly accomplished until two additional achievements are made. First, contemporary Black Studies departments must begin to refurbish their faculties with PhDs who have completed the terminal degree in the field. When we have reached the level of having more than half of our faculty members with degrees in African-American Studies we can say that the discipline is secure. More than anything else this will ensure the lasting impact of our forerunners on the academy. It should not be our ambition to appoint someone to the faculty who is looking for a job, but rather someone who has shown a commitment to scholarship, teaching, and participation in the profession. A department has failed when nearly thirty-five years after the creation of the first department it still hires faculty who do not have a terminal degree in African-American Studies. Should not the objective be to let political scientists, historians, sociologists, and communicationists hire their own people, and we hire those who have demonstrated the rigor, intelligence, and scholarship necessary to advance our discipline? What this requires of those of us who have transient degrees is the ability to commit discipline suicide in order to let a thousand new academic palms rise and sway in the academic wind.

Secondly, scholars in the discipline must devote more attention to works of theory and method than to description and polemics. Since we have argued that our paradigm has brought about a shift in the way identity, culture, and thought are examined, we must create reflective works that tease out the critical issues remaining to be unveiled in our quest for intellectual light. Lewis Gordon's *Existentia Africana* (2000b) is one of the best philosophical works to date by an African-American Studies scholar. Gordon has sought to create open spaces for

new discussions in the development of theory. Other works have been written, some by scholars in other fields, but we still need more work done by African-American Studies professors that provide theories of location and dislocation, cultural reconstruction and recentering, as well as new methodological and practical tools for criticism and assessment. I am convinced that we are on the threshold of a remarkable era of scholarship in this very necessary discipline. However, only when the scholars trained in African-American Studies start producing theoretical and critical research will we have turned the corner to intellectual freedom. On with the task, you chosen generation!

Note

1 Professor Joyce has written about her approach to African-American studies in chapter 14 (eds.).

CHAPTER THREE

Dreams, Nightmares, and Realities: Afro-American Studies at Brown University, 1969–1986

Rhett Jones

> The primary cause of disorder in ourselves is the seeking of reality promised by another.
>
> Michael Harper

Black Studies at Brown University, as at many other colleges in the United States, had its beginnings in the 1968–9 academic year.[1] And as was also the case at other universities, it was initiated by undergraduates. At that time the institution was divided into Brown for men and Pembroke College for women, with undergraduates sharing a common faculty, but each having its own residential campus and separate deanery.

In this essay I examine some of my goals for the Afro-American Studies program at Brown, as well as my frustrations and problems. I begin with my arrival at Brown in 1969, when I was appointed as the graduate student member of what was then called the Afro-American Studies Planning Committee. This group, consisting of faculty, a representative from the deans, undergraduates, and me, met under the leadership of Charles Nichols, professor of English and first chair of the program. It was responsible for the early development of Black Studies at Brown. I end with 1986, the year in which Brown undergraduates conducted a third major demonstration, many of the goals of which those of us involved in Black Studies at Brown had long sought. The administration's acceptance of two of these demands (the appointment of tenured faculty in Afro-American Studies and the formal incorporation of Rites and Reason theatre into the program), while certainly not resolving all our problems, brought a chapter of our struggle to an end. The advantage of this limited time frame is that I have been able to focus intensely on a period in our program's history, to write from first-hand experience as a former director of a Black Studies program, and to

link developments on our campus to those elsewhere in the field. The obvious disadvantage is that I have not been able to give sufficient attention to the many achievements of later colleagues – Anani Dzidzienyo, Paget Henry, and Lewis Gordon – who succeeded me in the hot seat known as the Director of Afro-American Studies and now the chair of Africana Studies at Brown University.

In 1968 Afro-American Brown and Pembroke students peacefully walked off campus. They did not have to walk far, just down College Hill for a couple of blocks where they were welcomed and housed by Congdon Street Baptist Church, one of Providence's historic black churches. From this base and with the support of the congregation the students negotiated with the university's administration for an increase in the number of black undergraduates, graduates, staff, and faculty. They also negotiated for an African-American Studies program. These negotiations were successful. Brown's Afro-American Studies program was established in 1968 and began offering courses in 1969. But the negotiations were not as successful as they first appeared. While they were energetic, intelligent, and well organized, the students had no idea how the university worked. As a result, much of what they thought they had won had to be fought for again and again. What undergraduates thought they had achieved in 1968 was not, in fact, even fully agreed to in writing by Brown until the third major student demonstration in 1986. There was also one in 1975. In that year, students of color occupied Brown's administration building, and "it was necessary to place an emergency call to faculty to ring the building in the expectation that Third World students occupying the structure would be physically attacked by certain white undergraduates" (R. Jones 1976).

Others' Dreams, My Nightmares

This nightmare of a mob of thuggish white students attacking fellow undergraduates was scary enough, but it was a one-time event. The more frightening, challenging, and enduring nightmare of those involved in Afro-American Studies at Brown during its early years was the Brown administration. Whether our administration was insensitive, devious, malevolent, inept, or all four, or whether it was, at times, one of these, and, at other times, a couple of the others, *I was never able to determine*. Reality did teach me one very practical guideline, though: Always get it in writing! The fact that a commitment was in writing did not mean the university would not later renege, but it did make it more difficult for Brown to do so. During my twelve years as Director of Afro-American Studies, I was often criticized for refusing to act until I had a written statement from the higher administration in hand. This gave the university a tactical advantage in what I sometimes viewed as the war between Brown and its own Black Studies program, because the hierarchy often stalled in responding to the most reasonable request until it had become moot. In response to this strategy, I learned to pepper my opponents with memoranda and letters, so I could later demonstrate that I had

not only made a reasonable request that had been ignored but had also made several additional requests that had been ignored.

Reality also taught me not to leave Providence in the summer, as I soon learned the administration preferred to make politically sensitive decisions – such as those around African-American Studies – during the period when most faculty and students were away from campus. Upon returning, we were confronted with a *fait accompli* and thereby forced to spend scarce time, resources, and energy on undoing whatever the administration had done. As Brown is chuck full to overflowing with bright people, I was not the only one to discern this pattern. Recently, the university was involved in a debate over whether or not to arm campus police. An outside group, appointed to review the issue and make recommendations to Brown, submitted its report shortly before the summer break. Because of the higher administration's history of making such major decisions over the summer, Ruth Simmons, Brown's current president, felt it necessary to reassure the campus community that no major decisions concerning the arming of police officers would be made until all were consulted in the fall.

If Brown's administration was hostile toward Africana Studies, it had plenty of company, as, at times, only those committed to and involved in the field seemed to find anything good in it. This included many Afro-Americans in general and some Afro-American intellectuals in particular. The late 1960s and early 1970s were heady times for North America's blacks. Jim Crow was dead, millions – this number is not exaggerated – of anti-racist whites suddenly jumped out of the closet, and it seemed as though a nation that had been racist from birth was finally going to live up to its oft-stated ideological commitment to equality. Though we blacks participated in our own deception, we were dreadfully deceived. Most whites were far from willing to relinquish race privilege, and the end of legal segregation actually did them a favor. They were now able to behave in racist ways without formally declaring themselves racist. Eventually, with the support of a few creative right-wing intellectuals and a great deal of money, these white folk transformed Martin Luther King, Jr.'s appeals for a color blind society into a justification for continuing bigotry against blacks.

As Black Studies was one of the results of the movement for racial justice, it naturally came under attack from these white folk, but they were ultimately Johnny-come-latelies as the field was already under siege from various quarters of the Afro-American community. In his autobiography, Roy Wilkins, long-time head of the NAACP, wrote that in his travels around the United States he tired of persons always coming up to him and asking why black Americans did not stick together, "as though blackness was some kind of glue" (Wilkins and Mathews 1982: 215). As Harold Cruse so clearly demonstrated in the *Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, black scholars and activists were no more united than was the black community as a whole, and if his book did not offer sufficient proof of this, the many – often vicious – attacks on it by Afro-Americans of varied political persuasions did. The study of black folk was not new, so that as Black American Studies was formally organized, it inherited the existing divisions among Afro-American

intellectuals, which may – for the purposes of this essay – be broadly divided along integrationist, Marxist, and nationalist lines. This is not an especially useful set of distinctions for, as much scholarship since then demonstrates, they are not mutually exclusive categories. But they carried considerable psychological meaning and political significance for those of us involved in Black Studies at the time. If one of the nightmares for those at work on the Africana Studies effort at Brown was the animosity or incompetence of the administration, another was the sometimes informative and useful and sometimes ugly and useless battles among those involved in building our new discipline.

Not surprisingly, integrationists, many of whom had risked their lives in the battle against segregation, were appalled at the seeming willingness of black students and black scholars to voluntarily segregate themselves so shortly after gaining admission to North America's leading (white) colleges. In the pamphlet *Black Studies: Myths and Realities* such Afro-American activists and intellectuals as Andrew Brimmer, Kenneth Clark, Martin Kilson, Bayard Rustin, Thomas Sowell, and Roy Wilkins made clear their opposition to Africana Studies. Wilkins (1969) contemptuously referred to the field as "black Jim Crow studies," while Clark's (1969) contribution was to publish a letter in which he resigned from the Antioch College board of directors in protest of the college's proposal to establish "an all-Negro Black Studies Institute." Brimmer summed up many of the concerns of other contributors:

> I am greatly disturbed by the proliferation of programs variously described as "Black Studies" or "Afro-American Studies" and by the growing tendency of numerous Negro students to concentrate in such areas or to substitute such courses for more traditional subjects in undergraduate programs (especially the social sciences and the humanities). [Black students] should have no illusion about the extent to which they are likely to acquire in "Black Studies" programs the mental discipline, technical skills, and rigorous training in problem-solving that they will so desperately need in their future careers. (A. Brimmer 1969: 41)

Many Afro-American integrationist intellectuals clearly believed the negative things Euro-American intellectuals were saying and writing about this new area of study. And why not? After all, as Patrick Real (2002) persuasively argues, black intellectuals had accepted the rules and assumptions of white American ideological debates at least as far back as the early national period.

Integrationists also disliked the celebratory aspect of Black Studies, and, in their view, its attempts to rewrite black history to show the ancestors of black Americans in a favorable light. According to Thomas Sowell, "The history that matters most is not the history of the achievements of our ancestors but the history that we can write with our own achievements" (T. Sowell 1969: 36). Sowell, and blacks who agreed with him, appeared not to notice that whites placed a great deal of emphasis on the achievements of their ancestors, as a way of instilling pride and patriotism in their children. In order to accomplish this goal, con-

siderable distortions of and omissions in the historical record proved necessary. For whites, the achievements of their ancestors mattered a great deal.

Brimmer and Clark each later spoke at Brown under the auspices of the Afro-American Studies program. Although Brimmer was at the time one of the leading economists in the country, few members of Brown's economics department turned out to hear him speak. Clark fared better. Not only did Brown faculty in such departments as anthropology, education, political science, and sociology come to his talk, but he also drew an enormous group from greater Providence's black community, many of whom were familiar with the role of his research in desegregation cases and his book, *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power* (1965).

The willingness of Brimmer, Clark, and other integrationist black intellectuals initially hostile to Africana Studies to speak under the sponsorship of Black Studies units at Brown and elsewhere suggested a change in the way many of them – but clearly not all – viewed the field. By the later 1970s it had, at least to their satisfaction, demonstrated that rather than encouraging blacks to separate themselves from white America on and off campus, Africana Studies could in fact provide them with the means to better integrate themselves.

From the perspective of black nationalists this was just the problem. As they saw it, African-American Studies ought to be enlisted in the worldwide struggle on behalf of black folk. Instead, it was selling out black people for a near crumb-like piece of the Euro-American pie. Having won the right to appoint black scholars in Africana Studies, the field now demonstrated an eager, ready willingness to destroy itself by appointing non-blacks to its faculty. In *Cultural Genocide in the Black and African Studies Curriculum* (1972), the title of which tells all, Yosef ben-Jochannan, one of the most popular nationalist spokesmen among students in the 1980s (black undergraduates invited him to Brown three times), provided a clear statement of this position:

> The BLACK EDUCATOR must be free to criticize and question ANYONE, ANYHING, ANYTIME. He or she is the only person capable of achieving the "TRUE KNOWLEDGE" about what it is to be BLACK or AFRICAN AMERICAN. For there is not a single WHITE man, woman, or child, living or dead, who knows what it is to be "BLACK." Thus, THE FINAL AUTHORITY ON BLACKNESS can only come from the black educator. (ben-Jochannan and Mwadilifu 1972: 57)[2]

As ben-Jochannan saw it, only blacks could correctly interpret the black experience and thereby construct a valid and meaningful Africana Studies curriculum.

Other nationalists took a more balanced but still black-centered perspective on Africana Studies. Maulana Karenga, a leading black nationalist, once imprisoned for his work and widely and wrongly attacked as a "reverse racist," acknowledged in the early pages of his *Introduction to Black Studies* (2002) the important support for Black Studies provided by white students. Sterling Stuckey (1987) traced the roots of black nationalism back to the culture created by slaves,

carefully noting that it resulted not from some biological category, but rather from African survivals and the black experience in slavery. As Stuckey saw it, culture not race was crucial, so that free blacks played no role in the early evolution of Afro-American culture. In the premier issue of his new journal, *First World*, Hoyt Fuller stated its intention to "document and celebrate" the impact Africanity had on American culture, while insisting it would do so "from a black perspective. As an oppressed people, we have trained our eyes to see what those who have dominated us have willed us to see, even when their vision served our own degradation" (H. Fuller 1977). Talmadge Anderson wrote in the *Introduction to African-American Studies* that his book would "not have been possible without including the studies and perspectives of respected non-Black or White scholars who, because of their racial fairness and academic integrity, have also contributed much towards demystifying the African American past and present" (T. Anderson 1994: ix). Still, Anderson argued, "Others may contribute their perspectives [on Black Studies], but the initiative and final definition must be from an African ethos or worldview" (ibid: 4). As long-time editor of the *Western Journal of Black Studies*, Anderson printed articles by scholars from a wide range of racial backgrounds, but published all papers along with a photograph of their author.

As this discussion of nationalists clearly demonstrates, while integrationists, Marxists, and nationalists may be broadly distinguished from one another, each group was itself divided.[3] Following – as they so often did – the lead of European Marxists, Euro-American Marxists organized their divisions in similar kind. By the mid-to-late 1960s, each of these organizations had its own line on race and a (usually small) number of Afro-Americans who were committed to it. So those involved in Black Studies at Brown and elsewhere were confronted with a bewildering array of left-wing groups with perspectives on the field, among them the Communist Labor Party, the Communist Party of the United States, the Progressive Labor Party, the Socialist Labor Party, and the Socialist Workers Party. This is not an exhaustive list, and unfortunately space does not permit exploration of the differences between the Old and New Left, even if I wished to pretend I fully understood them. I don't. Like integrationists and nationalists, leftists were initially hostile to the emergent field. Don King, described as "an Afro-American student active in the Boston area," wrote in the August 1969 issue of *Progressive Labor*:

> Probably the worst thing about the demand for Black studies is the kind of movement that the struggle for them builds. It builds a Black student movement founded on the illusion that under capitalism the university can serve the needs of Black workers and students, and that students can see to it that the university serves Black people by joining the administration. This idea is false and dangerous. In this society the universities and colleges serve the interests of but one class – the bourgeoisie. (D. King 1969: 39)

Other parties on the left were less hostile to Africana Studies, with the Socialist Workers Party (Trotskyites in the United States) among the strongest supporters

of the struggle for the new discipline. The Communist Party of the United States was also supportive.

Over time, many of the left-wing groups emerged as supporters of Afro-American Studies, though they naturally differed as to the form the field ought to take, and in the best Euro-American Marxist tradition spent as much time attacking one another as they did non-Marxists. These clashes were bewildering to those of us involved in the initial development of Black Studies, who were often from working-class black backgrounds. We had little experience with white leftists, who thought they knew more about black oppression – and its solutions – than we did, and were not shy about telling us what we ought to do. Some of the sharp conflict between blacks and whites on the left over Black Studies was gradually muted as African Americans began to assert their perspectives in the pages of such left-oriented journals as *Freedomways*.

Blacks on the left also began to establish their own organizations (the Black Panther Party and the African People's Socialist Party) and to publish their own journals (*Black Scholar*). And they began to publish their own textbooks. In the first chapter of *Introduction to Afro-American Studies*, published in 1978 and authored by a collective at the University of Illinois, its authors make their Marxist orientation clear: "the most important aspect of any society is the struggle over power and ownership of property" (Anonymous Collective 1978: 3). The problems confronting black Americans, the collective earlier argued, were not limited to the United States: "The whole damned capitalist world is in crisis and conditions are getting bad for the masses of people, people from all nationalities. On the world level, the crisis in capitalist countries (including the old ones like England and the USA, and new ones like the USSR) is making a world war more and more of a possibility" (ibid: 2). In the next year, Omali Yeshitela, chairman of the African People's Socialist Party (despite its name, based in the United States), reminded students in a speech at San Jose State University:

> In 1979, unfortunately, many black students – and perhaps most black students – feel like the reason we are on college campuses is because of our own genius, because we're pretty bright, and different from the rest of the people who are not on college campuses. Also, that we are in college for our own personal advancement, as opposed to just a few years ago, when black people understood that the reason we go to school is so that we can change conditions for black people. That used to be the truth. But today we go to school so that we can be a lawyer, a doctor, an engineer, or what have you – so that we can make some bucks, that we can have some personal security. (O. Yeshitela 1982: 113)

Yeshitela's nightmare was the dream of the integrationists, who sought to use Black Studies as a stepping stone for Afro-American students to achieve, but these differences, and others, were papered over as black integrationists, Marxists, and nationalists alike agreed over the course of the later 1970s that Africana Studies was a useful discipline. They did not, as their histories should have demonstrated, and as events would soon make clear, mean the same thing by this.

Dreams and Realities Collide

Events came to a head during the 1982 annual meeting of the National Council for Black Studies (NCBS), held in Chicago under the auspices of the Illinois Council of NCBS. In 1975, Bertha Maxwell, Black Studies chair at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, invited several Africana Studies scholars to meet to discuss the rapid growth in the field – nearly 500 academic units had been established between 1966 and 1972 – and some of the resultant problems. A follow-up meeting was held at the headquarters of the Educational Testing Services in Princeton, New Jersey. The NCBS was formally organized in 1975 and the Illinois Council along with the New England Regional Conference soon emerged as among its strongest divisions. The New England Regional published the *New England Journal of Black Studies*, *Hantu* (the Regional's newsletter), and a guide for those interested in grant writing for Black Studies units. It met twice a year, and in 1983 counted 17 colleges as institutional members (R. Jones 1983a). It hosted the annual meeting of NCBS in Boston in 1986. Under the leadership of John Walter, first at Bowdoin College and then at Smith, the New England Regional – despite enrolling a large number of integrationists, Marxists, and nationalists – managed to steer clear of ideological battles, as we struggled to plant Africana Studies in New England's stony and resistant soil – to say nothing of its stony and resistant minds. As I recall it, we understood the importance of working together and presenting a united front in dealing with administrations that were much like that of Brown in their hostility toward and/or confusion about Afro-American Studies. Under John's leadership and that of Floyd Bass (University of Connecticut), Johnnella Butler (Smith College), Veve Clark (Tufts University), Chet Davis (University of Massachusetts), Gerdes Fleurant (Salem State College), Charles Frye (Hampshire College), Ewart Guinier (Harvard University), and Melvin Hendrix (University of Rhode Island), we worked together with such success that several Africana Studies units in neighboring New York petitioned our national headquarters to be allowed to join the New England Regional. Eventually, the lines among the regions were redrawn to permit them to join.

Where the New England Regional worked to avoid being divided by ideology, the Illinois Council embraced it. Events unfolded in a different way in Illinois, for despite Boston's pretension to being a major metropolis, it was no Chicago. Chicago, then described by demographers as the most segregated large city in the United States, was a strong union town (complete with its own major radio station, WCFL), and aggressive groups of leftists with a history stretching back to the Wobblies. The city was run by a machine that alternated between oppressing blacks and accommodating them, and sometimes did both at the same time. It was the location of a strong network of black Catholic churches, two universities (University of Chicago and Roosevelt University, each of which had appointed blacks to their faculties long before it was fashionable), and the headquarters of

the Nation of Islam. The city was the home of the Midwest's leading black newspaper, the *Chicago Defender*, the nation's most successful black publications, *Ebony* and *Jet*, and though often celebrated for its blues and jazz, was the source of the best du-wops ever recorded, long before anyone ever heard of Motown. There were more than a million blacks in the city, most living contiguously. It was an environment in which black ward politics and black idealism met and intermingled so easily that those of us fortunate enough to grow up there erroneously thought the rest of the black world worked just like the Windy City. I could go on, but as Chicago is my hometown, I don't want to be accused of prideful chauvinism. All that was required for Chicago to become one of the centers of the fledging field of Black Studies was someone with vision.

Gerald McWorter, "he the man." McWorter, who has since changed his name to Abdul Alkalimat, did not dodge ideological divisions. As an activist on the left, he was actively embroiled in them. He was director of the Afro-American Studies and Research program at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign, and a member of the collective responsible for *Introduction to Afro-American Studies*. Champaign has its own small black population, but Alkalimat saw his base as the massive number of blacks, and their traditions, in the Windy City. He organized the Illinois Council for Black Studies, actively involved left-wing organizations and community groups in its work, and hosted the NCBS annual meeting in 1982. He also ran for chair of the organization and was elected. Well, not quite. The NCBS board, then dominated by nationalists, raised questions about the election. At the next annual conference, held at Berkeley, the NCBS leadership called for a re-vote to determine whether or not Alkalimat was legitimately the new chair. The meeting during which the vote was called was confusing and, many felt, illegitimate, but Alkalimat was voted out, a decision confirmed by the executive board, which later met at Princeton. Voting rules were changed so that the outcome became retroactive and Alkalimat would not become chair. This was rightly perceived as an illegitimate coup by leftists and integrationists. Some nationalists were also outraged. Many who did not see themselves as located in any particular camp thought Alkalimat had been unfairly treated. The careful work and unity that had created a strong NCBS was shattered by the board's action. Some abandoned organized Black Studies entirely, others left the national organization – now viewed as nationalist controlled – and concentrated their energies at the state level or on individual African-American Studies units.

At the 1984 NCBS annual meeting, held in Charlotte, North Carolina, Alkalimat circulated a letter to the board that detailed the unfair way he had been treated, and he predicted that this treatment would have dire implications for the future of the organization. Ron Bailey, a leftist then on the faculty at Northeastern University, and I met during the meeting and discussed Alkalimat's letter, and in April 1984 I sent a formal response to it. I include part of it here because it fairly reflects my dreams for Black Studies, and for Brown's Afro-American Studies program at the time. Bailey and I thought that instead of leaving NCBS, we should organize a caucus within it,

> one that would bring black studies scholars who are willing to publicly declare themselves as far left of center together. As I see it, those of us who are willing to organize such a caucus would continue to pay our NCBS dues, remain active in the organization, and organize working sessions during the annual meetings and in other forums. These sessions would be open to all with the sole stipulation that participants must work from the ideas of black folk back to theory rather from the theory to the ideas white leftists think we ought to have. While I believe *all* tendencies left of center should receive a hearing, I believe we belittle our people's struggle when we allow tiny splinter groups (ignored by the masses of working-class black folk) to monopolize our time. Our brothers and sisters are not stupid in that they have had a fair opportunity to evaluate most of the Marxist groups. They have found them trivial, irrelevant to their needs and lacking in substance. (R. Jones 1984)

This letter not only reveals my position on the intra-Africana Studies battles among integrationists, Marxists, and nationalists, but also displays my belief that Black Studies should work from the experiences of blacks to theory rather than the other way around. That (as I have already noted) this interpretation of divisions needs to be modified is demonstrated by the work of two nationalists, Maulana Karenga and Sterling Stuckey, who have both constructed ideologies that work from black folk experiences up.[4] The letter also reflects my conclusion that Afro-American Studies should develop in consultation with, rather than isolation from, the black community.

Congruent with my dream that Africana Studies theory should be built from the black community up rather than from the intellectual community down, was my idea that there should be no single master plan for African-American Studies departments. Each program, I argued, should have a clear, written statement of its purpose and what it sought to achieve.

> The thrust of the program ought to be tied directly to the history, interests, location, and facilities of the institution and the surrounding community. A statement of purpose for a community college black studies department ought to look very different from that made by a department located in a research oriented university offering the doctorate, and a program operating in or near a large black community ought to have a very different thrust from one located in a small New England town. (R. Jones 1977: 1)

Shortly after I became director of Afro-American Studies at Brown, I asked Harry Hughley, then a doctoral student in sociology and a graduate assistant in Afro-American Studies, to interview persons in and around Brown and the greater Providence area on Black Studies. He interviewed chairpersons, university librarians, persons in the fledgling computer center, community leaders, and students – 22 persons in all – and filed a three to six page report on each (R. Jones 1977: 9). In May 1973, Hughley submitted a summary of his report and a set of recommendations, suggesting that the program might wish to devote its resources

primarily to the social sciences and the humanities (R. Jones 1998: 5). As his written work demonstrated, Hughley was a hard-working, compulsive gatherer of data in the best sociological tradition, but he was not without a sense of humor. When asking about Egyptology, a separate department at Brown, Hughley was informed by a faculty member in no uncertain terms that "Egypt is not part of Africa!" Hughley deadpanned in surprised response, "Oh, have they moved it?"

After the circulation of a number of working papers and a series of meetings, "it was agreed the central thrust of the black studies program at Brown would be methodological rather than thematic and would involve students, community residents, and faculty" (R. Jones 1977: 9). Faculty involved in Afro-American Studies at the time believed Brown had a responsibility not just to faculty and students, "but to members of the greater Providence community in general, and the greater Providence black community in particular. Yet faculty misliked the relations between many black studies programs and community residents common at the time, a relationship in which persons came down from the campus to tell black citizens what was best for them. They sought instead a genuine partnership" (R. Jones 1977: 10). My voice had been heard in all this, but others involved in the program at the time agreed with me.

In looking back on these early developments in an interview conducted by Anne Diffily (then managing editor of the *Brown Alumni Monthly*), I said, "I knew that if we wanted to build a good, strong black studies program, we needed to build on our strengths in the university. Also, I was concerned with getting the most recent research out to the community. The problem was, you could bring Professor Whoop-Di-Doo, who is internationally known, to Brown for a lecture, and [black] people wouldn't come" (A. Diffily 1986: 20). If we were going to have a genuine dialogue between community and university and establish a means by which the community could regularly share its ideas with students, faculty, and staff, we needed to establish a forum to make that possible. My dream was twofold: "First, there was a need to develop a framework for an ongoing relationship with the black community, and second it was necessary by means of quality research to systematically expand knowledge of the black experience" (R. Jones 1982: 51). My nightmare was that, given the confusion and hostility of Brown's administration toward African-American Studies, we would not be able to achieve either of these things.

Back then, I was fresh from witnessing the damage that the concept of cultural deprivation had inflicted on black children in America's public schools. The concept, a manifestation of the covert and non-biological racism that emerged in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement, suggested that the reason Afro-American children did not do well in school was not racism, but rather that they were suffering from cultural deprivation. The term itself was both a logical and conceptual absurdity from an anthropological perspective, for how could an entire people be culturally deprived? John Gwaltney, a blind, black anthropologist – rattle these three labels about in your mind as you read – had great fun in regularly attacking the racist perspectives of anthropology in his column in *Notes from the Association*

of Black Anthropologists, titled, "Notes from the Natives." But most mainstream anthropologists found much in the term useful and some linked it to the culture of poverty, a construct developed by anthropologist Oscar Lewis. I saw it this way:

> Cultural deprivation thrived as a construct among social scientists in the 1960s because black folk were ignorant of the many scholarly articles, books, and research reports published on the topic, just as they had no idea that funding for those interested in cultural deprivation was generously supplied by private foundations and the federal government. The racist poison of cultural deprivation moved slowly from the writings of professors of psychology, sociology, and education, into the curricula of Schools of Education, into the teaching plans of teachers, and finally into the classrooms of black children. Only then did black parents discover cultural deprivation was but the most recent racist attack on black folk, and move to eliminate it as a force in their children's lives. (R. Jones 1983b: 24)

Black parents and their supporters killed cultural deprivation as dead as its forerunner, consciousness of kind, by 1980. But in the meantime, I asked myself, how many black lives had been ruined? My dream was to short circuit this ugly system whereby racists sitting in ivory towers could develop hostile concepts and use them to justify attacks on blacks. By means of Black Studies programs, black Americans could be let in on the ground floor of such racist edifices as cultural deprivation, and quickly topple them before they were built very high. At Brown, my colleagues and I agreed, this would mean bringing black town and gown together in an arena of mutual respect.

Those of us at Brown who sought to bring community and campus together were not alone in the African-American Studies movement. Alkalimat reminded his readers that the new field must be willing "to maintain relations with the broader aspects of the Black community [and] serve the policy end of contributing to solving the problems of Black people facing the entire society."[5] Writing in 1993, Douglas V. Davidson explained:

> The recently created Black Studies units established community programs which ranged from tutoring prospective Black college students to conducting courses and seminars on the Black experience free of charge to community residents. In addition, a variety of cultural enrichment and academic programs were offered. In sum, Black Studies programs/departments were actively working to bridge the traditionally accepted gap between "town and gown." (D. Davidson 1993: 37)

In a section titled "The Maturing of Black Studies," Bazel Allen wrote: "Thus if one conceptualizes the Black Studies movement not simply as a phenomenon restricted to college and university campuses, but also as a component of that broader Afro-American struggle for cultural recognition and self-determination symbolized by the Civil Rights Movement," it is easier to understand community oriented research projects (B. Allen 1984: 6). The students who founded African-American Studies, James Stewart observed, sought to "force a redefinition of the mission of institutions of higher education to deemphasize the isolation of

academe from the community" (J. Stewart 1984: 1). While some expressed confidence that it would be easy to accomplish this, others suggested that it would not be so easy to bridge the gulf between the "schools of thought that predominate black culture, those that are recognized by scholars and those employed by the masses" (T. Fuller III 1984: 2).

We recognized these differences and the attendant difficulties of bridging them at Brown, yet dreamed still of bringing the two together. We transformed this dream into reality by means of Rites and Reason, the black theatre at the university, established by my late friend and colleague George Houston Bass shortly after his arrival at Brown in 1970.[6] "Bass helped his students at Brown develop a research theatre of black myth and history, using their own resources to produce original performance works" (A. Diffily 1986: 19). But, as Bass explained in a 1986 interview:

> Although we were doing interesting experiments, the interpretations of Afro-American reality that we were doing were pretty much the same as others'. In the late 1960s and early 1970s black theatre artists were saying that they had a responsibility to interpret themselves and their reality. Rites and Reason was caught up in that fervor, but we began to recognize the need for some more systematic way of doing that. (Ibid)

We arrived at a way of achieving this goal by taking advantage of Rites and Reason's demonstrated ability not only to bring black people to campus to see its plays, but also to involve them in its work.

We also took advantage of the fledgling program's working relations with Afro-Americans in Providence. Congdon Street Baptist Church, as already indicated, had provided a home for the undergraduates who had walked out in 1968. Nichols, first chair of the program, had, in the first semester of his appointment, organized the "Community Relations Seminar," a course in which about 30 undergraduates enrolled. During the second term of the 1969–70 academic year, led by leaders from the black community, students explored issues, problems, and developments of concern to African Americans in Providence. Some of the leaders gave formal addresses, while others spoke informally. When the discussion turned to Brown, as it often did,

> Almost without exception, the leaders were suspicious of Brown and its motives, repeatedly warning students, who were both white and black, that the university had a long history of indifference, if not overt hostility to black Americans, and suggesting the struggle for an Afro-American Studies program was not the first battle blacks had fought with Brown, and predicting it would not be the last. They were correct. (R. Jones 1998: 2)

These early regular meetings with representatives of the community established a link that made it not especially difficult to involve black Providence in what we later came to call the research-to-performance method (RPM).

In the fall term of 1973 we began the research phase with an undergraduate seminar, "Oral History as an Index to Change," in which students used newspapers, public records, census data, and other documents to construct a history of relations between blacks and whites in Providence between 1920 and 1940. With the help of community agencies, and with support from a grant from the Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities, we also arranged for students to interview senior citizens, both white and black, who had lived in Rhode Island during the 1920s and 1930s. All interviews were audio taped and excerpts were played in meetings of the seminar. Bass participated in all meetings of the class and after it was completed took the interviews conducted by students, their working papers and summary papers, as well as raw data used by the students, and began work on his play, eventually titled *The Providence Garden Blues*. Bass and I planned to follow each performance with an audience discussion of the play, and Ferdinand Jones, a professor of psychology in the university, generously agreed to join us as our moderator. We had expected discussions much like those we led in our classes: heated, but at the same time restrained in the best tradition of academic debate. The play, however, touched a number of raw nerves, mostly those having to do with class, gender, religion, and politics. Our community did not enter these debates with academics and students quietly, and the discussions were often fierce and angry. This was not at all unusual for Rites and Reason as Bass's productions had a way of forcing people to see issues they preferred to have remain invisible. At one performance at Rhode Island College, many people walked out on the production (G. Bass 1975).

With regular grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities, and Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, plus a number of grants from state and local foundations – both public and private – we went on to refine the RPM. Major grants from the Ford Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Rockefeller Foundation helped significantly in this development, so that while we continued to work with students we were able to expand the process to include community folk and some professional actors. In 1983 I put it this way:

> In [the RPM] a team of researchers, playwrights, and directors explores a body of scholarly knowledge on black folk and transforms it in to a play. The black community of Greater Providence participates in this work in two ways. First, the scholars share their research with the community and invite its members to talk back, telling scholars, in effect, where they have been right in their interpretation of the black experience and where they have been wrong. Second, members of the community also attend the performances of the play and participate in discussion of the play itself and the research which informed it. (R. Jones 1983a: 7)

We had achieved and continued to maintain our goal of involving Rhode Island blacks in the work of Brown's Afro-American Studies program and involving our program in helping them to address and redress issues of concern to us all.[7]

Our nightmare in achieving all this remained the Brown administration. We were willing to raise outside funds, and despite considerable administrative obstruction were able to raise more than a million dollars in the period covered by this essay alone. Of course, this was "chump change" to an engineering department or a medical school, but it was extraordinary for a Black Studies program at the time. Even more extraordinary, it was raised without much help from the university's development office. *Not a single dime, not one nickel, not even a red cent was ever raised with the help of this office.* And I hereby challenge anyone at Brown to show me this statement is untrue. There were often individuals – Brown had then and still has a number of people who were not only more than competent but extraordinarily kind as well – in Development who were very helpful. But as one of them once sadly told me, "The work you are doing is innovative, multidisciplinary and involves the community. It also involves blacks. This stuff is fundable. But you are not a priority for Brown." During his tenure, Nichols prepared two major grants, one of which a major foundation signaled it was willing to fund, but Brown's administration delayed – whether due to malevolence or incompetence, I have already admitted I don't know – until the deadline for submission of the grant application had passed.

I admit that those of us in Afro-American Studies made a mistake in not publicly confronting the administration over its failure to support our grant applications. Instead, we went ahead and wrote them and finessed them through the internal process. We then tried to reinvent the wheel in dealing with funding sources when there were plenty of well-qualified folk over in Development to tell us how the wheel turned and just how to turn it. Moreover, this excessive reliance on grant writing, which we justified by saying at least the monies raised were those of Black Studies to do with as we wished, consumed a great deal of time. Brown has a development office so faculty can devote most of their time to teaching, research, and the development of innovative ideas while leaving the mechanics of finding money for all three to those trained and able to do it. Doing all our own grants and searching for those who might fund them also prevented us from devoting time to battling Brown to increase our regular budget. Eventually, the piper turned up looking for his paycheck as funding sources began to ask if what we were doing was so important "howcum" Brown's administration was not only not supporting it on its own, but only half-heartedly signing off on our applications. Unable to come up with a good answer to this most reasonable question – need I admit again I still don't know? – we began to lose traction in our pursuit of outside funds. Our earlier failure to confront the administration on this issue came back to bite us in the end. (Yes, this is an intended pun.)

Conclusion

I do not want to give the impression that the university was a hostile space. In common with most American institutions, Brown has never been quite the

wonderful place its public relations office makes it out to be. But it comes close. Most of our students are caring, sensitive, intelligent, and well informed. If I died in the midst of one of my undergraduate seminars there wouldn't be anyplace for me to go, because I'd already be in heaven. Of course, some students occasionally goof off and most of them – as all young people – don't know quite as much as they think they do, but they keep our faculty on their toes. I know colleagues at other colleges who have admitted they occasionally go to class unprepared, but I'd be afraid to do so at Brown, as I barely hold my own with my students when I am well- and even over-prepared. Like most Euro-Americans, I assume most of our white faculty still struggles to fully emancipate itself from racism, though I wish here to emphasize that I have seen virtually no empirical evidence of overt racism among my colleagues. During the years I directed Afro-American Studies, the program got by with a lot of help from its senior faculty friends. I *never* asked black faculty members Michael Harper (English), Ferdinand Jones (Psychology), and Charles Nichols (English) for help without getting it. Long before it was politically correct to do so, Afro-American Studies was strongly supported by white faculty members James Barnhill (English), John Emigh (Theatre), John Ladd (Philosophy), Philip Leis (Anthropology), Lewis Lipsett (Psychology), Martin Martel (Sociology), William McLoughlin (History), Giles Milhaven (Religious Studies), George Monterio (English), Robert Padden (History), Harold Pfautz (Sociology), and Newell Stultz (Political Science). Careful readers will note the absence of female names on this list. Don't be misled. This should not be taken to mean tenured white women were not supportive of Black Studies "back in the day," only that there were not many of them around. There were no tenured black women. Those who brought the lawsuit that resulted in a consent decree that brought 77 women to Brown's faculty had sought to have it extended to blacks, but the Brown administration successfully fought against that addition.[8] No, I don't know the reason for this opposition either. Readers who are now concluding that I don't know much about the inner workings of Brown's administration would be right.

In planning this essay, I intended to devote some time to our other major dream in the 1970s, a focus on what is now called the African diaspora, but I have run out of space. Nor have I space to examine our manifest failure to devote much systematic attention to womanist studies, the emergent field of ethnic studies, relations among blacks and other American minorities (this despite my own research on black/Native American relations), and the fierce, sometimes ugly, debates over whether Africana Studies should be regarded as a distinct discipline in itself or a multidisciplinary endeavor. As Brown's Black Studies unit was among the pioneers in what is now called the study of the African diaspora, however, I do wish to append a brief explanation of how this came about. In two words: Anani Dzidzienyo.[9]

Dzidzienyo, appointed in 1973 and director of Afro-American Studies from 1986 to 1992, was my first tenure track hire and one which I have never regretted. Whenever I reflect on my many failures as director of Afro-American Studies

I remind myself, "At least I was smart enough to hire Anani." If Bass was the heart of our involvement in the local community, Dzidzienyo was the heart of our involvement in diaspora studies. Born in Ghana, educated in the US and the UK, fluent in English, Eve, Fanti, French, Portuguese, and Spanish, with research interests in Brazil and Portuguese-speaking Africa, Dzidzienyo was crucial in the development of Brown's Portuguese and Brazilian Studies department as well as Africana Studies at Brown. When the High Chief of the Ashanti of Ghana visited Brazil, Dzidzienyo was asked by the Brazilian government to travel to Brazil not just to translate, but to inform Brazil's diplomats as to the protocols of dealing with this traditional ruler.

For Afro-American Studies, Dzidzienyo developed in the late 1970s two year-long courses, one called "African History and Society," the other "Blacks in Latin American History and Society." With Dzidzienyo's courses as models, Brown's Black Studies faculty next created two other year-long courses, "Afro-American History and Society" and "Caribbean History and Society." As the titles suggest, these four courses were multidisciplinary in approach and focused on the black past as well as on contemporary issues. In effect, they linked past to present. After considerable discussion, we then carefully inserted all eight courses between our year-long "Introduction to Afro-American Studies" course (we had already decided we needed to do more than the one-semester introduction to African American Studies that was then the norm) and our advanced courses. In retrospect, all this seems clever enough; the only dumb thing we did was to fail to publicize that we now had eight multidisciplinary courses on various geocultural areas of the black world. And, yeah, we failed to label our courses as studies of the African diaspora. When the rest of Africana Studies finally showed up on the African diaspora playing field not by just talking about it[10] – which had been true since the beginnings of the discipline – but by actually developing systematic courses, we were already there. The transformation of this diasporic dream into curricular reality is largely the result of efforts by Anani Dzidzienyo.[11]

Beyond the demonstrations by students of color in 1986, Afro-American Studies at Brown continued to evolve, becoming under the aggressive yet always reasonable leadership of Lewis Gordon, a department in 2001. We have continued our longstanding involvement with black Rhode Island by means of Rites and Reason and have successfully built on our early commitment to and interest in the African diaspora. We have, as I have tried to indicate above, considerably profited from the presence of Brown's brilliant, quirky undergraduates in our classes, and while Afro-American Studies has always enrolled graduate students, we are now moving formally into graduate studies. As I have also tried to indicate, our dreams in the early years were partly, perhaps largely and surely inevitably, shaped by the image of higher education held by others. Brown is no paradise, so I don't expect our nightmares will soon vanish, but now that we have more control of our own reality, we are dreaming different dreams.

Notes

1 To make for less fatiguing reading (and writing) I use the terms Africana Studies, African-American Studies, Afro-American Studies, and Black Studies interchangeably. I realize the use of one term rather than another has meaningful political and psychological significance for some, and one need not be a linguist to agree with them. While I mean them no disrespect, that is not the case here.

2 Yosef ben-Jochannan is also a leading intellectual in the Afro-Jewish community. See chapter 30, this volume – eds.

3 For a discussion of this three-way separation that focuses on its consequences for African-American Studies' textbooks, see R. Jones (2001).

4 Karenga, of course, has demonstrated this in the founding of Kwanzaa, a holiday he drew on black folk culture to create. It is now celebrated by millions of blacks in the United States. Stuckey, in *Slave Culture* (1987), traces the roots of black nationalism back to the slave experience, itself rooted in – as he sees it – the cultures of Central and West Africa.

5 Gerald A. McWhorter (1982: 51). Abdul Alkalimat continued his efforts to engage the black masses in dialogue with black scholars, "by any means necessary." The fifth edition of *Introduction to Afro-American Studies* (1984) carries the name of the University of Illinois on the title page, and was published with a grant from the Fund for Improvement of Post Secondary Education.

6 I will not attempt here to convey the impact of George Houston Bass (artistic director of Rites and Reason and Professor of Theatre and Afro-American Studies at the time of his death in 1990) on African-American theatre, Rhode Island, Brown, Afro-American Studies, and me. Some indication of his kindness, generosity of spirit, and contributions to the world-wide community of blacks may be found in the special double issue of the *Langston Hughes Review* (1990 IX: 1 and 2; 1991 X: 1 and 2) so professionally, generously, and lovingly edited by his longtime friends and colleagues Amritjit Singh and Gita Brown, and to which so many of George's students, friends, colleagues, and associates contributed. To know George was to love him and to work with him was to be encouraged and uplifted.

7 In 1987 George Houston Bass and I wrote a paper on this work, "Rites and Reason: A Theatre That Lets the People Speak," but we never published it.

8 Only one black woman was hired during the period of the consent degree, and she was hired by Afro-American Studies – eds.

9 Anani Dzidzienyo's discussion and reflections on the development of African diasporic studies are in chapter 32 of this volume.

10 Virtually all the Afro-American Studies journals launched in the late 1970s committed themselves to the exploration of the black experience beyond the borders of the United States. See, for example, editors' statements in the inaugural issues of *First World* (1977), *Studia Africana* (1977), *Umoja* (1977), *PASS: A Journal of the Black Experience* (1978), and *Review of African American Issues and Culture* (1978).

11 The interest Dzidzienyo and I shared in the diaspora in this early period is reflected in our jointly written "Africanity, Structural Isolation and Black Politics in the Americas" (Dzidzienyo and Jones 1977).

CHAPTER **FOUR**

Black Studies in the Whirlwind: A Retrospective View

Charlotte Morgan-Cato

The editors of this volume offered me the opportunity to submit a testimony about my experiences of thirty years' teaching in a Black Studies department. The language of testimony brings memories of giving witness, testifying when you have reached some kernel of truth resonating within yourself and hopefully with your listeners; conjuring notions of trials, tribulations, and defense.

I come as witness to thirty years in a teaching/learning enterprise which at its core challenged the US's definition of itself. A recent article in a national newspaper declared "many Americans didn't know that slavery and all its attendant horrors existed in the American North." The ignorance and/or continued avoidance of the centrality of race in American life forty years after the introduction of Black Studies on US campuses illustrates our failure to resolve the issues that brought Black Studies into existence. Today, in the wake of the World Trade Center attack of September 11, 2001, terrorism is now uppermost in the minds of many Americans and others around the world. Yet terrorism is nothing new on the North American continent. Native Americans and African Americans have long known terrorism on American soil. The horror stories of African-American people are intertwined within the lexicon of Black Studies. At its best, Black Studies promised to reshape the academic enterprise and gave rise to other equally powerful programs, including those of other ethnic and gender studies. I came to Black Studies from the study of British colonial history at the University of Chicago and African Studies at Columbia University. However, it was only through the lens of a Pan-Africanist perspective and through teaching in Africa that I was able to place my earlier studies into proper context. What Du Bois noted about the omissions and distortions within the academy in the 1930s was equally true in the 1960s.

I was born and raised in a working-class community on Chicago's south side during the 1940s and l950s. I learned about African-American history from my family, the *Chicago Defender* (the local Black newspaper), and the books selected for me by the youth librarian at the Abraham Lincoln Center Library. I still recall the pride with which my mother introduced me to poet laureate of Illinois and

Pulitzer Prize winner Gwendolyn Brooks, who lived around the corner from my relatives in the Forestville neighborhood. I was unaware that the community in which I lived was perceived negatively as a ghetto until I entered college. At the University of Chicago a formal course on African-American history was not offered until my last quarter, with the arrival of the venerable John Hope Franklin. By this time, however, I had become alienated from American history and more fascinated with the colonial histories of British Commonwealth territories.

Upon graduation, I taught high school social studies just as the "Africa Decade" began and the Civil Rights Movement was gaining strength. Although my classroom was by no means a battlefield, several pre-college teaching encounters in Chicago and in Africa during the 1960s presaged what was to come. At one predominantly white north side school, my teaching of the "Problems of American Democracy" course was too much for some students and parents, many of whom were recent European émigrés who questioned my political beliefs. (At that time all Chicago teachers had to sign a loyalty oath.) After being monitored for several weeks by teaching supervisors (who I naively assumed routinely visited new teachers), I was told by my principal to avoid trouble by making certain "Americans come out on top." African-American students, on the other hand, tended to criticize the overly optimistic assessments of American life; their vehement and challenging insistence that the textbook view of American democracy was "just not true" startled and surprised me after teaching predominantly white students. Students again opened my eyes when I was in Africa during the late 1960s teaching Commonwealth history in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, at a school funded by the Agency for International Development to teach men and women members of the African National Congress (ANC), the South West Africa Peoples Organization (SWAPO), the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), and other liberation movements. The presence of these students studying together for a common goal represented a nascent Pan-Africanism for me. In addition, they followed closely the progress of Blacks in the United States. When news of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was broadcast, classes were canceled and bulletin boards and blackboards were scrawled with graffiti proclaiming "The capitalists have killed Dr. King." My classes subsequently became seminars on how African Americans and the Civil Rights Movement could survive the tragedy of King's death. Some months later, activist Kwame Ture, then known as Stokely Carmichael, visited the campus and expounded on the application of Black Power in an arousing and provocative speech which encouraged the students to challenge the school administration on a variety of issues. Into this vortex stepped a noted British scholar, who gave an invited lecture on African resistance movements. Students listened in stunned silence to his erudite exposition on resistance movements and the reasons for their failure. During the question period a young woman stood up and cried out: "Why are you always telling us about the wars we lost? Why don't you tell us about the ones we won?" His unsatisfactory answers further alienated the students and he made a quick exit. As history department chair, I realized my slavish adherence to the prescribed curriculum had to be

modified; passing examinations could not preclude the acquisition of meaningful knowledge. These clashes between the text or "master narrative" and the lived reality of students' lives, as well as my own, laid the foundation for how I would view Black Studies when I returned to the United States, more aware than before of the bias in my own training, which had been based on the Department of State approach to Africa.

The other great influence on my teaching philosophy was my participation in the African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA), a national organization of "scholar activists" formed in 1968, whose approach to the study of Africa and the African diaspora was deeply influenced by the Civil Rights Movement, the growing body of literature reassessing the impact of Africa on the world scene, and the quest for Black academic leadership in research, interpretation, and development. While living in Tanzania, my only sources for information about the Black Studies movement in America were overseas news reports, occasional letters, and tourists. AHSA filled the void. It claimed leadership in the Pan-Africanist Black Studies movement and provided many of the staff for the first wave of Black Studies efforts in Northern colleges. Many were Africanists who proposed "using African history to effect a world union of African people to restore the cultural, economic, and political life of African peoples everywhere" (J. H. Clarke 1995). Their ideological base was unapologetically Pan-Africanist, with a goal which reached beyond mere unity and which looked to use heritage as an instrument for our liberation. John Henrik Clarke – essayist, scholar activist, founding member of AHSA, and chairman of Black and Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College (a sister institution of Lehman College) – expressed it this way: "History is a clock that people use to tell their political time of day: It is a compass they use to find themselves on the map of human geography." AHSA became for me a sort of compass determining my approach to Black Studies: the organization served as a postgraduate institute where I found mentors, teachers, and lifelong colleagues, met and interacted with the major academic figures of the Pan-African world, and observed the numerous political challenges to Black Studies as a movement.

The challenges to Black Studies would exist in microcosm at Lehman College, one of twenty units of the City University of New York, where I taught for thirty years. Lehman is an urban commuter college situated in a bucolic setting in the northwest Bronx. Once the uptown branch of Hunter College, Lehman became an independent unit in 1968. Its Black Studies department, like many other Black Studies departments, was born in conflict – a result of successful student initiatives which challenged university complacency and attacked the value of higher education's traditional exclusion of students from curriculum and administrative matters. The general story of student protests leading to the establishment of Black Studies programs is well documented. Inherent in far too many of these efforts are confusion of motives and faulty analysis of the problem. In the case of Lehman, early student efforts were relatively modest. In the fall of 1968, Black and Hispanic student leaders began to press the education department for fuller

implementation of a new teacher education curriculum designed to acquaint prospective teachers with the history and culture of the Black and Hispanic population of New York City. The effort was deemed necessary since the City University of New York produced most of the city's teachers, but until the advent of Open Admissions enrolled and graduated relatively few minority students. The newly enrolled students asked for oversight on course content, input into faculty hiring, and mandatory courses on ethnicity and intergroup relations for education majors. Disillusioned by the foot-dragging of administrative staff and entrenched faculty who claimed a "shortage of qualified applicants" and made other excuses, and emboldened by the success of students at Cornell and Columbia, Lehman's radical student leadership escalated their demands to include an autonomous Black Studies administrative division, offering not only a major, but also authorized to act on curriculum content concerning the Black experience across disciplines. After more than a year of strikes, scuffles, demonstrations, shutdowns, and lock-ins, Black Studies and Puerto Rican Studies were approved as departments.

Eighteen years later, in 1988, at a conference celebrating the anniversary of the college, a former student, now a professor in another university, recalled the intentions of the student organizers to facilitate a process whereby more empathetic teachers might be developed. The student organizers were also aware of the momentous changes sweeping the country and were fully conscious of their participation in this movement. They met off campus in groups, and one Sunday afternoon in Harlem more than 150 persons gathered in a dance hall to plan the successful strategy which forced university administrators to capitulate. On the chosen day, all involved Black and Hispanic students left their classes, exited the buildings, and chain-locked building entrances. The faculty were locked in a lecture hall where they were debating the establishment of Black Studies and Puerto Rican Studies. The programs were approved, and the departments were established within six months. The students failed to realize, however, that the traditional solutions (new departments, new courses, new teachers) would not guarantee their goals: empathetic, committed teachers for their children.

The urban Black student brought to the college experience a sense of self often inaccessible to traditional images of the "college student." In this sense, Black Studies exposed the weakness of much of the college enterprise, especially challenging the university's over-reliance on "objective standards" for evaluating the teaching/learning encounter. Prior to the arrival of Black Studies on the US college scene, "objective" pedagogy too often failed to communicate the recognition, respect, even reverence for Black culture students expected from their teachers. Black Studies found traditional methods of academic discourse inadequate for judging what happens in the classroom and exposed the university's failure to grapple with the questions of "learning how to know and knowing how to learn." Ironically, the mandatory ethnicity courses were never imposed on the education majors and the Black professors hired in that first flush of victory have disappeared; the problems of New York's schools remain as daunting as ever.

The academic transformation sought by the students proved elusive. University traditions, curriculum politics, institutional racism, financial crisis, and New York City politics all contrived to subvert their deepest intentions. Though never officially acknowledged, the Black Studies department took upon itself an additional function. Its faculty became unofficial ombudspersons for Black students who took grievances to the department and expected advice and a remedy. A 1973 study reported that students wanted "special help and understanding" and expected their needs to be given priority. We were expected to be more involved in Black students' campus life and sometimes found ourselves involved in their private lives as well – speaking at churches, participating in community activities, and attending weddings. I witnessed the initiation of one of my students into the Santeria priesthood. At her home in the South Bronx, I was warmly welcomed by a student's proud parents as "la Professor" and became immersed in the rituals of a religious tradition made even more authentic by drummers from Nigeria. We were "brothers and sisters" (they didn't call us "professor" in the early days) participating in a great academic adventure. We were the one point of contact for those students unprepared for the traditional college experience and in whom feelings of alienation abounded. This solidarity between faculty and students was the "most satisfying aspect of being in Black Studies," a view observed by many who noted a new community had been created on the campus.

How we taught was as important as what we taught. My own best teaching was influenced by the survival of "call and response traditions" in Black oral communication. Students have remarked that my "finest hours" were on the days when I "preached," drawing upon my personal experiences, life in the Black community, and a passion differing from that of the usual classroom lecture. But I also had lesser days during my first years in the department when students simply rebelled, telling me I was "too structured, too demanding, and too white" in my approach. I learned to use group work that went beyond the written essay for assessment. Over time I have had students express extraordinary creativity. I also had to learn that in Black Studies, student pain was often just below the surface and emotions could break free. Some students came to Black Studies expecting academic therapy for real life problems. Students of mixed heritage sought to discover their identities – identities often lost in rancorous and conflicting statements from both sides of the racial divide. Some used Black Studies as a place to vent long-bottled hostilities against "the system." Expressivity and good student faculty bound us together. It was not at all unusual to hear a student say, "I wouldn't miss my Black Studies class."

In the beginning, our course selections emphasized Africa, influenced no doubt by the specialties of the new faculty hires, the high profile of newly independent Africa, and the intensity of support for liberation struggles in Guinea-Bissau and Southern Africa, most notably South Africa. Our "Introduction to Black Studies," for example, was a survey course in African history and politics well served by our New York location. African and Caribbean diplomats based

at the United Nations lectured frequently, as did representatives of the liberation movements. The rallying cry "Portuguese wine is African Blood!" was well known among the students, as we regularly hosted African scholars, Black nationalist leaders, radical public intellectuals, and local political figures who espoused the Pan-African cause. Our Black student body became more international, reflecting increased immigration from Africa and the Caribbean.

Ironically, at the height of our strength in the 1970s, student interest in the movement of international liberation was cut short as political forces within the city and the university ended free tuition and began the dismantling of Open Admissions. All the city colleges briefly suspended operations and began to institute draconian changes. Black Studies survived at Lehman with a greatly reduced faculty – from a high of twelve full time to a low of three.

The changed political climate of the 1980s supported a back to basics movement, which at Lehman resulted in the imposition of a core curriculum designed to ensure students acquired a common knowledge base, thereby reasserting the primacy of the traditional disciplines and restricting the availability of Black Studies courses. Although the department course offerings were severely attenuated and the faculty seconded to the core program, unexpected rewards ensued. Our non-Black enrollment increased. More white and Asian-American students began to enroll in department courses after their exposure to Black Studies faculty. The core courses became recruiting tools.

Meanwhile, the economic crisis facilitated other shifts. The three "c's" of consumerism, careerism, and computer assisted instruction infected all of the campuses, especially the community colleges where the focus on getting a job revealed deep gaps in the teaching/learning enterprise. Students seduced by these three "c's" moved away from activist postures to the safety of the marketplace. They came to Black Studies asking not what they could do for their communities, but rather, what they could do to get a good job. Cultural amnesia developed: memories of the 1960s faded, and fewer students acknowledged the impact of racism. Previously, students were familiar with the names Nyerere, Nkrumah, Mandela, Garvey, and Queen Nzinga. In the 1970s, students knew about the ancient civilizations, particularly Ghana and Egypt. A diagnostic essay would recall assessments about the enormous wealth of Africa and its heritage (often hodge-podge and ill-informed, but positive). By the 1980s, when accounts of Africa's poverty, starvation, and tribal warfare dominated the headlines, first essays revealed a sense of despair and loss. Our students were less academically prepared, less well informed, and more naive. Films depicting the attacks on Civil Rights protestors in Birmingham, Alabama, were confused with South African situations. One student once intensely questioned my personal accounts of segregation and discrimination, insisting that I was exaggerating and being extreme. Some students were even unaware of the existence of the Atlantic slave trade to the West Indies. They assumed the current Black population had always been present. I still recall my surprise and chagrin when I read one student's response to a museum field trip. This particular student missed the interpretive

lecture and guided tour and visited on his own. He wrote in response to my query about what he learned from the experience: “I really am glad I took this course in Black Studies. It has answered so many of my questions. For example, I learned there really is a Cupid and not only that he exists, but that he is Black. Just think, it’s a Black man that shoots arrows that make people fall in love.” (The student was evidently referring to the diorama depicting life among the forest people of the Congo).

For Lehman, the last decade of the twentieth century ushered in a momentous archeological find from the slave period in New York City. CUNY, in a series of mishaps, failed to appreciate the cultural significance of the find: a slave burial ground uncovered in downtown Manhattan at the site of a proposed federal office complex. While anthropologists and Black community activists were securing a court injunction to stop the excavation of the site, old city maps appeared suggesting that as many as ten to twenty thousand burials would have taken place there. Meanwhile, approximately four hundred sets of skeletal remains were transported to the anthropology department at Lehman for analysis by the university’s prime academic forensic team. The remains were secreted away in dingy locker cabinets with little ceremony and treated as “specimens.” The Black Studies department was alerted to the situation by an African-American administrative assistant who decried what she saw as a lack of respect for “our ancestors” by white professors intent on profiting professionally. A series of public events coordinated by the department honored the remains and ensured their removal to a specially prepared site on campus where Yoruba and Islamic religious rituals were conducted and the public invited for quiet meditation. Much sentiment was, however, against any further examination of the remains. Some activists rallied support for immediate reinterment, charging that Black people were being enslaved and exploited all over again. The department’s intervention and placement on the committee charged with oversight failed to alleviate the distrust, while nationalists from the Harlem and Brooklyn communities came together to further embarrass the department. The remains were subsequently taken to Howard University, where the activist community was assured Black leadership in a Black institution would do a truer, more meaningful analysis. The loss of the remains and the loss of community support exposed the department to educational and other political powerbrokers.

Community involvement has both risks and rewards. A more positive result came out of the department’s work with a group of women in the Laconia section of the Bronx. Taking its cue from the work of the philosopher and educator Paulo Friere in Brazil and Guinea-Bissau, the department’s efforts were highly successful. In the aftermath of a highly publicized domestic tragedy, neighborhood women (they were local business owners, youth workers, retired teachers, daycare supervisors, and concerned residents) asked the local state literacy office for help for “our young women in our neighborhood.” My colleagues and I in Black Studies and Women’s Studies collaborated with these women for almost two years to produce a series of free seminars entitled “Stress in Your Face.”

The neighborhood women designed the curriculum, publicized the venture, and co-led the workshops along with faculty. The seminars were highly successful and outstripped the limited resources of Black Studies and Women's Studies. We reached our target population of young, black, single mothers, and more – married women, working women, retirees, and college students, Black and Hispanic. Though underwritten by a small grant from the American Association of University Women, much of the work was voluntary on the part of faculty and the community. The seminar location, a daycare center (offered generously to us after state budget cuts foreclosed free use of the literacy center), was donated by the local officer of the National Council of Negro Women. It was a case of Black Studies and Women's Studies in action, providing people with information and resources to better their lives and empower their communities. Yet it could not be sustained. I could not "keep my day job" and continue to administer what was, in effect, an evening community school. The needs were too great and the resources too few. We were overwhelmed.

The same constraints that hobbled the existence of our community program continue to affect the college. Rounds of budget decreases, tuition increases, and staff layoffs periodically occur. The department, though small, continues. Course offerings have been secured through cross-listing and sharing of faculty, thus bringing integration to the department. Indeed, the applicants hoping to follow me on the faculty reflect a great diversity in ethnicity, race, and disciplinary interests.

Black Studies has made a difference. It opened the door for other approaches to the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge. It challenged conventional wisdom and questioned North America's knowledge base. It lifted a generation moored in an abyss of "mis-education." I wholeheartedly testify to the continuing need for it, but the milieu for Black Studies has changed. Our Pan-African vision remains just that – a vision. The powerful force the African-American public could be for Africa and the Caribbean stalled with the end of apartheid in South Africa. The Black Studies movement was a shining moment and its seeds exist in the hearts of Black communities. The rich, private tradition of Black scholarship exemplified by Arthur A. Schomburg, John Henrik Clarke, William Leo Hansberry, Yosef ben-Jochannan, and any number of known and "unknown bards" is being emulated in small neighborhood centers in communities of color around the world. I closed out my career at the university confident that Black Studies will always resurface in some form or another, taking assurance from the words of the great Marcus Garvey, who declared at the end of his career: "Look for me in the whirlwind."

CHAPTER **FIVE**

From the Birth to a Mature Afro-American Studies at Harvard, 1969–2002

Martin Kilson

Now seventy-one years old and with some forty years of academic association with Harvard University, where I've taught courses in the fields of African Politics, Afro-American Politics, and American Ethnic Politics, I rank among the old guard of African-American scholars who were participants or midwives at the birth of Black Studies curricula on American college campuses – both at Black Colleges and White ones – in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Though the number of African-American academics present at White campuses in the founding era of Black Studies was extremely small – seldom more than two or three at any given institution – the scholarly abilities of these African-American academics were at the highest level. Among that early old guard sector of African-American academics on White campuses during the founding era of Black Studies, I think of the following: John Hope Franklin (historian) at the University of Chicago; Kenneth B. Clark (psychologist) at Brooklyn College; recently deceased Hylan Lewis (sociologist) at Brooklyn College; John Aubrey Davis (political scientist) at City College; Adelaide Cromwell Hill (sociologist) at Stanford University; recently deceased John Blassingame (historian) at Yale University; Charles Davis (literary studies) at Yale University; Clyde Ferguson (international law) at Rutgers University; C. Sylvester Whitaker (political scientist) at Princeton University; John Ralph Willis (historian) at Princeton University; Clement Cottingham (political scientist) at Swarthmore College; George Bond (anthropologist) at Columbia University; Elliot Skinner (anthropologist) at Columbia University; Charles V. Hamilton (political scientist) at Columbia University; Hollis Lynch (historian) at Columbia University; Ewart Guinier (civil rights lawyer) at Columbia University; Ralph Smith (civil rights lawyer) at the University of Pennsylvania; William Shack (anthropologist) at the University of California at Berkeley; John Bracey (historian) at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst; William Julius Wilson (sociologist) at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst; and Otey Scruggs (historian) at Syracuse University.

If there were anything like a common perspective toward new Black Studies curricula held by the small group of African-American academics on White campuses – the old guard, if you will – it related to a belief that new faculty members teaching the Black Studies curricula should be selected out of established humanities and social science disciplines – literary studies, English, philosophy, history, political science, sociology, economics, etc. After all, a large number, if not all, of the African-American academics mentioned above who were present at the birth of Black Studies on White campuses were *de facto* scholars in the field of Afro-American Studies and Black Studies (including African Studies at Harvard), but pursued these subjects within established humanities and social science disciplines. For example, Kenneth Clark studied African-American psychological patterns; John Hope Franklin studied African-American history, as did John Blassingame; John Aubrey Davis studied African-American politics, as did Charles V. Hamilton; George Bond, Elliot Skinner, and William Shack studied traditional African cultures, and so on and so forth.

Accordingly, in operational terms related to the structuring of faculty for new Black Studies curricula on White campuses, an early issue of conflict on some of those campuses between the established faculty and the activist Black students who initiated thrusts for Black Studies curricula revolved around the question of appointing faculty for Black Studies jointly with established academic departments or solely within the new Black Studies or Afro-American Studies program or department. The situation surrounding the quest by activist Black students for an Afro-American Studies curriculum at Harvard during 1968 and 1969 was significantly shaped by this issue.

It happened that during the struggle for an Afro-American Studies curriculum at Harvard during that school year, I was the only African-American faculty member in Harvard College, having been appointed an assistant professor in political science in 1964, voted to tenure in the department of government in 1968, and officially appointed a full professor in the spring term of 1969. From the start of my teaching at Harvard as a lecturer in 1962 and in my subsequent appointments, I was hardly a typical faculty member. That is, in addition to being African American, I was a leftist intellectual, a Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam War activist, interracially married, and engaged with the activist sector of Harvard's Black students as faculty advisor to their association, the Harvard African and Afro-American Students Association (HAAASA), and its journal, the *Harvard Journal of Negro Affairs*, which I helped to organize and pay the printing bills between 1963 and 1965.

Accordingly, when the president of Harvard, Nathan Pusey, and the dean of the faculty, Franklin Ford, appointed the Faculty Committee on African and Afro-American Studies – chaired by department of economics chair Professor Henry Rosovosky – it was no problem for me to accept membership on that committee, functioning thereby as the only African-American member. Other members were Adam Curle (School of Education); Daniel Fox (department of history); George W. Goethals (social relations department); Alan Heimert

(English department); H. Stuart Hughes (department of history); Gary Marx (social relations department); and John Whiting (anthropology department). The Faculty Committee on African and Afro-American Studies – popularly dubbed the "Rosovosky Committee" – commenced its work in summer and fall 1968 and submitted its report in February 1969. Officially called *Report of the Faculty Standing Committee on African and Afro-American Studies*, it supported the establishment of an Afro-American Studies curriculum at Harvard. I voted for the committee's proposal and also drafted a section of its report.

The leaders of HAAASA, however, differed with a feature of the committee's report relating to the academic organization of a new Afro-American Studies curriculum: the feature favoring the joint appointment of an Afro-American Studies faculty with established academic departments. They favored instead a faculty appointed solely to teach the Afro-American Studies curriculum. HAAASA leaders were more skillful at lobbying the broader Harvard faculty on this issue than was the Faculty Committee on African and Afro-American Studies, and a second vote by the Harvard faculty in April 1969 established an Afro-American Studies curriculum with its own departmental machinery for appointments. At that meeting, I and all but one of the members of the Faculty Committee on African and Afro-American Studies continued to support the committee's position on joint appointments of an Afro-American Studies faculty. The faculty member who broke with the committee was Professor Alan Heimert. As the history of those hectic and sometimes testy events surrounding the establishment of Harvard's Afro-American Studies curriculum in spring term of 1969 evolved by word-of-mouth around the country among African-American students and academics, my position in the formal establishment of Harvard's Afro-American Studies curriculum got totally distorted, from the actual one of supporting Harvard's Afro-American Studies curriculum to a mythical one of opposing it.

Interpreting My Role in the Birth of Harvard's Afro-American Studies

In his invitational letter to me to contribute an essay to this volume, my dear friend Professor Lewis Gordon remarked: "You've been mentioned a few times by several [invited] authors, some in terms of your initial objection to there being such [Black Studies] programs, so it would be good for your contribution . . . to state your early and subsequent relationship [through to the present] to African-American Studies."

Now, as I have already demonstrated, I supported the establishment of the Afro-American Studies curriculum at Harvard and actually drafted part of the Faculty Committee's report that proposed this curriculum. However, some HAAASA students vociferously disagreed with my support of the Faculty Committee's proposal for the joint appointment of the faculty to teach Harvard's Afro-American Studies curriculum, and this disagreement with me gained broad

recognition among activist Black students and Black faculty on other campuses involved in the quest for Black Studies curricula. As participants in groundbreaking historical events like those associated with the birth of Black Studies on White campuses, one cannot expect to control the evolving interpretations of one's role, and I understood this fully and lived with it.

Being rather easy-going about ideological and intellectual contests, while also taking my own positions seriously, I got used to Black students and faculty I encountered while speaking at colleges around the country approaching me and saying, "Why did you oppose Afro-American Studies at Harvard, Professor Kilson?" I would proceed to explain that I supported an Afro-American Studies curriculum at Harvard in 1968–9 and that the notion that I opposed it was a myth. Sometimes my response convinced questioners, sometimes it did not. Perhaps the most annoying experience I've had with someone claiming I opposed Afro-American Studies at Harvard was in 1995, when the major journal on African-American academic patterns, the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (*JBIHE*), carried an article that trumpeted my Harvard colleague Henry Louis Gates's achievements in strengthening Afro-American Studies at Harvard. In trumpeting Gates's achievements, the author of the article – one Richard Benjamin, a freelance writer – attempted to diminish the participation of other African-American academics at Harvard in regard to the status of the Afro-American Studies department prior to Gates's arrival in 1990, such as previous Afro-American Studies chairs (Ewart Guinier, Eileen Southern, and Nathan Huggins). As the African-American faculty member at the founding stage of Harvard's Afro-American Studies program in 1969, I was also diminished in the *JBIHE* article. Published in autumn 1995 under the title "The Revival of Afro-American Studies at Harvard," the *JBIHE* article observed that "[Professor Martin] Kilson vigorously opposed the establishment of black studies [at Harvard]."

As noted above, this account of my position on the founding of Afro-American Studies at Harvard was broadcast from the early 1970s onward. Nonetheless, I thought that such blatant nonsense appearing in the pages of a serious organ like the *JBIHE* warranted a strong response from me, and I sent one. Though a booster of Henry Gates, the editor of *JBIHE*, Robert Slater, nonetheless recognized that Richard Benjamin's comment was totally false and published my long reply on the first page of the spring 1996 issue of the journal. My sharply worded reply to Benjamin's false claim that I opposed the founding of Afro-American Studies at Harvard read in part as follows:

> According to Richard Benjamin's strange grasp of historical events, "Kilson vigorously opposed the establishment of black studies [at Harvard]." This is absolutely false; you'd think I was absurd. But, for Mr. Benjamin's information, I am not absurd. I was inevitably in favor of the establishment of black studies at Harvard in [the] 1969–1970 period. Why? Because of my scholarly work and also my intellectual and ideological character. My commitment to the realities of black folks –

here and worldwide – commenced with my Harvard doctoral dissertation and has evolved through more than 100 published articles and also conference papers, as well as some seven books that I have edited and co-authored, one solely authored, and several additional book manuscripts in progress. My ideological makeup is progressive or leftist, my own pragmatic and independent variant of being leftist. I would have been absurd to oppose black studies at Harvard or any other place. I am not absurd.

Moreover, Mr. Benjamin could have easily averted his false statement through a simple procedure: reading well and correctly. A correct reading of the *Report of the Faculty Committee on African and Afro-American Studies*, which was presented in February 1969, reveals immediately that I along with all other members of the standing committee . . . supported the establishment of black studies at Harvard. For Mr. Benjamin's information, the issue of the establishment of black studies was, therefore, never an issue at all. The issue in dispute between the standing committee . . . on the one hand, and the Association of Black Students at that time, on the other hand, was how to package [academically] a curriculum of Afro-American Studies at Harvard.

My point here, then, is that anyone who seriously observed Black-related issues around Harvard during the 1960s onward would be aware of the progressive role that I played in Black-related events, that dates back in fact to my graduate school years at Harvard during the 1950s. I have myself documented this role in a chapter on my intellectual career, which appears in my forthcoming book, *The Making of Black Intellectuals: Studies on the African-American Intelligentsia*. But readers of this chapter don't have to rely simply on my testament. For, interestingly enough, one of the contemporary conservative Black intellectuals of importance, Professor Randall Kennedy of the Harvard Law School faculty, has also testified to my progressive activist role. Although Kennedy is a believer in the bizarre position propagated by Thomas Sowell, Shelby Steele, Alan Keyes, Kwame Anthony Appiah, and other conservative Black intellectuals that Black-ethnic activist mobilization amounts to "racialism" and is thus extremist and illegitimate in American democratic society, at least he (Kennedy) got the basic facts right about my progressive activist role in regard to Black-related events at Harvard in the 1950s and 1960s. Randall Kennedy's characterization appeared in his introduction to *Blacks at Harvard: A Documentary History of the African-American Experience at Harvard and Radcliffe* (Sollors, Titcomb, and Underwood 1993), in which I also have a chapter:

One defender of the new [Harvard] African and Afro-American [Students] Association [during the early 1960s] was Martin L. Kilson, a lecturer in the Department of Government [1962–4] who subsequently became the first tenured black member of the Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Another of the Association's backers was Archie Epps III, a first-year graduate student [in religious studies] who later became the Dean of Students at Harvard College . . . *From his years as a graduate student in the 1950s, when he helped to found the Harvard Society for Minority Rights* [then Harvard's NAACP chapter], *to his years in the*

> *1980s and 1990s as the senior black faculty member within Arts and Sciences, Kilson has been involved in all of the many racial controversies that have surfaced on campus* . . . In "Harvard and the Small-Towner" [Kilson's chapter in *Blacks at Harvard*], Kilson continues to defend [his] early "bid to give vigorous intellectual formation to students' Black-ethnic awareness," contending that the [African and Afro-American Students] Association was "Black-skewed" but "not ethnocentrically Black-skewed." Kilson gives no hint as to how he justifies his confusion; after all, insofar as the student group at issue delimits its membership on a racial basis, it seems that the group could appropriately be labeled as "ethnocentric." . . . For historians of ideas, the task of the future will be to identify the line separating what Kilson defends as pragmatic "ethnic militancy" on Harvard's campus from what he condemns as "ethnocentrism." (Kennedy 1993; emphasis added)

I don't have space here to correct Kennedy's intellectually lightweight understanding of the generic issue of activism by ethnic blocs in American political culture, but let me assert that Kennedy's belief that such activism in cultural and political affairs is illegitimate is mistaken. Meanwhile, I want to reiterate that Kennedy does get correct my longstanding progressive activist role in Black-related events during my long association with Harvard College, even though Kennedy dislikes the role I played.

As I have already indicated, my role in Black-related events at Harvard has always been calibrated along my own leftist-freethinker, skeptical lines. And during the quest to found an Afro-American Studies curriculum at Harvard during those years, my support of HAAASA's struggle for this curriculum was similarly calibrated in my own leftist-freethinker terms. Accordingly, I, like most of the old guard African-American academics on White campuses in this period (Kenneth Clark, John Hope Franklin, John Aubrey Davis, St. Clair Drake, John Blassingame, Charles V. Hamilton, etc.), favored filtering faculty for new Black Studies curricula through established disciplinary departments in the humanities and social sciences, through joint appointments. The activist Black students favored sole appointments by the new Black Studies programs or departments. But in favoring joint appointments neither I nor other old guard Black academics in this period were opposing Black Studies as such, and as already mentioned I was in fact a firm supporter of the Harvard Afro-American Studies curriculum as a member of the faculty committee that initially designed this curriculum.

As the early Afro-American Studies or Black Studies was put in place and got underway in the fall of 1969 into the early 1970s, I did not hesitate to criticize instances of extremist modes of Black-ethnic activism in these programs because I learned from my mentors among second-generation progressive-activist, African-American academics (e.g., St. Clair Drake, Horace Mann Bond, Hylan Lewis, L. D. Reddick, John Aubrey Davis, and others) that, as pragmatic leftist Black intellectuals, we had an obligation to avoid xenophobic and chauvinist forms of Black-ethnic activism, just as we were dedicated in opposition to xenophobic and chauvinist forms among White American groups. Thus, I articulated this outlook in several journal and newspaper articles.

For example, one of the first such articles I published began as a keynote address to the NAACP National Board at the organization's first annual conference held in the South since World War II, in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1969. The address, which strongly supported evolving Black Studies curricula on White campuses but cautioned activist Black students against xenophobic Black-ethnic assertions, was published in *The Crisis* (October 1969). A summing-up piece articulating my variant of leftist-freethinker support of Black Studies was published as "Reflections on Structure and Content in Black Studies," in the *Journal of Black Studies* (March 1973), in what was the third year of that journal's existence when it was edited by its founder, Molefi Asante, though then he was named Arthur L. Smith and was head of the Center of Afro-American Studies at the University of California at Los Angeles.[1] Other articles supportive of activist Black students while cautioning against xenophobic or chauvinist modes of Black activism appeared in the *Harvard Crimson*. Some of these articles also cautioned against ethnic activist patterns among Jewish-American students that exhibited xenophobic tendencies, such as my article "Cosmopolitan Imperative," *Harvard Crimson* (February 25, 1985), "Ethnic Militancy," *Harvard Crimson* (October 1, 1975), and "Jews and Harvard," *Harvard Crimson* (November 5, 1975). In regard to such articles, an official of HAAASA, Godfred Otuteye from Ghana, remarked in the Harvard Yearbook for 1969 that they had some influence among Harvard's Black students in this period. According to Otuteye , "When Professor Martin Kilson writes a letter to the *Crimson* that disagrees with statements by black student leaders there is a wild commotion. 'What do you think: Certainly Kilson must be right'" (G. Otuteye 1993: 423).

As Otuteye's observation suggests, there was some testiness surrounding the occasional debates I had with activist Black students about the limits of chauvinist modes of Black-ethnic assertion. I do not think, however, that I was particularly concerned with "winning the debate," but rather I focused more on the intellectual character and quality of the contest. I felt that if I left behind a residue of cogent, well thought out, and reflective discourse on issues related to the evolving Black-ethnic assertion and activism among Harvard's Black students, then that was "victory" enough for me. In matters of keenly argued and fissured issues like the founding of Afro-American Studies at Harvard and other predominantly White campuses in the late 1960s and early 1970s, I have taken my intellectual cue from one of that second-generation cohort of African-American social scientists trained in the 1920s and 1930s who was one of my major intellectual mentors, the late Professor St. Clair Drake. Professor Drake once remarked to me that he liked being an engaged leftist-freethinker Black intellectual "because," he said, "I like a serious argument." Well, I too like a serious intellectual argument, and as those who follow my intellectual career are well aware, I have engaged in a lot of them and still do in my elderly years. Furthermore, when one engages regularly in testy intellectual combat, one can expect some brickbats, so to speak. I have often been "dissed" and sometimes "cursed" by my critics. On the other hand, sometimes my critics just get my

thinking all wrong (out of bad intellectual habits on their part, I should add), as with the way my actual position of supporting the establishment of Afro-American Studies at Harvard during the late 1960s got translated among Black students and academics around the country in a totally distorted way.

Phases of Black Studies at Harvard, 1969–2002

Since the start-up year for Afro-American Studies at Harvard University in fall term 1969 there have been approximately four developmental phases. Let us label them with the names of the scholars who have thus far directed the department:

1. Ewart Guinier/Eileen Southern Phase (1969–80)
2. Nathan Huggins Phase (1980–9)
3. Werner Sollors Phase (1988–90)
4. Henry Louis Gates Phase (1991–present)[2]

It should be noted here that the Werner Sollors Phase was a kind of interregnum period – a "holding operation" phase – during which Sollors (a White scholar in the field of English studies who also studied African-American topics) headed up the Afro-American Studies department while Professor Nathan Huggins took a medical leave of absence. Professor Huggins battled pancreatic cancer during 1988 into 1989 and died in December, 1989. Professor Sollors gave up the chairmanship in July 1990, replaced by Professor Barbara Johnson (a White scholar in English studies who also studied African-American topics), chairing Afro-American Studies until the summer of 1991, when Henry Gates commenced his headship of Afro-American Studies.

Now, in terms of the curriculum, faculty, and overall institutional development of Harvard's Afro-American Studies program from the Guinier/Southern Phase through the Gates Phase, there can be little doubt that the Gates Phase represents the high-noon era, so to speak. The Gates Phase produced a range of institutional resources available to Afro-American Studies at Harvard that was unprecedented. If the Guinier/Southern Phase can be viewed as the formative and struggling phase, the Huggins Phase viewed as the settling-down phase, then the Gates Phase has clearly been the take-off maturation period. Owing, on the one hand, to Henry Gates's skillful academic entrepreneurial talents, and on the other hand to an Afro-American Studies-friendly Harvard administration under President Neil Rudenstine, Dean of the Faculty Jeremy Knowles, and Provost Albert Carnesale, the Gates Phase witnessed, above all, a serious commitment of Harvard financial resources for faculty development in Afro-American Studies. There was also a commitment of Harvard administration political muscle for pressuring mainline Harvard academic departments to cooperate with faculty development related to Afro-American Studies, via the mechanism of joint-

appointment faculty for Harvard's Afro-American Studies. The centrality of this mechanism of joint-appointment faculty for the full-fledged development of Harvard's Afro-American Studies program under the Gates Phase was sort of ironic, of course, for during the founding years of 1968–9 the leadership of HAAASA vociferously opposed the joint-appointment mechanism for faculty growth in Afro-American Studies. I, however, as the only African-American faculty member on the Faculty Committee on African and Afro-American Studies that created the Harvard program, supported the joint-appointment mechanism, as did the full committee. *C'est la vie.* In time, what was once offensive can become acceptable and workable.

Be that as it may, nothing like the kind of firm Afro-American Studies friendliness on the part of the Harvard administration during the Gates Phase existed during either the Guinier/Southern Phase or the Huggins Phase. Quite the contrary. The Harvard administration under President Derek Bok in the 1970–90 era was as financially indifferent as it could possibly be to the faculty development needs of Afro-American Studies without appearing fully opposed to its very existence. And this was so despite the fact that the main dean of faculty during the Bok years – department of economics Professor Henry Rosovosky – fashioned a public demeanor for himself as an "Afro-American Studies-friendly official."

Operationally, however, I know from conversations with the late Professor Nathan Huggins (I was a longstanding member of the executive board of the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute preceding Huggins's arrival at Harvard in 1980 and throughout his chairmanship of Afro-American Studies) that Rosovosky exerted little pressure with the Bok administration on behalf of faculty development for Afro-American Studies. So the kind of commitment the Neil Rudenstine administration gave faculty development for Afro-American Studies in the Gates Phase was never available in the Bok years to either the Guinier/Southern Phase or the Huggins Phase. A lot of Afro-American Studies-friendly official verbalization was the main thrust of the Bok/Rosovosky interface with Afro-American Studies at Harvard between 1970 and 1990, I submit.

When Nathan Huggins came to Harvard as chair of Afro-American Studies in 1980, there were only two full professors in Afro-American Studies: Huggins and Eileen Southern, he in the department of history and she in the department of music. The first Afro-American Studies chair, Professor Ewart Guinier, retired in the spring term of 1979. This paltry number increased to three full professors within several years, when Werner Sollors came from Columbia University to a joint professorship in the English department and in Afro-American Studies, and another full professor joined Afro-American Studies in 1981 when department of economics Professor John Kain (an expert on African-American labor patterns) accepted a joint professorship in Afro-American Studies. Apart from several assistant professorship appointments and several annual visiting professorship appointments, this was the faculty situation in the program during the Huggins Phase, 1980–9.

Between the start of the Gates Phase in the fall of 1991 and fall term 2001 there was an explosion in the senior faculty ranks in Afro-American Studies, as compared with the Huggins Phase. The appointment mechanism utilized in this explosion – actively assisted from the top of the Neil Rudenstine administration – was through joint professorships between Afro-American Studies and mainline departments in the humanities and social sciences. At the start of the fall term of 2001, ten professorships had been fashioned for Afro-American Studies along joint-professorship lines. Among these professorships were Henry Gates himself (English); Kwame Anthony Appiah (philosophy); Cornel West (religious studies); Werner Sollors (English); John Kain (economics); Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham (history); William Julius Wilson (Kennedy School of Government); Lawrence Bobo (sociology); Suzanne Blier (fine arts); and J. Lorand Matory (anthropology). In addition to this faculty growth, the Gates Phase also witnessed a solid development in resources for the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for Afro-American Research, which developed a sizable fellows program and gained serious financial resources as endowment through the machinery of President Rudenstine's office – an endowment of $25 million according to pronouncements by Henry Gates.

Thus, the foregoing record of faculty, curriculum, and research growth in Afro-American Studies during the Gates Phase clearly identifies Professor Gates as a top-rank academic-entrepreneurial Black scholar. I should add that at the end of spring term 2002, Harvard's department of government – where I hung my academic hat at Harvard – fashioned a joint professorship between itself and Afro-American Studies, through the appointment of Professor Michael Dawson, formerly of the University of Chicago.

Some Evaluative Reflections on the Gates Phase in Afro-American Studies

Rather like Booker T. Washington's *modus operandi* during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries at the Tuskegee Institute, Henry Gates exhibits a keen grasp of the salience of what might be called the "self-promotion ethos" in functioning as an academic entrepreneurial intellectual. Since his arrival at Harvard's Afro-American Studies program in 1990, Gates has mastered the cultivation of news reports on himself and his headship activity at Harvard. Among the many newspapers and magazines that Gates has used to cultivate his variant of the "self-promotion ethos" are the *Boston Globe*, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Emerge Magazine*, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *New York Times Education Supplement*, and especially the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, to mention only a few.

For my purpose here, a *JBIHE* article in the autumn 1995 issue can be taken as prototypical of the many accounts of the Gates Phase in Harvard's Afro-American Studies program. The article I have in mind is the one I have already mentioned, authored by freelance writer Richard Benjamin and entitled "The

Revival of African-American Studies at Harvard." I regard it as prototypical because at its very beginning statements by the subject of the article, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., are employed to set its interpretive thrust. Thus, at the start of the second paragraph:

> "Afro-American Studies [at Harvard] was dead [on Gates's arrival]. It was a corpse . . ." [So] says the man responsible for its resuscitation at Harvard, W. E. B. Du Bois Professor of the Humanities, Henry Louis "Skip" Gates, Jr.

This observation by Henry Gates on the condition of Afro-American Studies at Harvard University during the period that immediately preceded his arrival in the fall term of 1991 – the Huggins Phase (1980–9) – is not only incorrect. In objective terms, it was also not even necessary for Henry Gates to diminish – to put down – the state of Afro-American Studies at Harvard prior to his appearance on the scene in order to enable observers of the Gates Phase to recognize its advances in institutional resources for Afro-American Studies. Relative to the marginal level of support that the Derek Bok Harvard administration made available to Afro-American Studies under Huggins's directorship, the Huggins Phase produced solid academic achievements for Afro-American Studies. Courses were expanded through junior faculty appointments and through skillful use of visiting professorship appointments, and also the Du Bois Institute – managed mainly by a skillful associate director, Dr. Randall Burkett, a keen scholar of the African-American church – was put on a solid research footing.

It just so happened – a matter of serendipity – that with the new Neil Rudenstine Harvard administration in 1990 came a fundamentally new, assertively pro-Afro-American Studies outlook at the center of Harvard University. Whoever the scholar was who succeeded the Huggins Phase would benefit from a new range of institutional resources for Afro-American Studies. That Henry Gates presumably considered that his put-down characterization of the Huggins Phase in Afro-American Studies ("it was a corpse") was necessary for the adequate recognition of the Gates Phase's achievements tells us something fundamental about the salience and character of the "self-promotion ethos" in his academic-entrepreneur persona, I suggest.

Setting a negative tone toward the Huggins Phase of Afro-American Studies by characterizing it as "a corpse" wasn't enough of a put-down for Henry Gates, however. Thus, hardly within three pages of this tacky comment, the author of the article adds insult to injury by remarking that the Huggins Phase witnessed no attempt "to appreciably increase the department's size, intellectual activity, or prestige." One can tell from the subtext and wordsmith mode of the article that Henry Gates himself closely tutored its production, which means that Gates could have checkmated and corrected the above-mentioned comment by the author, Richard Benjamin. Since Gates didn't checkmate the comment, we can say that he shared in it.

Now, as a participant in the affairs of Afro-American Studies during the Huggins Phase through my longstanding membership on the executive board of

the Du Bois Institute, I can testify that this put-down is just plain wrong. Nathan Huggins made numerous and often frustrating attempts to advance institutional resources for Afro-American Studies at Harvard during the 1980–9 era, but the absence of serious commitment to Afro-American Studies by the Bok/Rosovosky administration rendered his endeavors of little moment. Werner Sollors can also attest to this as an executive board member of the Du Bois Institute and as an Afro-American Studies faculty member during the Huggins Phase. Randall Burkett – the keen manager of affairs at the Du Bois Institute in the Huggins Phase – can also attest to this. (Burkett, stripped of his Du Bois Institute job unceremoniously by Henry Gates in 1996, is now at Emory University.) Furthermore, Professor Preston Williams of the Harvard Divinity School, who with me was a longstanding member of the executive board of the Du Bois Institute going back to its founding in 1976, can also attest to the enormous efforts of Professor Huggins to put fire under the Bok/Rosovosky administration on behalf of Afro-American Studies at Harvard.

But never mind. As suggested by the clearly Gates-friendly 1995 *JBIHE* article, a tendency toward a kind of overkill application of the "self-promotion ethos" by Gates translated into not just a pattern of disregard of contributions by others to the life of Afro-American Studies at Harvard before the Gates Phase. It also translated into a seeming pattern of just plain exaggeration. For example, Benjamin remarks in the article, almost certainly with prior information from Gates himself: "Gates' appointment came with considerable speed." And this observation is reinforced by a remark offered directly by Gates himself: "Harvard called me completely out of the blue. I had no idea I was being considered for headship of Afro-American Studies."

I can report without fear of contradiction that neither of these foregoing observations is credible. For one thing, the Harvard administration set up an Ad Hoc Appointments Committee on Afro-American Studies to produce a successor to Huggins well before the headship of the program was offered to Gates in late spring term 1990. Along with Preston Williams, Werner Sollors, and several others, I was a member of that committee. Several candidates from top-rank universities (among them Professor Arnold Rampersad of Columbia University and Professor Albert Robeteau of Princeton University), who were offered the post by the committee, declined it. Another of the candidates we canvassed, Professor Cornel West of Princeton University, also declined the post but later joined Harvard's Afro-American Studies department during the Gates Phase.

Furthermore, in 1988 during a visit to Harvard as a member of the University Visiting Committee to the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute, Henry Gates suggested in private tête-à-tête with a member of the Du Bois Institute's Advisory Board that when consideration of a successor to Professor Huggins – then ill with pancreatic cancer – finally arose, he would like to be a candidate. I was that board member to whom Henry Gates confided that he was deeply interested in coming to head Harvard University's Afro-American Studies program, and I later communicated Gates's deep interest to a couple of other members of the board. The point

here, then, is that there was no special "considerable speed" involved in arriving at the appointment of Henry Gates as chair of Afro-American Studies at Harvard. Neither is Henry Gates's observation true that his interface with the appointment process was something "out of the blue." Henry Gates maneuvered – through me – very early to place himself favorably for possible receipt of an offer to chair Afro-American Studies at Harvard University.

Just as Henry Gates learned the salience of the "self-promotion ethos" from the wily Booker T. Washington's *modus operandi* as a pioneer Black academic-entrepreneur educator, Gates might also be said to have learned from Washington the salience of what might be called "strategic connections" with establishmentarian patterns in American society. Any serious scrutiny of Henry Gates as a Black academic-entrepreneurial intellectual suggests he has a keen grasp of fashioning strategic connections. The 1995 *JBIHE* article on the Gates Phase provides an interesting and rather tacky instance of his intertwining of self-promotion and establishmentarian linkages.

For instance, in seeking what might be called an extra-publicity boost for the advances in Afro-American Studies during the Gates Phase, the author of the *JBIHE* article was sent – presumably by Gates – to interview Professor Harvey Mansfield in the Harvard department of government. The extra publicity sought was to gain a *conservative* imprimatur for the Gates Phase's achievements in Afro-American Studies from the most militant conservative academic at Harvard in the 1990s and a favorite of powerful right-wing think tanks like the American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation, the Manhattan Institute, and the Hudson Institute; namely, Harvey Mansfield. Around Harvard University, Mansfield is famous for his frequent diatribes against administrative policies to advance the status of African Americans and women there. He was also zealous in opposing gay activism on campuses, charging homosexuals generally as a source of cultural decay in Western civilization. The extra-publicity boost for the Gates Phase in Afro-American Studies at Harvard took the following form in the 1995 *JBIHE* article:

> [Professor Mansfield] adds that he and his [white] colleagues are impressed by what Skip Gates has been able to do in the short time he's been here [in Afro-American Studies]. "Some people feared that Gates was just another politicizer or 'p.c.-type.' But he hasn't been. He has been willing to criticize blacks such as Leonard Jeffries, Tony Martin, and so on."

From where I sit, the kind of academic and ideological pandering involved in gaining the favor of Professor Mansfield and similar White conservatives for the Gates Phase in Afro-American Studies at Harvard is intellectually dubious at best. How do Afro-American Studies in general and the Gates Phase at Harvard in particular really profit from this tacky kind of self-promotion and pandering for conservative public favor?

Besides the questionable worth of Professor Mansfield's pro-Gates Phase, extra-publicity comments, I can report that Mansfield doesn't really know what

he's talking about when suggesting that progressive African-American intellectuals had to await Henry Gates before they displayed a willingness to criticize anti-White xenophobic outbursts by Black intellectuals like Leonard Jeffries. Progressive Black intellectuals take our commitment to pluralistic intellectual values seriously, and we provided critiques of xenophobic extremists among African Americans well before Gates conveniently discovered this issue. I have in mind articles by Cornel West that have criticized xenophobic Black extremists; articles by Adolph Reed, Jr. that have done likewise (e.g., "The Rise of Louis Farrakhan" and "Farrakhan: False Prophet," *The Nation*, January 21 and 29, 1991); and articles I have written (e.g., "On Campus Flirting with Farrakhan," *New York Times*, February 11, 1989), among others. All of these critiques of xenophobic patterns among African Americans preceded Henry Gates's pandering-to-conservatism mode of, to quote Harvey Mansfield, "criticiz[ing] blacks such as Leonard Jeffries, Tony Martin, and so on."

Where I and other leftist Black intellectuals take issue with Gates on this matter is that, as a group, the African-American intelligentsia has no obligation to pander to White conservatives' cues in regard to what the interrelationship between ideological strands among the African-American intelligentsia should or should not be. We therefore reject Henry Gates's pandering-to-White-conservatives' predilections regarding activist and militant patterns among African Americans, pleading for the approval of prominent conservative personalities like Mansfield or the conservative columnist George Will. It happens that Gates was host to a Mansfield–Will dinner at his Cambridge home in spring 1996, attended also by the invited Boston press (the *Boston Globe* reported on the dinner in its March 7 issue). A dinner for Harvey Mansfield and George Will! After all, these kinds of conservatives, who vociferously opposed the Civil Rights Movement, would roll back its gains to something near the *Plessey v. Ferguson* Jim Crow era if they could.

Indeed, despite his proffered pro-Gates Phase comment on Afro-American Studies at Harvard, Mansfield attempted *in the same breath* to defame the field of Black Studies in general. He told the author of the 1995 *JBIHE* article that before Gates's arrival in the fall term 1991, the field of Black Studies was generally ultra-radical and that in the Harvard program there was "a great deal of compulsory radicalism, Marxism, and neo-Marxism." This kind of red-baiting of Black Studies by White conservative intellectuals is nothing new of course, but one would have thought that Harvey Mansfield would have had the simple decency to keep White conservatives' intrinsic antipathy to African-American cultures and politics to himself while he was assisting Henry Gates's self-promotion agenda. Alas, even the august and establishmentarian-deferential Henry Gates couldn't bring forth in a White conservative like Mansfield a simple respect for African-American patterns.

As a leftist Black intellectual who embraces a keen belief in Black people's honor, I've always looked with dubious eyes on Gates's obsessive combining of the self-promotion ethos and establishmentarian linkages in the hope thereby to

maximize benefits as a Black academic-entrepreneur intellectual. Yet, whatever the intellectual *modus operandi*, Gates's headship of Afro-American Studies at Harvard has produced solid academic-entrepreneurial outcomes over the past decade, as I have demonstrated earlier in this essay.

A Concluding Note

What does the future look like for Afro-American Studies at Harvard? In terms of the academic range of the curriculum available to the students, the list of senior faculty presented earlier in this chapter indicates a range of courses that richly embraces subfields in the humanities and social sciences (e.g., literary studies, social/political history, social structure, political patterns, ideological movements, racial dynamics, cultural ethnography, and socioeconomic patterns). The interface between Afro-American Studies and Black Studies generally is uniquely available in the Harvard Afro-American Studies program, I should add. For one thing, the joint professorship held by Suzanne Blier in Fine Arts and Afro-American Studies makes available several courses in her specialty of African Art. Also, the joint professorship held by Lorand Matory in Anthropology and Afro-American Studies makes available several brilliant courses in his two special Black Studies fields: one is the study of African religions, focusing especially on the Yoruba in Nigeria, but also on Africa generally; another is his study of Afro-Latin religions, focusing especially on Afro-Brazil but also on Afro-Cuba and on the Afro-Caribbean generally. Indeed, the range of Matory's ethnographic work makes him a unique third-generation scholar in the field of Comparative Black Diaspora Studies, along with the Columbia University African-American historian Winston James, who has brilliantly cultivated the subject of social structure in Comparative Black Diaspora Studies. In his work, Lorand Matory – and also Winston James – stands on the shoulders of several generations of forerunner scholars, Black and White. I have in mind Melville Herskovitz (anthropologist), Lorenzo Turner (cultural linguist), Harold Coulander (anthropologist), Ira de Augustine Reid (sociologist), Irene Diggs (anthropologist), Katherine Dunham (choreographer/dancer), Janheinz Jan (anthropologist), St. Clair Drake (anthropologist), George Shepperson (historian), Stanley Mintz (anthropologist), M. G. Smith (anthropologist), and Benjamin Faris Thompson (ethno-art studies), among others.

As is well known by now, the first semester of the new president, Lawrence Summers, of Harvard University was marred by his bizarre and (from where I sit) arrogant posturing toward Harvard's department of Afro-American Studies. Employing a haughty and boss-rule mannerism at several meetings with members of the department in the fall term of 2001, Summers said that his Harvard administration was not going to be anywhere nearly as friendly to Afro-American Studies as the preceding president Neil Rudenstine had been. Summers also turned rather nasty in his dismissive posturing toward Afro-American Studies, especially in regard to his chastising Professor Cornel West for presumed

limitations in his teaching obligations and for aspects of West's public intellectual role. The result of Summers's treatment of the department was devastating. At least three full professors let it be known to their friends that they immediately gave thought to exiting Harvard University, and by the end of the spring term of 2002 two of those professors officially announced such a decision. K. A. Appiah was the first to sign on to a professorship at Princeton University and in June Cornel West did likewise.[3] Professor Henry Gates is sitting on the fence for the moment, so to speak, at first announcing publicly that "there's a 50–50 chance I'll leave Harvard." By the summer of 2003 the department's name was changed to African and African-American Studies, and Gates decided to take a year's leave to spend time at Princeton as visiting faculty. Thus, in administrative and leadership terms, the situation of Black Studies at Harvard is presently up in the air. Some of the effects will be known by the time this book is published.

Let me conclude with commentary on Harvard's department – as well as on Black Studies generally – by one of my former Harvard Black undergraduate students during the early years of the program's development. That student was Ernest Wilson, now professor of political science and director of the Center for International Development at the University of Maryland. A member of Harvard Class of 1970 (a class of 50 African Americans, the largest up to that date), he was the president of HAAASA as it spearheaded the drive for an Afro-American Studies program between 1968 and 1969. Though he and I differed on specific matters relating to the academic organization of Afro-American Studies at Harvard, we both fervently favored such a program and throughout the sometimes testy debate, he and I sustained a friendly relationship. Ernest Wilson occasionally came by Tutorial Office on Holyoke Street, sometimes after midnight, to talk about one event or another that occurred during the preceding day of maneuvering between the Faculty Committee on African and Afro-American Studies (on which he sat as a student representative) and HAAASA leaders.

For the 30th Anniversary Conference on Afro-American Studies at Harvard (held April 8, 2000), a volume on the history of the Harvard program was commissioned and Wilson and I contributed essays (see Dalton 2000). I want to conclude this chapter with excerpts from Professor Wilson's essay. Answering the question, "What we [HAAASA leaders] won," he made some searching comments about the current state of affairs in the Harvard department and some insightful observations on possible new directions for Black Studies in general:

> The [Harvard] faculty voted [in spring term 1969] that Afro-American Studies was an intellectually valid area of scholarly investigation and programs [*sic*]. And so we won a moral down payment and a commitment from Harvard one day to make the program as good as we knew it could be.
>
> I began this essay by looking back thirty years. Let me end it by looking ahead thirty years. Recognizing that goals and plans change over time, let me point to some areas where our original intentions still remain problematic, and then some new issues I believe are important to consider as Afro-American Studies move toward 2030.

One of the unresolved older questions is the fit between scholarship and the needs and opportunities in the wider local, national, and international communities. Recall that the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute was conceived at one point to engage actively with "the black community" broadly defined. I know that in my own field, international relations, there are just not enough young African Americans entering the pipeline that leads to careers in the State Department, international business, or global non-governmental organizations. The need for engaged black experts remains high. Should the Du Bois Institute revisit the balance between scholarship for scholarship's sake and greater public engagement? Could there be ties with, for example, the Kennedy School or African NGOs to advance the number of students going into these and other fields of service?

What is the role of students in the current program? Are they getting as much authority and responsibility thrown at them as they want and can handle? Do students have a voice in departmental or Du Bois Institute governance? I suspect they no longer sit on tenure reviews and hires (which may be a good thing). But what is their role? Are we mentoring the next generation adequately, in the way that Kilson, Willard Johnson, Barbara Jackson, Nell Painter, and Ephraim Isaac mentored us? How do we measure it in our programs?

There are also some new issues that African-American Studies programs everywhere must address if they are to be relevant for 2030. America will have a very different face over the coming decades. With far more brown, yellow, and black citizens. What is the special contribution of Afro-American Studies in a much more multicultural America? What are its limits? Should Afro-American studies serve as a model for other hyphenated studies? Will Asian [American] studies and Latino [American] studies employ the same model as Afro-American Studies? Is there a special way that Afro-American Studies should relate to Asian Americans, for example? What can Asian [American] studies teach Afro-American Studies? Or more radically, should Afro-American Studies perhaps be eliminated by 2030 as unnecessary, or perhaps merged with the programs of other groups? What are the pedagogical implications of multiculturalism?

There are global as well as domestic implications here. In a forthcoming book I develop the term "double diversity," by which I mean the intersection of our growing internal domestic demographic differentiation as well as our global diversity. Finally, Afro-American studies needs to figure out how to *investigate and celebrate our uniqueness while sustaining the core American values of tolerance and openness, which in the United States permit that distinctiveness to flourish*. (Wilson 2000: 48–9; emphasis added)

Notes

1 Asante's account of his work in the development of African-American Studies is in chapter 2 of this volume. (eds.)

2 Gates's views on politics in African-American Studies appear in chapter 7 of this volume.

3 Appiah is now Laurance S. Rockefeller University Professor of Philosophy and the University Center for Human Values at Princeton University and West is now Class of 1943 University Professor of Religion and African-American Studies at Princeton. By 2005, Lawrence Bobo left for an appointment at Stanford University and Michael Dawson returned to the University of Chicago (eds.).

CHAPTER SIX

Black Studies and Ethnic Studies: The Crucible of Knowledge and Social Action

Johnnella E. Butler

Introduction

During the summer of 1976 I went to Southside Chicago to a local, grassroots conference called by Paulo Freire. While there, I explained to Freire that I was working on a dissertation that would be an Americanization of his theories with the hope of influencing significant change in American education, challenging racism and contributing to cultural, social, economic, and political equity. He looked me straight in the eye and said somewhat sadly, "I wish you luck, but education in the US will never change without a significant social revolution – and that is not going to happen." To a great extent, I then (and do now) believe him to be correct. But as Derrick Bell warns us, we must behave as if racism – and I would add academic ethnocentrism – can be defeated.[1]

I therefore saw the potential for that change in the literature and early folk culture of African Americans; I saw that potential in my students – who then were mostly White and Black; I saw that potential in grappling with the two most-quoted passages from Du Bois that asserted that the problem of the twentieth century would be the problem of the color-line, and that two warring ideals struggled in one dark body of the Negro (W. Du Bois 1993: chs 1, 2). My experiences in an Irish American Catholic college in New England where friendships with the Irish American, Polish American, and a few Puerto Rican, Dominican, African, and African-American students gave me insight into the synergy between assimilation and racism, helped me see that synergy's relationship to double consciousness. I listened to Freire's every word that day, and somewhat defiantly, but most respectfully, told him that I thought there was a great possibility that Black Studies could be successful and that the work of women critics and writers like Toni Cade, literary scholars like George Kent, Black liberation theologians like Gayraud Wilmore and Leon Watts, and historians like Vincent Harding portended well for the future of such a venture. I saw

the dialectic of knowledge and social action as the dialectic of Black Studies that would bring about the development of the field, encouraging productive interaction between scholarship and teaching. Black Studies, I thought, would influence, matrix-like, a transformation in higher education that would encourage a human-centered education, inclusive of different traditions and identifying imbalances of power. Despite Nixon's regressive policies and the conservative backlash to the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, I thought, along with many others, that we would overcome.

Now, almost thirty years later, despite not being anywhere near where I thought Black Studies would be – numerous undergraduate programs; distinguished MA and PhD graduate programs; inspiring and problem-solving programs based on coalitions among academic affairs, student affairs, and community groups – I remain optimistic. Given the overwhelming odds that Paulo Freire knew and that we have experienced in establishing the field, I agree with John C. Walter, former president of the New England Region of the National Council for Black Studies (NCBS) and former president of the National Association of Ethnic Studies (NAES), when he predicts in the essay "Problems and Possibilities for Black Studies for the 21st Century":

> Despite all these problematics, I sense that African American Studies is about to experience a profound renaissance. The content of African American Studies explains and responds to much in our history and our present-day struggles to realize our democratic aspirations. While examining the cultural, social, economic, and political realities of African American people, it simultaneously analyzes the black/white paradigm, the paradigm in which in the United States the racialization of other groups, domestic and international, is based. Thus it provides a necessary touchstone in scholarship and pedagogy for similar study of all ethnic groups – most of whom have been racialized in opposition to whiteness at some point . . .
>
> So, Black Studies, as program or department, as African American or African [*sic*, misprint: author intended *Africana*] Studies, has a crucial, continuous role to play. I see more and more students asking questions that demand the honesty and comprehensiveness too often lacking elsewhere, in particular as we analyze and incorporate in our national story the significance of racial and ethnic power imbalances, and the ways they shape our behaviors one to another and our multiple and interacting identities.

This essay traces the way that I, one of many of the first generation of Black Studies faculty and administrators, approached establishing the field in the institutions in which I work. It moves from the personal, to the methodologically and administratively strategic, to the theoretical – just as we all tried to move from our personal experience to identifying paradigms and theoretical assumptions amid the quickly moving and largely hostile academic environment in which we, Black students and interested White students, entered.

My parents taught me that every experience, every bit of life, provides opportunities to make sense of the world, to learn and, if appropriate, to teach. This

has been my guiding principle, the one which led me to the scholar/teacher program at Johns Hopkins University and which led me to spend the greater part of my career seeking ways to make sense of what came before Black Studies, to study and teach and help develop further the content and pedagogy of Black Studies, and to help others bring about the radical transformation necessary for the full inclusion of African Americans in higher education. Black Studies, whether now or before the formalization of the field, seeks what I would call a *contextualized* objectivity (one that makes sense of African-American life based on history, its legacies, the present, and future possibilities) by analyzing experience to identify not only the patterns but also to determine the course of action (reflection, theorizing, then action based on that reflection and theorizing learned from previous situations, events, eras, and actions).[2] Through a discussion of why I entered the field, what I expected, and what philosophical and strategic concepts and approaches I advanced and why, I hope to provide a useful epistemology for identifying and probing the challenges Black Studies presents to higher education and the challenges Ethnic Studies and American Studies present to Black Studies. That epistemology is based on (1) individual and group experience and (2) paradigms emerging from double consciousness, the engagement of the Black/White binary, *mestiza* consciousness, and the borderlands.

The Epistemological Crucible of Knowledge and Social Action: Why Black Studies?

A strong inner drive motivated me to help develop the field. That drive caused my father to remark: "God takes care of babies and Johnnella." I find that now, 32 years after I entered my first classroom as a 22-year-old graduate of the Johns Hopkins MAT in English program, the drive remains.

I took risks, as many of my generation did. It is difficult to identify those risks now, for at the time, they simply seemed the thing to do to accomplish the ultimate goal of instituting a new field of study that challenged the core of academia. Risk taking was and is essential to the development of the field of Black Studies, Ethnic Studies, and other ethnic-specific studies. It is clear to me that Black Studies is the most difficult of the ethnic-specific fields to institutionalize. Becoming a professor of African-American Studies was, as I saw it, the way I could use my talents best to continue the work that had gone before me to have African Americans share fully in the democratic promise of the United States.

Then as now, that is a truly radical goal. I remembered stories about the battles my parents fought, individually and with others, as educators for forty years each in the state of Virginia for proper books, decent schools, for Negro History to be taught in the face of Virginia history that characterized Negroes as happy darkies in whom Northerners stirred up the desire to be free. I remembered the story of Dr. Luther P. Jackson, for whose wife I was named, who suffered immensely because he had written the truth about racism in his history of the

Negro in Virginia. I remembered my father's example in brokering much of the school desegregation in Alexandria, Virginia as assistant superintendent, and my mother's pioneering as the first Black teacher hired in Alexandria to teach in a White school. I remembered the pain and anger on students' faces when they argued for Black history courses in the high schools at meetings my father held at our home with the so-called "militant" students, and the challenges he faced from the school board. I remembered the shot through our back door one night, the brick through my parent's bedroom window, and the day my mother was transferred to another White school because of White parents' protest against having a Negro teacher in the school. I remembered when the White principal committed suicide because she could not bear the hatefulness of the situation. I knew from these and other stories and experiences that including African Americans in all aspects of American education meant much more than letting students attend classes, hiring a few faculty, and adding a book here, a course there.

Most of all, I think that early on, I not only remembered but understood. From 1960 to 1964 in high school, where I was the only Black student in my class, I managed to win offices in Student Government and establish a lecture series for the entire student body to bring a scholar on the Civil Rights Acts being passed then, a lawyer who participated in the Nuremberg trials, and a liberation theologian from Columbia University. In hindsight, my deliberately choosing the Hopkins Ford Foundation fellowship over another for an MA and PhD simply followed logically. The Hopkins MAT program then promised to produce "scholar/teachers" who would be prepared for either the inner-city junior or high school, or for the junior college, as the term was in that day. This seemed to me to be the ideal beginning for what I had decided to do: teach African-American literature and help develop the field of Black Studies.

My academic journey in Black Studies began in 1968, my first year of graduate school, in what I recall was the first course in Negro History at Johns Hopkins University taught by Professor Hugh Graham. I had graduated that June from the College of Our Lady of the Elms in Chicopee, Massachusetts where, as one of the few African-American students, I held various Student Government offices, brought among others to that small Polish and Irish American town the activist/comedian Dick Gregory, and initiated with other local Student Government presidents a consortium that the colleges later established as an academic consortium.

It seemed morally right that I use my talents otherwise than in becoming the outstanding coloratura soprano I had convinced the Julliard School that I could become. My father knew me better than I knew myself in those days. He knew my real passion, for he advised me to attend Hopkins rather than pursue a second bachelor degree at Julliard. That way I could develop my scholarly, teaching, and singing abilities to do my part for the betterment of my people and of all society. Here, he said, my passion and reality came together, and he most likely rightly thought I would be more financially secure teaching.

My lofty ideals demanded sacrifices I can only now see in hindsight when I consider it took twelve more years for me to give up completely my passion for performing Mozart, Spanish classical music, spirituals, and music by Black women composers. But the Hopkins experience weighed heavily – mixed signals from being the only Black in my class, as well as being among the first women in the Homewood campus graduate programs; grade discrimination at the hands of individual professors that deans would not rectify. On the other hand, through the program, I taught in urban and suburban Baltimore, and the Negro History course contextualized what I had learned at home and studied on my own. I now had facts. A bibliography! Getting my feet wet in feminism by meeting Florence Howe and Paul Lauter when the Feminist Press was beginning in Baltimore, mingling with old socialist groups from the 1930s in the city, singing and becoming a popular soprano in Little Italy, on stage in Gilbert and Sullivan, and studying voice – all this, I see now, combined with the goal of an active, pedagogical scholarship. Familial and educational social activism and a highly emotional musical sensitivity buttressed my goal and led me to a certain understanding of Black Studies and its potential.

Nineteenth-century racial uplift and Paul Lawrence Dunbar also played their part, for they were very much a part of my early upbringing thanks to Grandpa and Granny Spencer and their stories. The Harlem Renaissance – its music and poetry, and the stories of my father's teen years in the late 1920s when he played pick-up basketball games with the Rens; of Grandpa Butler, who had his own hack stand, chauffeuring Marcus Garvey in Asbury Park because Garvey said that Grandpa looked like he was "straight from Africa" – seemed to me a time when it was nearly possible for Negroes to be Negroes and Americans as well. When my father sent me postcards from Georgia while he toured that state in 1967, working with White teachers and school officials who would be teaching Black children, the same time that Lemuel Penn was shot dead there by the Klan, I began to see clearly the connection between Black nationalism and the aspiration of democracy. As a teacher, curriculum transformation specialist, and administrator in Black Studies and Ethnic Studies over the years, I have sought to reconcile the two, for in that complicated and vexed reconciliation, I remain convinced, lies the possibility of substantive social, cultural, political, and economic progress for African Americans and the beginnings of the realization of an equitable society in the United States.

Expectations

In many ways, I am not different from others of my age group who, as Princeton lecturer Vincent Di Girolamo writes, saw academia as a calling, a means toward "help[ing] people understand and change their lives for the better" (V. Di Girolamo 2002: 7–8). In that essay, however, he argues that professionalism is death. I think rather that many of my Black peers saw the academic profession

in need of change – not only racially, but also fundamentally, in its structure, content, and behaviors. We were not for professionalism, but neither were we about to abandon completely the master's house because we and our ancestors owned much of it. We set out to dismantle, rebuild, refashion, and rename the house by modifying, throwing out, and using new tools.

In short, I entered the field of Black Studies at Towson State College (now University), expecting to work with colleagues to correct omissions and distortions, to teach and write about African-American life and culture through an interdisciplinary lens, with literature and literary study as the disciplinary basis and springboard. I never questioned the connection of African-American Studies to Africa and her diaspora beyond the United States. I never questioned the need to forge partnerships between Black Studies and the local Black community, no matter how politically complex and ideologically conflictual that community may be in addressing racism and seeking wholeness and agency. It made sense to me – as I directed the program at Towson as an instructor, without tenure, as I chaired the department at Smith, first as an instructor without tenure, and later as a tenured associate professor – that in order for Black Studies to be successful, it needed to have departmental status and a structure whose scholarship, pedagogy, and teaching would interact with mainstream departments in transformative ways through curriculum and professional development. Then as now, I saw Black Studies as seeking the closest approximation of the truth. As such, I sorely underestimated the belligerent rigidity and the subtle, tenacious variations of racism in academia. Nonetheless, I, and many others like me, proceeded as if we could be successful, despite our growing more and more mindful of the great heights and vast dimensions of the racial mountains.

Personal decisions mirrored the academic politics and goals of Black Studies in those optimistic days when the National Council for Black Studies (NCBS) worked to develop criteria for accreditation of Black Studies departments, or in the New England Region, when we supported one another for tenure, helping to identify referees, explain the significance of publications to skeptical committees, and defended one another when reappointment was threatened.[3] I have maintained my tenured positions in either African-American Studies or Ethnic Studies, working at the intersections of disciplines and at the intersections of Black Studies, Women's Studies, Ethnic Studies, and American Studies. I collaborated with colleagues through faculty development projects to "transform the curriculum," a Women's Studies goal that we hoped would seriously engage race as it intersects with gender and other categories of identity. The word Black, then and now, to me signifies cultures and cultural realities, past and present, of peoples of African ancestry. Afro-American, African American, signified to me then and now, either US people of African ancestry or people of African ancestry in the Western hemisphere. Naming I did not see as a problem. I took it for granted that African Americans in the US had an American ethnicity, despite not being able to trace our ethnic descent as precisely as Euro-Americans, many Latinos, Asian Americans, or American Indians could, can, or pretend to be able

to do. At the root of all this, I thought, along with others, was the continued development of the Black intellectual tradition, a tradition that has rude, harsh, and conflictual encounters with mainstream scholarship, be it local, regional, national, or global – encounters that prohibit transformation of the concept of the Universal to include the complexity of humanity.

So I expected to be part of a successful vanguard, and for a while it seemed it would be so. In the early 1970s some of us younger scholars were invited to the Institute of the Black World (IBW) in Atlanta to discuss the future of Black Studies, its theoretical, academic, and community dimensions. That is when I encountered in academic discourse challenges to assumptions I had made based on personal experiences as well as my expectations for the resolution of ideological conflicts. I had worked with self-proclaimed nationalist separatists in Baltimore, planning and hosting a citywide conference on race, ethnicity, and education – a group that earlier had refused me admission to the Freedom School but allowed my elementary school students from the Model Cities program to enter, because I appeared too "boogie." Learning from my father's example, I knew that being Black in the US was charged with political and emotional issues, and I had observed him conjure the positive results of one-on-one discussion to work those issues through. At the IBW conference, I was not as prepared for the academic Marxists' insistence on economic analyses at the expense of cultural analyses, but I learned the creative beauty of dialogue and the possibilities of coalescence there, both from the conference itself and during time being shown around Atlanta by Toni Cade and Eleanor Taylor.

An NEH summer institute with leading Black Aesthetic scholars, another NEH/MLA summer institute with feminists struggling with race and gender, serving on the board and as an officer of the NCBS and of NAES during the late 1970s through the 1980s, the Chicago Freire conference mentioned earlier, and partnering with my White feminist friend and colleague, Margo Culley, at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst for a three year project bringing together race and gender through Black Studies and Women's Studies – all this and more, formed a crucible of knowledge and social action in the academy that encouraged me to maintain hope in the success of both African-American Studies and Ethnic Studies.

What did I expect? I expected debate, dialogue, critical scholarship. I expected Stanley Elkins (1986) to rewrite *Slavery* once aware of its flaws – especially when Herbert Gutman's (1976) work came on the scene. I expected literary theory to evolve "out of the culture" – much as Barbara Christian (1994) and Toni Morrison (1994) have argued. I expected African Americans to be viewed scholarly and politically as racialized ethnic Americans – since most historical, sociological, and literary scholarship supports that view. I expected the scholarly and pedagogical exploration of the African diaspora to yield new insights into what is called Western civilization, both as experienced and as taught. In short, I expected that Black Studies, Afro-American Studies, African-American Studies, and Africana Studies to be self-reflexive and to be taken seriously.

Challenges, Approaches, and Strategies that Evolved

My expectations did not take into consideration the careerism, arrogance, or apathy that prevents the promise of corrective scholarship, that maintains the short shrift given to pedagogy, or the dogged persistence of Western paradigms that prevents their transformation to reflect the cultural, political, social, and economic complexity of the populations to which they refer. I did not anticipate that faculty in Black Studies, and later in Ethnic Studies, would not engage their academic marginality as a site of productivity for the scholarship and department-building necessary for institutionalization. Above all, I was unprepared for the crabs-in-the-basket and careerist responses to academia for which many of us opted. Black Studies and the structure and processes of academia challenged us, the Black faculty, in numerous ways. These topics demand their own essay. Black Studies, however, as a student movement, as the academic arm of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, challenged higher education in at the least several ways simultaneously:

1. To develop further, engender respect for, and teach the history, literature, culture, politics, sociology, and economics of people of African ancestry in the United States, and of people of the African diaspora elsewhere and of Africa.
2. To include in the curriculum, pedagogy, scholarship, research, and methodology of higher education content concerning people of African ancestry as a serious scholarly and disciplined pursuit.
3. To recognize and include the academic endeavors of Black Studies as worthy of tenure criteria, and inclusion in national examinations (SAT, GRE, etc.).
4. To address the social, cultural, and academic issues inevitably arising from the inclusion of a people and their significance in higher education when associated with those people is not only difference, but also a history and legacy of racial persecution, discrimination, and exclusionary cultural ethnocentrism, signaled by their dark skin and different hair texture.

Despite my Americanized Freirean approaches that assumed domestic colonialism, I had little anticipation of how I myself or my colleagues would respond to the restrictions and oppression we met in the academy or how we would read one another, support or not support one another, as we came from various experiences in the recently desegregated America to predominantly White institutions to teach Black Studies. Struggling with intimations and realizations of in-group struggles, alternately denying and accepting them, as well as the confusions of the imposed false dialectic between good scholarship and Black Studies scholarship (another topic worthy of an essay), my approaches to the development and institutionalization of Black Studies in the White academy were based on several philosophical assumptions.[4] These assumptions result from generative dialectics

resulting from the conscious engagement of contradictions inherent in the African-American/Black experience, scholarship, and pedagogy. They are:

1. *Black Studies is student-centered in its pedagogy and human-centered in its curricular and scholarly methods and goals.* It is often viewed as fitting awkwardly in higher education, for it has both scholarly and policy foci for the betterment of humanity. Specifically, Black Studies early on sought to theorize, to some extent, from experience. Stephen Henderson's *Understanding the New Black Poetry*, Addison Gayle's anthology *The Black Aesthetic* (1972), Paul Carter Harrison's *The Drama of Nommo* (1972), Chancellor Williams's *The Destruction of Black Civilization* (1974), and a host of earlier and contemporaneous works serve as examples. The move to a postmodern cultural studies, however, negated the possibility of useful critique of these works and created a vacuum in the field, bridged by the negation or glib diminution of identity and experience.
2. *Race and culture are intertwined, forming a matrix for other categories of identity.* Culture includes politics, artistic expressions, belief systems, economics, and the ways of being in the world. Race, of course, is a social construction.
3. *The intersections of race and gender are particularly central to Black Studies.* Time and scholarship have proven that Black Women's Studies and Black feminism are integral to Black Studies and related disciplines.
4. *Du Bois's concept of African-American double consciousness stands as both a cultural, social, and psychological reality and as a vehicle for its own generative reconciliation of the self/other dichotomy as expressed in life, theory, and policy.*[5] Identity in its multi-layered and multiple variations is the key concept in Black Studies as it is in studies of American life and culture.
5. *Theories and pedagogies in the humanities, social sciences, and arts should work the dichotomies at the heart of Black Studies dialectically, thus generatively and productively working off the tensions they produce.* Dichotomies such as African American/American, separatist/assimilationist, Afrocentric/Eurocentric, empiricist/conceptualist, Black Marxists/Nationalists,[6] are present in texts and in the lives of Black students and faculty, and affect perceptions of and interactions with other groups – as well as their perceptions of Blacks. As dialectics, they and their new variations must be constantly engaged and worked through.
6. *Blackness is a cultural, psychological, and physical adventure with Western civilization, simultaneously at the core of Western civilization, ostracized and negated; loved and hated; embraced and discarded.* Theories and philosophies emerging from the Eurocentric perspective must be engaged dialectically and generatively, much as the dichotomous perspectives in Black Studies must be engaged.[7]
7. *Black Studies, along with Ethnic Studies, has the potential to provide an interdisciplinary, comparative, domestic, international, and diasporic matrix for reenvisioning the humanities, social sciences, arts, and sciences.* Black Studies has the

potential to develop the interstices where it dwells into bridges as well as new areas and types of knowledge. Black Studies can do this more effectively than Women's Studies because of its extreme outsider status, the centrality of Black people and their experiences in the rise of capitalist modernity, and because of the continuous transmogrifications of the racial and cultural Black/White binary.

Along with these assumptions grew strategies for institutionalizing Black Studies. These strategies are characteristic of attempts of most of us in the first wave of the institutionalization of Black Studies:

1 *Require departmental status for Black Studies.* Control over appointment lines in order to provide the necessary courses for the major and control of the operational budget, curriculum, and tenure decisions is essential. When this is impossible because of politics or the size of institutions, programmatic status must at least have control over appointment lines to provide the courses for the major at minimum and control over the curriculum.
2 *Make joint appointments cautiously and only at the senior level.* Joint appointments work at the senior level to *enhance* Black Studies departmental offerings when the greater percentage of the appointment is in Black Studies. Because of demands placed on faculty from the more acceptable discipline-based departments, joint appointments do not usually provide either interdisciplinary or discipline-based courses necessary to the major or substantive direction to the unit's development. In rare cases, deans and department chairs may work out very specifically the job description for the discipline-based department and Black Studies when all parties are clear about the commitment to Black Studies scholarship and teaching.
3 *Establish community internship programs*. To encourage praxis and make palpable the synergy between knowledge and action, community internship programs connected to courses in the humanities and arts as well as in the social and natural sciences both complement and complete the curriculum. Such internships include work with grassroots organizations as well as in city, state, and national agencies and businesses. These internships serve two purposes: on the one hand they introduce students and faculty to the Black community near the educational institutions so that the community can be apprised of what is taking place on campus; on the other, they provide students with the opportunity to assess the possibilities for work during undergraduate and postgraduate years.
4 *The campus Black Cultural Center serves as a major part of the academic effort, connecting the extracurricular to scholarship, pedagogy, and teaching through lecture/film series and other cultural and social offerings.* Historically, cultural centers were extremely important factors in the development of Black Studies for the simple fact that they provided a protective haven for Black students on most White campuses where they encountered resentment and hostility

to greater or lesser degrees. Where resentment and hostility have subsided, Black Cultural Centers remain as important potential sites for connecting academic and student affairs, a role others have tried to play only to be thwarted by the traditional, administrative division between academic and student affairs. Black Studies has been a largely unrecognized pioneer in creating a generative dialectic between these units.

5. *Music, Art, Theatre, and Dance play vital roles in expressing the connection between the affective and cognitive, often enhancing the understanding of many aspects of the Black experience that have not been considered worthy of scholarship.* The arts are highly under-utilized and underestimated in academic institutions. The resulting loss is even greater for Black Studies than for the liberal arts and sciences. Artistic creation allows students, faculty, administrators, and community members to make sense of the past and present through engaging the affective and the cognitive processes of comprehension.
6. *US-based departments should offer comparative and interdisciplinary courses that provide historical, literary , political, and economic study of Africa and the diasporic experience of which US African Americans are a part.* Most departments, from those established from narrowly conceived community-based perspectives to those focusing on diasporic Africana Studies at the least, nod to the historical and cultural significance of Africa. Much work still has to be done in this area. In the 1970s scholars began to explore the African transformations in artistic expression, everyday life, and in the psychology of African Americans, resulting in brilliant seminal work that has largely been ignored by practitioners in the field who have, in my opinion, done much work in cultural studies that is not as soundly based as it could or should be had it evolved as scholarship rooted in this earlier work.[8]
7. *Tracking of graduates and the development of an alumni base is essential to provide evidence of the usefulness of the major and to leverage institutional support for both students and the field of study.* Necessary for future financial and political support, it is often difficult, if not impossible, for Black Studies (and other Ethnic Studies, for that matter) to gain the institutional support to gather data and seek outside funding. Faculty are often either too stretched by demands already placed on them or unfortunately fail to see the immediate need to work toward this goal.

For the chair of Black Studies and for the faculty, there was and remains a price to be paid for attempting to implement these strategies and to address the problems resulting from them. Discussion of this point merits a book-length study. Suffice it to say that during the first wave, professors spent an enormous amount of time in counseling Black students, other racialized ethnic students, and often White students interested in Black Studies, to help them to deal with academic and personal problems resulting from racial dynamics – some resulting from racism, others from the strangeness of the situation that highlighted difference and otherness, given the recent and longstanding context of legal segregation.

In some cases, the academic problems came as a result of some students not being as prepared as they should have been to enter college; in others, many excellent students found it difficult to make adjustments to racist, all-White campuses. Some Black professors went beyond the call of duty in responding to student problems and struggle with the institutional administration for the maintenance of Black Studies and, as a result, found it impossible to meet the requirements for tenure. Others severely limited their academic aspirations in the efforts to institutionalize Black Studies, gaining tenure but curtailing their scholarly production. Still others found tenure committees refused to recognize the validity of their scholarship, even when their work appeared in familiar, discipline-based, refereed journals.

A significant number persevered, however, and gained tenure, either in Black Studies or through joint appointments, but not without a great deal of harassment and often not within the standard time of seven years. Many found themselves challenged by Black colleagues who had pursued positions in discipline-based departments, teaching courses on topics in African-American Studies, and either implying by their actions or allowing others to ascribe to them the assertion that the best scholarship takes place in discipline-based departments, disconnected from student and community demands. Many of these problems stem from Black Studies being an interruptive field – that is, one that challenges through its emphasis on knowledge and social action not only the status quo in scholarship, teaching, and methodology, as well as in its interdisciplinary and community-oriented structure, but also the racism and ethnocentrism still embedded in mainstream scholarship.[9]

In the first twenty years, chairs and faculty in Black Studies were faced with crisis after crisis. Crises came from administrative, departmental, and faculty opposition to community internships, to cultural centers, to scholarship in the field, and to the expansion of the field through hiring faculty. Crises also arose in the everyday lives of Black students as they took courses and lived in dorms amid overt and covert racism. We spent time resolving these crises so students could achieve. We worked closely with student organizations like the Black Student Union to assist them in negotiating an environment scattered with landmines. We struggled for tenure with no precedents in our field. A significant number made it, but many others have died much too young, have left academia severely wounded, or remain frustrated.

Resistance to Black Studies comes in many forms. Then as now, institutional support in general is sorely lacking and administrators pit cognate departments against Black Studies and Ethnic Studies departments when allotting positions; administrators leave these fields out of important discussions about interdisciplinary scholarship and the future of the social sciences and humanities; they support individual faculty at the expense of departmental independence and curricular goals; and in Ethnic Studies, they encourage competitiveness between Asian-American, Chicano/a, Latino/a Studies, and American Indian Studies (which often locates itself separate from Ethnic Studies due to unique promises

of political sovereignty), by basing decisions solely on perceived community support rather than on numbers of students enrolled in courses or on the intellectual integrity of the overall curriculum.

The usefulness of these assumptions and the success of approaches I have identified can only be measured by the fact that Black Studies still remains as a viable entity in higher education, by the existence of continued scholarship in the field, and by the anecdotal evidence that its graduates, as single or double majors, are lawyers, professors, managers, medical doctors, artists, teachers, and museum directors – in other words, they hold jobs similar to those of their peers who focused in other liberal arts areas. To my knowledge, Black Studies has not been documented to the extent that Women's Studies, for example, has.

The approaches I have outlined are not startlingly out of line with any commonsense approaches that one might devise in establishing a new field in higher education. But because of what it challenges and who raises those challenges, Black Studies has never been treated as a new field worthy of scholarship and support.

Double Consciousness and the Black/White Binary

My philosophical approach to Black Studies is rooted in double consciousness and the Black/White binary as organizing principles and sources of analysis for pedagogy, curriculum development, scholarship, and methodology. In Ethnic Studies, comparative study and interdisciplinary scholarship move us into a borderland of interconnecting and conflicting histories within institutional structures that leave little place for interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and comparative departments. This fact forces both Black Studies and ethnic-specific and comparative Ethnic Studies units into an analogous space. The organizational issues discussed earlier address negotiating this institutional borderland.

In this section I discuss the ways double consciousness, the Black/White binary, *mestiza* consciousness, and borderland spaces serve in Black Studies and Ethnic Studies as constructions emanating from experience that simultaneously illuminate experience – in other words, as epistemological constructions.

As I discuss elsewhere, "The institutional and structural development of African-American Studies derived its guiding principles, structures, methodologies, and approaches from various interpretations of or responses to [the Du Boisian construct] of double consciousness" (J. E. Butler 2000a: 142). In that essay, I analyze approaches to Black Studies as outlined by Henry Louis Gates, Perry A. Hall, and Molefi Asante, "three scholars who during the 1990s advanced the most representative theoretical constructs for African American Studies" (ibid: 143). I contend that Gates and Hall replicate the self/other binary in Du Boisian double consciousness in ways different from one another, offering little movement towards the resolution of that binary or toward working generatively off the tensions between the agency of selfhood as it encounters the oppressive-

ness of the dominating other. Asante, I argue, excludes significant and generative interaction with the other of the binary. Du Bois, I point out, clearly calls for a continuous movement toward the *disruption* of the self/other dichotomy through the merging of the Negro and the American. Inherent to this merging is the ideal of shared power and cultural exchange of the best of the traditions. The Du Boisian struggle is for the "self," the Negro, and the "other," the American to *merge* to attain "self-conscious manhood" and to lose neither of the older selves. I suggest also that "The remainder of *The Souls of Black Folk* examines eloquently the role white power plays in maintaining the dichotomy, documenting and proposing ways for African Americans to disrupt it" (ibid). Similarly:

> Correcting Gates, Hall, and Asante to address the self/other dichotomy means asserting the African-American self as seeking wholeness and empowerment in contradiction to the fragmented self projected by the dominant Other. It also means recognizing the primacy of race and foregrounding race and racialization in methodology that examines the ways race and racialization are modified and modulated by intersections with class, ethnicity, gender, and sexual identity. The Du Boisian dichotomous dialectic is still significant in the postmodern borderlands, but it must not be misread as simply a statement of a factual binary. Rather, Du Bois signals the borderlands when he calls for a consciousness based on a merger that he well knows and demonstrates is fraught with ethnocentrism, racism, and sexism. And he signals and lives the dogged battle of self-assertion and agency in the face of the dehumanizing "other." (Ibid)

Interestingly, the recognition, analysis, and disruption of the Black/White binary has been implicit in Black Studies from its inception. What has been lacking, I think, is clarity in distinguishing the purpose and value of historical and textual study (used broadly) from the purpose and value of analytical, cultural, and theoretical study, and the ways the two should inform one another. Another way of putting it is that Black Studies and Ethnic Studies suffer – as do the humanities and social sciences – from invoking rather than reading texts and privileging discipline-based theory over texts and over theorizing from texts and experience immediately relevant to the fields. Thus, while advocating American Indian, Asian American, and Chicano/a, Latino/a Studies in their own right, I simultaneously advocate analyzing the relationship among these studies and Black Studies in regard to the Black/White binary, rather than, as we have begun to characterize it, moving *beyond* the Black/White binary. The Black/White binary, or the color-line of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, exists now as a shifting state of transition, questioned, denied, reinforced by individual and group action, legally invalidated and a part of the active unconsciousness of this nation. While work is being conducted in comparative legal studies that examines rulings and precedents based not only on the Black/White binary but also on the ambiguity of racial delineations and the role that binary and Blackness play in those delineations, conceptualizing this work in the context of Black Studies or Ethnic Studies means analyzing both the effects of and

possibilities in regard to identity presented by double consciousness and *mestiza* consciousness in the experiences of racialized ethnic Americans, White Americans, women, and gays and lesbians. In comparative studies, the Black/White binary in the self/other binaries in other racialized histories and experiences, as they encounter whiteness, functions as a defining and epistemological construct.

Mestiza Consciousness and the Borderlands

The paradigms of borderlands and *mestiza* consciousness, like double consciousness and the Black/White binary, emanate from experience (see G. Anzaldúa 1987). As double consciousness and the Black/White binary have epistemic value for Black Studies and comparative Ethnic Studies, similarly the paradigms of borderlands and *mestiza* consciousness have epistemic value for Chicana Studies and Ethnic Studies. All four invoked together illuminate sites of comparison, of conflict, of significant difference and similarity.

For example, from 1992 through 1994, I co-directed three ten-day summer institutes, funded by the Ford Foundation, for a total of approximately 300 faculty from 27 community colleges and 4 four-year institutions in the state of Washington. The sessions were structured around morning plenary comparative study and afternoon ethnic-specific study. I used as my guiding principle for organizing the curriculum of the Cultural Pluralism Summer Institute a definition of a cooperative, relational, cultural pluralism that I had adapted to reflect what I saw then as crossing the boundaries of people of color's marginality, and I had first begun to think through that in my dissertation when exploring a pedagogy for Black Studies. Now I see it describes more so the possibility to work continually toward the disruption of binaries in identity. Such disruption has significant implications for scholarship, methodology, and pedagogy. This disruption, as a process and as a generative end, both productively generates synthesis and works off of contradictions. Thus, it provides a paradigm for the realization of the democratic aspirations of the US through the dialectic of knowledge and social action. I find myself invoking that definition in Introduction to Black Studies classes, comparative American Ethnic literature classes, and classes of literary theory. It is a reworked definition of one offered in 1971 by Stent, Hazard, and Rivlin. The italics represent my additions:

> A state of equal coexistence and cooperation in a mutually supportive relationship with the boundaries or framework of one nation of people of *differing ethnicities* and diverse cultures with significantly different patterns of belief, behavior, color, and in many cases with different languages. To achieve cultural pluralism, *the nation, the communities, the individuals must constantly seek to identify and work within the context of identifying the unity that is in diversity, and work generatively with the tensions between the individual and the group. Within the context of a generative, cooperative pluralism*, each person must be aware of and secure in *his/her* own identity, and be willing to extend to others the same respect and rights that *he/she*

> expects to enjoy, *and the "one," the "unum" of the nation is contextualized by the "pluribus," the recognition of and engagement of multiple perspectives, multiple centers of being, beliefs, and behavior. Boundaries and limits of behavior are established, reconsidered and reestablished through mutual consideration, mutual resources, and mutual sharing of resources.*

This enhanced definition places in action the dialectics between individual and community, self, and other, between difference and similarity. It stresses these dynamics as necessary to community and nation-building. In such dynamics, power and dominance are restricted, as rights of the individual to individual, individual to community, and community to community are determined dialectically.[10]

The teaching faculty all possessed expertise in either American Indian, African American, Asian American, Chicana/o, Latino/a Studies, or American Studies, and resonated with that conceptualization of cultural pluralism. Together, we identified comparative themes and dimensions of African American, Asian American, Native American, Chicano/Chicana, Latino/Latina history, literature, and politics. The following themes emerged:

1 Double consciousness and ambivalence as a key comparative theme.
2 Assimilation and Americanization as experienced and responded to.
3 Internalization of the "other" connected to race and ethnicity.
4 Development of personal and community identities, and of historical and contemporary metaphors of double consciousness, *mestiza*, and borderland consciousness.

From discussion of these themes emerged the following topics for comparative plenary sessions:

1 Comparative worldviews and curriculum change.
2 Containment and slavery.
3 The social construction of race and ethnicity.
4 Deconstructing ways of viewing race: legal histories.
5 Double consciousness, *mestiza* consciousness, and identity.
6 Euro-Americans, ethnicity, and multiculturalism.

What clearly emerged from the sixth theme was the significance of whiteness as an identity and the symbiotic relationship between assimilation and race. From all emerged the significant differences as well in history, political, and economic situations, and cultural, gendered, and social perceptions. Because they emerged in dialogue toward a common goal of good scholarship, even the most conflicting differences could be engaged. My guiding assumption for these workshops and for the analogous development of Ethnic Studies was the possibility of a cooperative, relational pluralism that connects, matrix-like, the merged entities or of

identity with a *mestiza* consciousness to result in the American, the United States citizen, the America that Tocqueville projected, without the "tyranny of the majority" and binary individualism at the expense of community.

What I imagined in working to establish Black Studies was for scholarship, pedagogy, and processes of institutionalization to work off a generative binary of double consciousness/*mestiza* consciousness, thereby lending clarity to the borderlands by providing what Anzaldúa calls us to become, a *crossroads*.

> To survive the Borderlands
> you must live *sin fronteras*
> be a crossroads
> (G. Anzaldúa 1987: 195)

This crossroads, *sin fronteras*, without borders, becomes an epistemological site on multiple levels, be it the human encounter of, say, an American Indian and an African American, the scholarly encounter of histories or texts studied comparatively, or the various forms of political, legal, and economic segregation and discrimination across groups. In ethnic-specific studies we need, then, to foreground explicitly the implicit study of Whiteness in Black history, or Asian American history, for example. Conceptualization of both ethnic-specific and comparative Ethnic Studies as borderland studies with the *dialectic of double consciousness/mestiza consciousness as the epistemological disruptive paradigm* foregrounds and helps place generatively the dynamics among Americanization and racialization; Whiteness and Blackness; interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinarity; texts and theory; experiences and legacies; gender, class, religion, and sexual identity, as well as the relationship of ethnic-specific studies and comparative Ethnic Studies to American Studies and other related interdisciplinary and area studies.

Double consciousness, *mestiza* consciousness, and the borderland metaphor, all lead epistemically to the crossroad metaphor from which should evolve a multi-layered and multiply approached *modus operandi*, a theoretical approach to Ethnic Studies as we explore the differing histories and legacies – all in the context of the persistence of the color-line in the borderlands.

In "Reflections on the Borderlands," I point out two passages – each key to the comparison between double consciousness and *mestiza* consciousness – in the context of expanding *mestiza* consciousness as an epistemic metaphor to include others (not simplistically or in place of) in addition to Chicanas.

> *Du Bois*
> The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, – a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of the world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One everywhere 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. (W. E. B. Du Bois 1993: 364–5)

Anzaldúa
La mestiza is a product of the transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another. Being tricultural, monolingual, bilingual or multilingual, speaking a patois, and in a state of perpetual transition, the *mestiza* faces the dilemma of the mixed breed: which collectivity does the daughter of a darkskinned mother listen to?

El choque de un alma atrapado entre el mundo del espíritu y el mundo de la ténica a veces la deja entullada. Cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems, *la mestiza* undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war. Like all people, we perceive the version of reality that our culture communicates. Like others having or living in more than one culture, we get multiple, often opposing messages. The coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference causes *un choque,* a cultural collision. (G. Anzaldúa 1987: 78)

Du Bois
The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, – this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to *merge his double self into a better and truer self.* In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of White Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in the face. (W. E. B. Du Bois 1993: 365; my emphasis)

Anzaldúa
The new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode – nothing is thrust out, the good, the bad, the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else. (G. Anzaldúa 1987: 79)

Reading Du Bois in the context of his life work, I interpreted and do interpret his reference to Negro blood as meaning Negro culture and racial experience. The crossroads of culture, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, and class provide the matrix of what we call Ethnic Studies. That matrix, grounded in text and experience, holds the possibility of not only establishing the fields of Black Studies, Asian American Studies, Chicano/a Studies, Latino/a Studies, and American Indian Studies, and their comparative study. It also holds the possibility of revitalizing the humanities, social sciences, and the arts, so that they can hold humanity and its best potential at their core. This is the legacy of Black Studies, the first of Ethnic Studies, and the potential of the emerging fields of

ethnic-specific and American Indian Studies. From my experiences, I believe that in our departments and programs, we are just beginning to become aware of the personal, scholarly, and pedagogical interactions necessary to engage this legacy.

Notes

1 See the final chapter of Bell (1992), especially pages 195–200.

2 Satya Mohanty sees objectivity "inextricably tied to social and historical conditions, and objective knowledge is the product not of disinterested theoretical inquiry so much as of particular kinds of social practice. In the case of social phenomena such as sexism and racism, whose distorted representation benefits the powerful and established groups and institutions, an attempt at an objective explanation is necessarily continuous with oppositional political struggles. Objective knowledge of such social phenomena is in fact often dependent on the theoretical knowledge that activism creates, for without these alternative constructions, Harding notes, our capacity to interpret and understand the dominant ideologies and institutions is limited to those created or sanctioned by these very ideologies and institutions [Harding 1991: 127]" (Mohanty 2000: 39–40).

I offer the term "contextualized objectivity" in an attempt to clarify the role of social, historical, cultural, economic, and political conditions in the shaping of objectivity. Once such a conceptualization of objectivity is accepted, such redundancy will not be necessary. I developed the concept in the paper "Realism and African American Literary Critical Paradigms" at the 2001 Modern Language Association conference as part of the panel "Future of Minority Studies: Redefining Identity Politics."

3 The New England Region of the NCBS during the late 1970s was a model for the organization in its networking among Black faculty at neighboring institutions and supporting faculty in the tenure process. Unfortunately, the model never went beyond the several participating New England schools – Smith, Brown, Bowdoin, Boston State, Salem State, Northeastern, Rhode Island College, and the University of Rhode Island – because public/private institutional splits, gender, and class issues, in my opinion, intervened.

4 See J. E. Butler (2001a: 18–41; 1989) and Butler and Walter (1991: 1–19) for a comprehensive treatment of the place of Black Studies and Ethnic Studies scholarship in the liberal arts curriculum, its challenges, assumptions, and the "heresies" it must commit.

5 I have written extensively on this topic in J. E. Butler (2000a, 2000b). In the latter, I compare Du Bois's concept of double consciousness with Gloria Anzaldúa's *mestiza* consciousness.

6 Houston Baker (1995) cautions "would-be 'Afro-Americanist cultural studies academics'" to understand the empiricists/conceptualists binary in the field as well as the ways "Blackness" revises or extends "notions of subject, identity, progress, and technology," and how institutions might well use Black Studies, Black students and faculty as "a theme park, and you its chief exhibit."

7 Herein lies the brilliance of the work of the late George Kent, which I cite frequently, and which deserves revisiting seriously by literary critics; see George Kent, *Blackness and the Adventure of Western Culture* (1972).

8 The works are too numerous to list here, but they are multidisciplinary, drawing from the fields of art, theatre, folk culture, religion, diasporic cultural expressions, and music, as well as history, politics, philosophy, and economics.

9 In my experience, faculty are impatient with trying to define, describe, and discuss interdisciplinary methodology, even when they are paid to do so in foundation-funded projects. There is little distinction made among interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and cross-disciplinary

terminology or methodology. This lack of clarity about interdisciplinarity contributes to the lack of a theory or theories of Black Studies or Ethnic Studies. Also, the hidden issue of where Black Studies or Ethnic Studies should reside – in the humanities or social sciences – exacerbates the problem. Many departments are housed in the social sciences because either their founders resided in that area or because the field was viewed as race relations, the province of the social sciences. Thus, short shrift institutionally is given to the hermeneutic and artistic epistemology of Black Studies in the humanities and the arts, despite literature arguably being the area most productive in Black Studies and Ethnic Studies.

10 In a recent essay I propose another word for the kind of dialectics I am describing in this chapter: *dianommics*. Such a coinage would capture the implicit generative production of unresolved but engaged theses and antitheses when synthesis is not immediately or foreseeably possible. See J. E. Butler (2002) for a discussion and chart comparing Western "logos" to the African "nommo." The implications should be great for theorizing not only in African-American literature.

CHAPTER **SEVEN**

A Debate on Activism in Black Studies

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Manning Marable

A Call to Protect Academic Integrity from Politics

Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

The founding fathers of what we now think of as African-American Studies were acutely aware of the distinction between scholarship that is political and politicized scholarship. Writing in 1925, the illustrious black bibliophile Arthur Schomburg worried aloud about propaganda masquerading as scholarship: work that was "on the whole pathetically over-corrective, ridiculously over-laudatory; apologetics turned into biography," work marred at its core by "puerile controversy and petty braggadocio," work that "has glibly tried to prove half of the world's geniuses to have been Negroes and to trace the pedigree of the nineteenth-century Americans from the Queen of Sheba."

The great black intellectual and activist W. E. B. Du Bois himself, writing in 1933, warned black scholars against "whitewashing or translating wish into fact." Closer to our own time, the sociologist Orlando Patterson memorably warned against the sort of Black Studies programs that utilize the "three P's approach – black history as the discovery of princes, pyramids and pageantry." Such an approach, he argued, "does violence to the facts . . . is ideologically bankrupt and is methodologically and theoretically deficient."

Would that these eloquent warnings had been heeded. Today, scholars in the field of African-American Studies struggle to agree on the most basic facts of our history. A vocal minority seeks the deepest truths about black America in cultist, outlandish claims about the racial ancestry of Cleopatra or the genetics of "souls." It's within this turbulent context that questions about the relation between scholarship and activism inevitably arise.

Intellectuals like Schomburg and Du Bois thought that all scholarship about "the Negro would be political," either implicitly or explicitly, given the fact that, as Schomburg put it, "The Negro has been a man without history because

he has been considered a man without a worthy culture." That's why even Schomburg, a man who loved the library like life itself, argued for what he called an *a priori* "racial motive" in black scholarship, while Du Bois stressed that "the American Negro problem is and must be the center" of the scholarly concerns of the "college-bred Negro." Since few, if any, colleges and universities offered courses that included content about African Americans, they viewed the scholar's task – and his gift to the broader culture – as contributing to political progress by establishing the worth of the black culture in the court of academic and public opinion.

In truth, the ideal of wholly disinterested scholarship – in any field of research – will probably remain an elusive one. But it's one thing to acknowledge the political valence of even the "purest" scholarship; it's another to demand of it immediate political utility. The ideal of knowledge for its own sake – what Robert Nisbet once called the "academic dogma" – may be unfashionable, and even unrealizable; but it should command our respect all the same. For it remains the basic rationale of the university. The scholar who analyzes the nineteenth-century slave narrative and its relation to the sentimental novel shouldn't feel guilty because her research isn't directly aiding the cause of distributive justice.

But scholars are citizens, too, and if it is wrongheaded to demand political payoff from basic research, it would be equally untenable to demand that research be quarantined from the real-world considerations that weigh so heavily upon us. Elsewhere, I've called for departments of African-American Studies to join with historically black colleges and universities in establishing sophomore- and junior-year summer internships for community development (through organizations like the NAACP and the Children's Defense Fund) to combat teenage pregnancy, so-called black-on-black homicide, and the transmission of HIV.

Yet those who would enlist the academy in the cause of activism must confront the awkward fact that the political views of academics can no more be regimented than their scholarly opinions. In the socialist tradition thoughtful work on the political economy of black America has been done by such scholars as Gerald Horne, Adolph Reed, and Manning Marable, who urge us to rethink the basic institutions of Western liberal democracy. In a conservative vein, such black scholars as Thomas Sowell and Walter Williams have argued that the problems of black America must be addressed primarily through voluntarist means. Obviously, both positions cannot be correct, but you can't gauge their validity by the relative compassion or commitment of their proponents. Policy disputes must be subjected to intellectual analysis, performed without a thumb on the scale. And it would be bitterly ironic if a field that was founded upon a protest against exclusion should itself become fearful of pluralism, either intellectual or political.

A typically vanguardist form of scholarly vanity is, of course, to suppose that we have a unique purchase on political wisdom, beyond the reach of ordinary citizens. Yet, in the case of African-American Studies, the yearning for political potency is altogether understandable. Even as the academic field has become

institutionalized, black America continues to suffer massive inequities that are the legacy of historical racism. To complicate the picture further, black America has itself become enormously fissured with a widening abyss between a growing middle class and an increasingly isolated underclass. Unfortunately, many of our conventional traditional modes of analysis simply fail to engage the vexing nature of these class differentials. "People don't care that you know," a street slogan has it, "until they know that you care." But genuine progress will depend not just on caring more, but knowing more.

Public policy issues can indeed be a central concern of African-American Studies, as they are at Harvard University, the University of Michigan, University of California at Los Angeles, Columbia University, and elsewhere. They raise conundrums as challenging as any you'll find in the academy. Thirty years ago no one predicted the current class divide that insistently raises questions to which there are still no satisfactory answers. How do we put our people to work? How do we expand the black working and middle classes? How do structural and behavioral causes of poverty interact, and how can they be defeated?

These are among the pressing issues that public policy scholars must address if they are to generate the new analyses and policy recommendations we desperately need. But the crisis of black America can't be willed away by commitment alone. On the level of policy, of practical politics, it demands empirical and analytical rigor: in short, the string of the academic dogma.

As W. E. B. Du Bois, himself a committed activist who never abandoned the life of the mind, once wrote, "Let us not beat wings in impotent frenzy" but "rather conquer the world by thought and brain and plan."[1]

A Plea that Scholars Act upon, Not Just Interpret, Events

Manning Marable

African-American Studies, once considered an insurgent outsider in white academic circles, has in recent years become part of the intellectual establishment.

Nearly all major universities have established programs, departments, and research centers in African-American Studies as well as other innovative interdisciplinary programs in Gender Studies and Ethnic Studies. The core requirements of undergraduate curricula usually include one or more of these courses. Foundations are now actively supporting a number of major research projects initiated by Black Studies scholars. Most programs work cooperatively with other traditional departments, including those programs that have an ideological adherence to Afrocentrism.

Yet this success has been achieved at a certain price. As Black Studies is being assimilated into mainstream academia, perhaps it is important to restate the key ideas that informed the historical development of the field itself. At the heart of Black Studies is the black intellectual tradition, an enormous body of scholarship

in the social sciences and humanities by and about people of African descent. That intellectual tradition has generally been "descriptive," "corrective," and "prescriptive."

First, scholars sought to richly describe the contours of black life and history, examining the reality of the black experience from the point of view of black people themselves.

The black intellectual tradition has also tried to correct the racist stereotypes and assumptions of black genetic or cultural inferiority that unfortunately still exist within much white scholarship. It challenged Eurocentric notions of beauty, which have often been grounded in a contempt for black culture.

Finally, Black Studies was also prescriptive: it was an integral part of the struggle to eradicate racism and empower black people. In short, there were both theoretical and practical connections between scholarship and social change.

Yet many Black Studies departments today no longer link the two. The function of Black Studies scholarship should be more than the celebration of heritage and self-esteem; it must utilize history and culture as tools through which an oppressed people can transform their lives and the entire society. Scholars have an obligation not just to interpret but to act.

The classical black intellectual tradition that has developed over more than a century reflected these general tenets and included overtly political goals. W. E. B. Du Bois was not only a great sociologist and historian but also the cofounder of the NAACP and the "father of Pan-Africanism." C. L. R. James was a brilliant cultural critic and historian who was also intimately involved in black movements in Africa and the Caribbean. Even more conservative scholars like the sociologist Charles S. Johnson actively used their scholarship in the effort to dismantle Jim Crow segregation.

The now-classic texts in Black Studies written before the 1960s were largely produced either outside the academy or at segregated all-black colleges. These earlier scholars, like Du Bois, understood that critical research into the heart of black life and culture had to be interdisciplinary. The tools of Black Studies scholarship could not be narrowly confined to the traditional apolitical approaches set by Euro-American intellectuals.

If Black Studies is to continue its development as a theoretically rich interdisciplinary field, it must continually challenge itself to understand contemporary black America. That means interpreting the new socioeconomic, cultural, and global forces at work rapidly restructuring African-American communities as well as Africa and the black diaspora.

Most contemporary socioeconomic problems confronting black America cannot be adequately addressed by using the traditional racial strategies of "integration" or "separatism" that have dominated black political discourse for more than a century. Integrationist leaders successfully fought against racial segregation a generation ago, creating an expanded black middle class. But the affluence and accomplishments of this new "talented tenth," produced in part by affirmative action, may have diverted our attention from the current

crises of class inequality and poverty experienced by millions of other African Americans.

The opposite approach of group separatism, characterized by Gayatri Spivak as "identitarianism," encloses African Americans within the narrow boundaries of their own emergences. The deeply conservative, patriarchal separatism represented by Louis Farrakhan, among others, represents a political dead end. Racial fundamentalism pushes oppressed minorities into an intellectual and political ghetto.

A new paradigm is required, one that would involve scholars who seek to substantially transform the society that perpetuates black inequality. This new approach must reach out, in particular, to the young generation of black Americans, born after the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, that is increasingly assaulted by the forces of unemployment, imprisonment, and social alienation.

Black Studies has begun to integrate the critical perspectives of class, gender, and sexuality into its major projects. However, too many Black Studies programs have a tendency to focus largely on the arts and humanities and much less on political economy, public policy, and urban ethnography. This literary and cultural studies orientation should be balanced by a greater emphasis on social science.

But perhaps the greatest challenge for African-American Studies is not only theoretical but political: how to reduce or eliminate the destructive consequences of institutional racism and inequality in a liberal democratic state.

This is no longer just an American question. Brazil, South Africa, and other nations are also exploring the complex relationships between racial identities, inequality, and power. We need a black scholarship that recognizes that the way we think about "race" is changing because of the rapidly growing communities. "Races" are not fixed categories. Thus, an oppressed racial minority in one historical period, like the nineteenth-century Irish and Jews in the United States, could be incorporated into the white mainstream. What may be occurring here (as well as in South Africa) is a redefinition of both race and class as a segment of the minority population moves into the corporate and political establishment at the same time that most are pushed even further down the economic ladder.

Black Studies is challenged to raise hard new questions about the meaning of race in American life. To do so it must construct a new analytic language and theoretical approaches toward understanding this society. We should create new black "think tanks," bringing scholars together with representatives of civil rights, labor, women's, and poor people's organizations to develop public policy initiatives.

That is why many black scholars have joined feminists and labor and community activists to develop the Black Radical Congress, a grassroots political organization created to revitalize the black freedom movement. We can only advance our field of scholarship by reaffirming the connection between the

intellectual work and public advocacy of Du Bois, James, Paul Robeson, and many others who established and developed Black Studies.

Notes

This chapter is reprinted from *Dispatches from the Ebony Tower: Intellectuals Confront the African American Experience*, edited by Manning Marable (2000b). It appears here by permission of Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Manning Marable.

1 W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Study of the Negro Problems" (2000/1898) – eds.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Singing the Challenges: The Arts and Humanities as Collaborative Sites in African-American Studies

Herman Beavers

In a recent exchange with Henry Louis Gates on the role of activism in the field of African-American Studies at the present time, Manning Marable makes the observation that "too many Black Studies programs have a tendency to focus largely on the arts and humanities and much less on political economy, public policy, and urban ethnography." He goes on to state "this literary and cultural studies orientation should be balanced by a greater emphasis on social science." In his view, the "greatest challenge" for African-American Studies departments and programs is "how to reduce or eliminate the destructive consequences of institutional racism and inequality in a liberal democratic state."[1]

I must say at the outset that I hold Professor Marable in very high esteem: his commitment to balancing his activism with the kinds of entrepreneurial initiatives required for African-American Studies to flourish in the academy at the present time is beyond question. I am not quite prepared, however, to accept his contention that programs and courses which emphasize the arts and humanities are somehow not as substantive in their intent as those which center on the social sciences and public policy.

Before I offer suggestions for how we might adopt a both/and attitude toward the content to be found in African-American Studies rather than an either/or approach, I want to state unequivocally that I take seriously Professor Marable's apt description of the African-American Studies intellectual and social project as one which has been "descriptive, corrective, and prescriptive." Thus, when he suggests that scholars in African-American Studies must undertake to "correct the racist stereotypes and assumptions of black genetic or cultural inferiority" that continue to predominate, not only in the academy, but in the larger public

sphere as well, I would point to the huge amount of cultural production in the areas of cinema, television, and music as sites that have emerged, since the 1980s, as important touchstones for scholarly analysis. Moreover, with the emergence in the last thirty years of African-American writing in established cultural forms like the novel, poetry, and drama, in addition to the video industry that accompanies the production of popular music, we are greatly in need of the kind of analysis that can deconstruct and critique the tremendous quantity of cultural production that is either aimed at the black community, based on circumscribed assumptions about black life, or limited in its ability to project a view of black life that resists nihilism.

In a book entitled *Representing Black Culture*, political scientist Richard Merelman coins the phrase "cultural projection" to describe "the conscious or unconscious effort by a social group and its allies to place new images of itself before other social groups and the general public" (R. Merelman 1995: 3). In his view, there are four forms of cultural projection: syncretic, hegemonic, polarization, and counter-hegemony. Syncretism refers to "a form of mutual cultural projection" which incorporates subordinate imagery into the images generally reserved for the dominant group (ibid: 5).

Hegemony, in keeping with Gramsci, refers to those moments in cultural projection when "the dominant group controls the flow of cultural production." Polarization occurs when dominant and subordinate groups "reject the other's efforts at cultural projection." Counter-hegemony occurs when subordinates "convert dominants to subordinate versions of the world" (ibid: 6).

This becomes evident if one looks at the curricula of the institutions where some of the most prestigious African-American Studies departments and programs are located. William Pinar is correct when he asserts that a curriculum is a racial text (W. Pinar 1993: 60). Thus, even as many campuses have instituted initiatives that emphasize multiculturalism, it is still the case that, taken as a whole, curricula are hegemonic in overall content. If the arts and humanities have been emphasized in recent years, then it is because the postmodern moment is one in which the politics of representation has come to the foreground as an important site of struggle. I want to suggest that due simply to the fact that institutions of higher learning are invested in a rhetoric of inclusiveness that falls apart under close scrutiny, the hierarchy of responses Merelman describes can manifest itself across a wide spectrum of courses and extracurricular programming, which is why Pinar's observation is so prescient; it demands that we utilize poststructuralist analysis to conclude that a "curriculum" is not a value-free enterprise that articulates preconceptual experience, but rather a "text" that must be read in light of its investment in maintaining the status quo.

Race offers one way to "understand curriculum as a discursive formation of identity and difference" (W. Pinar 1993: 61). But in my view, African-American Studies' most intriguing discussions have occurred around the ways that findings from social science become manifest in cultural projection. Hence, our students' ever-increasing interest in hip-hop culture offers an important window into how

individuals utilize cultural production to address what they see as their circumscribed place in society. Though music videos suggest all the ways that such activity is nothing if not fraught with contradictions and faulty supposition, our study of them can produce a level of dialogue that must partake of the social sciences in order to have depth and purpose.

What complicates such a hierarchy of responses to cultural production, of course, is gender. Thus one might recall, by way of example, that moment in Spike Lee's film *She's Gotta Have It* when the film's protagonist Nola Darling describes how she met one of her lovers. After a montage of potential suitors appears on screen to offer examples of how black men approach black women, Lee offers a sequence that is meant to be a recreation of Jamie and Nola's first encounter. Though the film has asserted that it is a diegetic unfolding of Nola's desire to relate what really happened between her and her three lovers, an examination of the cinematic aspects of the scene suggests that Lee is in no way invested in presenting the encounter between Jamie and Nola from her point of view. This is evidenced by the fact that Nola is always captured in either medium shots where she passes through the frame, or she is the object of Jamie's gaze, emphasized by Lee's use of a handheld camera to represent Jamie's position behind Nola, following her down the street.

While we could argue that *She's Gotta Have It* is a film aimed at a black audience, leading us to categorize the film as a polarizing cultural projection, considering gender forces us to think about the ways the film's deployment of cinematic conventions fails to avoid the objectification of the black female body. This brings me to the following point, namely, that African-American Studies is best thought of as an interdisciplinary field, which means that those who work in the field should be able to bring a number of analytical and critical instruments to bear on subjects such as Lee's film and other forms of cultural production. What I suggest here is that we might spend time discussing the film's cinematic elements, but it would also be productive to talk about the ways that the economics of American cinema (here, as it is impacted by the politics of independent filmmaking) shape not only the kinds of images we are given to consume, but also how those images are presented.[2] Further, because these images function as the embodiment of a process that must often take up issues of capital investment and the return on said investment as central concerns, as well as the manifestation of both racial and gender ideology, what might be the most pragmatic approach – should it be the case that one individual may not be capable of producing a "reading of the text" that can capture it as a cultural, economic, historical, and political event – is for African-American Studies to foment a dialogue where all the proverbial bases can be covered.

This brings me to the following consideration. In 1997 the African-American Studies program at the University of Pennsylvania sponsored a conference commemorating its 25th anniversary. Though there were several panels that addressed the political and historical issues we often associate with the field, we also included two panels that moved the discussion off the beaten track. The first dealt with

the issue of capital investment in the African-American community. To that end, we invited two of the principal members of a Chicago-based investment firm who were involved in the development and renovation of the Bronzeville neighborhood, made famous in the poems of Gwendolyn Brooks. The second panel dealt with the intersection of health policy and research within the goals of African-American Studies. After a wide-ranging dialogue that included scholars from the fields of behavioral science, nursing, cancer research, and counseling, it became clear that it is imperative that we be more inclusive in terms of the types of scholars we view as "doing African-American Studies."

If this is not persuasive, however, I would pose the question as to why we have not produced more institutions like Rites and Reason theatre at Brown University, which for more than twenty-five years has employed a "research to performance" model where scholars and playwrights collaborate to produce a script that incorporates contemporary scholarship in the areas of ethnography, sociology, psychology, and history (among others). Moreover, the theatre has often presented productions of a play and then, after a discussion with members of the community (referred to as "Folk thought"), presented a revised version of the play that incorporates the audience's criticism.[3]

To be sure, one reason that we have not reproduced this model is that there is a lack of institutional support for such a venture.[4] However, as someone who has a life as an artist, apart and distinct from my scholarly life, what is clear is that the opportunity to collaborate with social and behavioral scientists is attractive because it provides access to new sources of language, experiences to dramatize in film, art, or print, and ultimately leads us toward a more effective approach to the descriptive aspects of the African-American Studies enterprise.

Further, in a moment where we have witnessed the closing of the Tony Award-winning Crossroads Theatre in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and the very real prospect of the failure of the Freedom Theatre in Philadelphia, it seems to me that this might be the perfect time for African-American Studies programs to collaborate, not only with each other, but also with other campus and community groups to fill the breach. This can be done in any of several ways. First, it is essential that we be involved with the organization, development, and growth of student artistic groups on campus. On campuses where resources for student productions are tight, African-American Studies might direct some resources toward student groups working to manifest a campus presence. Second, we must encourage majors and minors to undertake artistic projects that reach beyond the campus walls and into the surrounding community. Third, we must not be so motivated by professional considerations that we eschew the opportunity to interact with students and members of the community who seek our participation in cultural events, even if that role turns out to be consultative or as commentators speaking to the audience after the production.

In short, the arts and humanities can lead us to what Richard Merelman suggests is a desirable state of affairs: that moment when the cultural projection of the black community persuades the dominant community of our worth as human

beings, as purveyors of compelling narratives regarding the human odyssey. And the scholarly expertise we have accrued working in African-American Studies can be utilized in community settings where film screenings, readings, book discussions, or performances are taking place. Even further, however, we might wish to work to find the resources and strategies necessary to bring scholars and cultural workers together in the team-teaching of courses, the presentation of research findings through dramatic performance, and the development of courses that fuse creativity and scholarly analysis.

Ultimately, African-American Studies exists because individuals with, in some instances, disparate kinds of training and viewpoints decide to come together to produce a quality of dialogue that emphasizes the process of trying to generate a multifaceted dialogue, one which enhances the efforts of each of the participants in their specific fields of endeavor. I have been distressed by the sense that those who engage in the arts have often been marginalized in the field of African-American Studies because they were thought to be incapable of offering the kind of "hard" research results that flow from conventional social scientific scholarship. But as I have intimated, there is yet a variety of formations available to us that can help us to achieve the goals described above by Professor Marable even as we give strong consideration to the kinds of calls for artistic excellence being issued by Toni Morrison, August Wilson, Wynton Marsalis, and Jessye Norman. In light of this, I would suggest that the role of African-American Studies is to have as great an impact on the "everyday" experiences of black people as possible. As Melba Joyce Boyd has argued, this should not be done in a spirit of self-congratulation but rather in a spirit of "ongoing revolution."

Notes

1 Quotations from Marable (2000a: 191), reprinted as chapter 7 in this volume – eds.
2 This is especially true since Nielsen ratings have shown that black television viewing habits and preferences are radically different from the viewing habits of whites. The implications of this, as John Fiske intimates, are that an economic analysis of black consumption of material goods and services could conclude the presence of a positive correlation between television and the consumption of snack foods, or further, television and high levels of cholesterol in black heart patients who watch television. My point here is not that these are conclusions we reach via speculation, but rather that a dialogue between scholars working in popular culture and economics or healthcare might lead in a variety of productive directions.
3 My description of the process at Rites and Reason theatre is based on the time I spent as a graduate student at Brown University, where one of my professors was the co-founder of the theatre, the brilliant George Houston Bass. It was from my association with him that I came to understand both the artistic value and the tremendous potential for social change embodied in the theatre's mission. [For more on Bass and Rites and Reason theatre, see chapter 3, this volume – eds.]
4 But we must not shy away from another explanation: here, our propensity to invest African-American Studies with the vicissitudes of personality, which leads us to the unfortunate conclusion that we should, in all instances, avoid replicating a good idea.

CHAPTER **NINE**

On How We Mistook the Map for the Territory, and Reimprisoned Ourselves in Our Unbearable Wrongness of Being, of *Desêtre*: Black Studies Toward the Human Project

Sylvia Wynter

The idea that Western thought might be exotic if viewed from another landscape never presents itself to most Westerners.

Amiri Baraka (1963)

It is the opinion of many Black writers, I among them, that the Western aesthetic has run its course . . . We advocate a cultural revolution in art and ideas . . . In fact, what is needed is a whole new system of ideas.

Larry Neal (1971)

I would like to refer you to an essay by the late Dr. Du Bois where he . . . says that, up until the point that he really came to terms with Marx and Freud, he thought "truth wins." But when he came to reflect on the set of lived experiences that he had, and the notions of these two men, he saw . . . that if one was concerned about surviving . . . about . . . "the good life" and moving any society toward that, then you had to include a little something other than an interesting appeal to "truth" in some abstract, universal sense.

Gerald McWhorter (1969)

The emergence of the Black Studies Movement in its original thrust, before its later cooption into the mainstream of the very order of knowledge whose "truth" in "some abstract universal sense" it had arisen to contest, was inseparable from the parallel emergence of the Black Aesthetic/Black Arts movements and the central reinforcing relationship that had come to exist between them. Like the latter two movements, the struggle to institute Black Studies programs and departments in mainstream academia had also owed its momentum to the eruption of the separatist "Black Power" thrust of the Civil Rights Movement. It, too, had had its precursor stage in the intellectual ferment to which the first Southern integrationist phase of the Civil Rights Movement had given rise, as well as in the network of extracurricular institutions that had begun to call for the establishment of a Black university, including, *inter alia*, institutions such as the National Association for African-American Research, the Black Academy of Arts and Letters, the Institute of the Black World, the New School of Afro-American Thought, the Institute of Black Studies in Los Angeles, and Forum 66 in Detroit. The struggle for what was to become the institutionalization of Black Studies was to be spearheaded, however, by a recently enlarged cadre of Black student activists at what had been, hitherto, almost purely white mainstream universities, all of whose members had been galvanized by Stokely Carmichael's call, made in Greenwood, Mississippi, for a turning of the back on the earlier integrationist, "We shall overcome" goal of the first phase of the Civil Rights Movement, and for the adoption, instead, of the new separatist goal of Black Power.

All three movements had been moved to action by the 1968 murder of Martin Luther King, Jr. and by the toll of burning inner cities and angry riots that followed in its wake. These events were particularly decisive for the Black Studies Movement. The new willingness of mainstream university administrators to accede to the student activists' demands for the setting up of Black Studies programs and departments was made possible by the trauma that gripped the nation. Once established, these new programs and departments functioned to enable some of the major figures of the then far more powerful and dynamic Black Arts/Black Aesthetic movements to carry some of their work into the academic mainstream, even where they, too, like Black Studies as a whole itself, were to find their original transgressive intentions defused, their energies rechanneled as they came to be defined (and in many cases, actively to define themselves so) in new "multicultural terms" as African-American Studies; as such, it appeared as but one of the many diverse "Ethnic Studies" that now served to re-verify the very thesis of Liberal universalism against which the challenges of all three movements had been directed in the first place.

The destinies of the three movements were, in the end, to differ sharply. The apogee years for all three movements (1961–71) were to see the publication of a wide range of anthologies of poetry, theatre, fiction, and critical writings, but also of the publication of three scriptural texts specific to each. Whereas 1968 saw the publication of *Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writings*, edited by Leroi Jones and Larry Neal, as *the* definitive anthology that crystallized

the theoretical discourse and practice of the Black Arts Movement, 1969, which saw the publication of *Black Fire* in a paperback version, marked the publication of the proceedings of a 1968 symposium, *Black Studies in the University*, which had been organized by the Black Student Alliance at Yale University. The conference was financed by the Yale administration. In 1971 the edited collection of essays by Addison Gayle, Jr., *The Black Aesthetic*, as *the* definitive text of what was to become the dominant tendency of that movement, was also published.

The paradox here, however, was that in spite of the widespread popular dynamic of the Black Arts and Black Aesthetic movements, they were to disappear as if they had never been. They had been done in by several major developments. First, by the tapering off of the movement of social uprising that had been the Black Civil Rights Movement, in the context of the affirmative action programs which enabled the incorporation of the Black middle classes and socially mobile lower middle classes into the horizons of expectation, if still at a secondary level, of the generic white middle classes, ending with the separation of their integrationist goals from the still ongoing struggles of the Black lower and underclasses. At the same time, this separation had itself begun to be effected in the wider national context, both by the subsiding of radical New Left politics subsequent to the ending of the Vietnam War, as well as by the rightward swing taken by the society as a whole as a reaction against the tumultuous years of the 1960s.

Second, their demise was hastened by the defection of the most creatively original practitioner of the Black Arts Movement, Leroi Jones/Amiri Baraka, and his conversion from Black Power nationalism (of which the Black Arts/Black Aesthetic movements had been the "spiritual arm"), to the Maoist wing of Marxism-Leninism as a counter-universalism to the universalism of Liberalism which the Black Nationalist Movement had arisen to contest and as one which he hoped would avoid the trap of the cognitive and psycho-affective closure into which the Black Arts/Black Aesthetic movements seemed to have fallen.

Third, the rise of Black feminist thought and fiction, which took as one of their major targets the male and macho hegemonic aspect of the black nationalist aesthetic and its correlated Black Arts Movement, even where Black women had played as creative a role as the men, also took its toll.[1]

Baraka's Maoist-Leninist and the Black women's feminist defection were serious blows. The *coup de grâce* to both the Black Arts and the Black Aesthetic movements, however, was to be given by the hegemonic rise of a Black (soon to be "African-American") poststructuralist and "multicultural" literary theory and criticism spearheaded by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Since it was this thrust that was to displace and replace the centrality of the Black Aesthetic Movement, redefining the latter's Reformation call for an alternative aesthetic able to contest what Pierre Bourdieu (1984) was later to identify as the "monopoly of humanity" of our present mainstream bourgeois aesthetics, with the reformist call for an alternative

"African-American" literary canon ostensibly able to complement the Euro-American literary one and, therefore, to do for the now newly incorporated Black middle classes what the Euro-American literary canon did and continues to do for the generic, because white, and hegemonically Euro-American middle classes.

In her book *Black Women Novelists and the Nationalist Aesthetics* (1994), Madhu Dubey perceptively summarizes Gates's critique of the two movements whose disappearance he was instrumental in effecting. While not refuting his critique – which argued, *inter alia*, that the Black aestheticians had been duped by the tropes of figuration of the "text of blackness" – Dubey nevertheless poses a fundamental question, one that gave rise both to the title and the thrust of my argument. While she first notes that both the Black Aesthetics and Black Arts movements had sought to "unfix the notion of Blackness from the traditional color symbology of the West" and to challenge the "Western equation" of blackness "with ugliness, evil, corruption, and death," Gates's poststructuralist critique had now come to accuse their practitioners, in Derridian terms, of putting forward a "metaphysical concept" of blackness as presence and of having, thereby, instead of displacing an essentialist notion of identity, merely installed blackness as "another transcendent signified." This had then caused them to become entrapped by "racial essentialism," which by its "reversal of the Western definition of blackness" had come to depend "on the absent presence of the Western framework it sets out to subvert" (ibid: 28–9). The fact that Gates's poststructuralist activity itself depends on the "absent presence" of the very same Western framework that it was also ostensibly contesting did not detract from the success of his ongoing attacks on the Black Arts/Black Aesthetic notion of identity in terms of poststructuralism's "critique of the humanist subject."

However, while admitting the effectiveness of Gates's counter-discourse in putting the seal on the demise of these two earlier movements (as well as of Black Studies in its original 1960s conception rather than in the pacified, ethnically re-christened *African-American* Studies that it has now become), Dubey then poses the following question: Why, she asks, had it been that with all its undoubted "theoretical limitations," the Black Aesthetic "rhetoric of blackness" should have so powerfully "exerted an immense emotional and ideological influence, transforming an entire generation's perception of its racial identity?" What had lain behind the "remarkable imaginative power" of the nationalist "will to Blackness," "bristling with a sense of the possibility of blackness" that had characterized the range of writings from political activists like Stokely Carmichael and Eldridge Cleaver, to writer-activists like Leroi Jones/Amiri Baraka, Don L. Lee, Sonia Sanchez, Jayne Cortez, and Nikki Giovanni, cultural nationalists like Maulana Karenga, literary critics and theoreticians like Carolyn Gerald, Hoyt Fuller, Addison Gayle, Jr., and Stephen Henderson? What had been the unique dynamic that had enabled the rhetorical energy of the Black nationalist discourse so powerfully "to mobilize the sign of blackness"?

If Dubey's question can only be answered by the making visible of what Gates terms the absent presence of the very Western framework, in whose terms *black-*

ness, like its dialectical antithesis *whiteness*, must be fitted onto a symbology of good and evil – "The white man," Fanon writes, "is sealed in his whiteness, the black man in his blackness . . . How do we extricate ourselves?" (F. Fanon 1967b: 9–10) – and, therefore, with any attempt to unfix the sign of blackness from the sign of evil, ugliness, or negation, leading to an emancipatory explosion at the level of the black psyche, then Leroi Jones/Amiri Baraka's implicit proposal that Western thought (and therefore the cultural framework of this thought) needs to be exoticized, that is, viewed "from another landscape" by its Western, and indeed in our case, Westernized, bearer subjects, can provide us with the explanatory key to the answering of Dubey's question.

In addition, recall that the Black Arts and Black Aesthetic movements were themselves historically linked to a series of other earlier such movements across the range of the Black African diaspora: not only of the US's own Harlem Renaissance Movement, but also in that of the Négritude Movement of Francophone West Africa and the Caribbean, that of the Afro-Cuban and Afro-Antillean movements of the Hispanic Caribbean, together with the still ongoing Rastafari-Reggae religiocultural movement, an invention of the endemically jobless underclass of Jamaica, which explosively flowered at the same time as the Black Arts/Black Aesthetic movements, musically interacting by means of the transistor radio with the "Black Power" musical-popular expressions of the US, the 1960s and 1970s as iconized in the archetypal figure of a James Brown. They were also linked synchronically to the global field of the still then ongoing global anti-colonial movements as well as to the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. Any attempt to "exoticize" Western thought by making visible its "framework" from "another landscape" links us, then, to a related paradox defining all three movements. This paradox was that of their initially penetrating insights gained by the very nature of a wide range of globally subordinated peoples moving out of their Western assigned places and calling into question what was, in effect, the structures of a global world system – as well as the multiple social movements of other groups internal to the West, as for example, feminists, gay activists, Native Americans, Chicanos, Asian Americans, students, all mounting similar challenges – insights, therefore, into the nature of that absently present framework which mandated all their/our respective subjections. All this led, for a brief hiatus, to the explosive psychic *cum* political emancipation not only of Blacks, but also of many other non-white peoples and other groups suffering from discrimination, yet on the other hand, to their ultimate failure, in the wake of their politically activist phase, to complete intellectually that emancipation.

The literary scholar Wlad Godzich (1986) perceptively identifies the nature of this paradox when he notes that although it should have been obvious at the time that the great sociopolitical upheavals of the late 1950s and 1960s, especially those grouped under the names of decolonization and liberation movements, would have had a major impact on our ways of knowledge, this recognition has not been made for two reasons. The first is due to the "imperviousness of our present disciplines, to phenomena that fall outside their predefined scope"; the second, to

"our reluctance to see a relationship so global in reach – *between the epistemology of knowledge and the liberation of people* – a relationship that we are not properly able to theorize." This reluctance was, therefore, not an arbitrary one, as proved in the case of the Civil Rights Movement of the US. For while the earlier goals of the movement, as it began in the South, because directed against segregation and therefore couched within the terms of the universalist premises of mainstream Liberal discourse, could be supported, once the move to include the North and the West and therefore the economic apartheid issue of an institutionalized jobless and impoverished underclass, all interned in the inner-city ghettos and their prison extensions, had led in the direction of the call for Black Power, the situation had abruptly changed. Godzich suggests that an epistemological failure emerged with respect to the relation between the claim to a black particularism as over against Liberalism's counter-universalism, on the one hand, and over against that of Marxism as a universalism, on the other. Since, in the case of the latter, because based on the primacy of the issues confronting the Western working classes postulated as the globally generic working class, this in the same way as their issue, postulated as that of the struggle of labor against capital, had also logically come to be postulated as *the* generic human issue. While given that Liberal humanism is itself based on the primacy of the issue of the Rights of Man as *the* defining premise which underlies both our present order of knowledge, as well as its correlated mainstream aesthetics, the claim to the particularism of a Black Arts and a Black Aesthetic as well as to Black Studies in its original conception – these as the correlates of the claim to Black Power, which had itself been based on a return to the earlier recognition made in the 1920s by Marcus Garvey that, in the later words of the Barbadian novelist George Lamming, " 'the Rights of Man' cannot include the 'Rights of the Negro' who had been institutionalized discursively and empirically, as a different kind o' creature to 'Man' " (G. Lamming 1970: 297) – were to find themselves met with outright hostility on the part of mainstream intellectuals/academics and aestheticians.

The implacable dimensions of this hostility were to lead swiftly, as Godzich further notes, to a "reterritorialization," whose goal was to reincorporate these movements, sanitized of their original heretical dynamic, into the Liberal-universalist mainstream. However, while this reincorporation was effected, in the case of Black Studies, by its reinvention as "African-American Studies," and as such as but one "Ethnic" Studies variant among a diverse range of others, all contrasted with, at the same time as they were integrated into, the ostensible universalism of Euro-American centered mainstream scholarship, the other two movements, by the very nature of their self-definition as a black particularism which called into question the mainstream art and aesthetics together with their "monopoly of humanity," were not amenable to such pacification and reincorporation. As a result, their rapid disappearance, their extinction even, hastened along by Gates's neo-universalist, poststructuralist critique, logically followed. For it had been precisely their original claim, as Godzich notes, to a Black particularism over against the universalist premises of our present mainstream

aesthetics and order of knowledge – their claim, in Gerald McWhorter's terms, to "something other than 'truth' in an abstract universal sense," or, in Neal's terms, to a post-Western aesthetics based on a new system of ideas, with these claims, linked to their insistent revalorizing of the negative-value connotations that both the mainstream order of knowledge, and the mainstream aesthetics, placed upon all peoples of Black African descent, thereby imposing upon us "an unbearable wrongness of being" – that can be identified, from hindsight, as *the* dynamic that was to exert what Dubey defines as the immense emotional influence on an entire generation's self-conception (including the kind of intellectual self-confidence that a Gates, for example, as a member of the beneficiary generation, would now come to possess).

Nevertheless, the eventual defeat both of the Black Aesthetic and Black Arts movements as well as of Black Studies in its original conception came from the very process that had occasioned their initial triumph – that is, from their revalorization of their "racial blackness" as systemically devalorized by the logic of our present mainstream order of knowledge, its art and its aesthetic. For while this strategic inversion had functioned for a brief hiatus as a psychically emancipatory movement, by its calling in question of the systemic devalorization of our physiognomic and original ethnocultural being as a population group, its eventual failure can be seen not only in the psychic mutilation of the tragic figure of a Michael Jackson as expressed in his physically mutilated face, but also in the widespread use of plastic surgery not only by blacks, but also by a wide range of other non-white groups, as well as by white non-Nordic groups themselves.[2] With this latter instance providing a clue to the fact that the systemic devalorization of racial blackness was, in itself, *only* a function of another and more deeply rooted phenomenon; in effect, only the map of the real territory, the symptom of the real cause, the real issue. This is as the territory: that, for example, Eldridge Cleaver, in trying in his book of essays *Soul on Ice* (1968) to account for the almost reflex-instinctual nature of his attraction to white women as contrasted with the lukewarm response to, for him, the always already devalorized Black woman, had glimpsed; that Gwendolyn Brooks, in trying in an interview to account for the reason that successful black men also seemed instinctively to prefer lighter-skinned black women had also charted (C. Tate 1983); that over some half a century earlier, W. E. B. Du Bois, in trying to come to grips with his own double consciousness that made it difficult for him to be an American without being anti-Negro, had recognized as a new frontier with respect to the study of the still unresolved issue of what determines (indeed, what structures) the nature of human consciousness; that Larry Neal had identified in agonistic terms as "the white thing within us." Yet, and this is *the* dilemma, all this as a territory or issue that cannot be conceptualized to exist within the terms of the *vrai* or "regime of truth" of our present order of knowledge. Any more than, as Foucault also pointed out in the case of the eighteenth-century classical episteme or order of knowledge that preceded our contemporary own, which was to displace/replace it during the nineteenth century, the conception of biological life could have been

imagined to exist within the terms of its *vrai* or "regime of truth" (M. Foucault 1980: 78; also 109–33). Nevertheless, as a territory, an issue, to whose empirical existence the particularity of the Black experience, and therefore of our necessarily conflictual and contradictory consciousness, together with the occasional emotional release from such a consciousness, attests, as definitively as a Geiger counter attests to the empirical presence of radioactive material. This, therefore, as a hitherto unknown territory, the territory of human consciousness and of the hybrid nature-culture laws by which it is structured, that was only to be identified, in the context both of the global anti-colonial struggles, as well as of the social movements internal to the West itself, by the political activist and psychiatrist Frantz Fanon in his book *Black Skin, White Masks*, doing so from the ground of the particularity of the black experience. "Reacting against the constitutionalist tendency of the late nineteenth century," he wrote, "Freud insisted that the individual factor be taken into account through psychoanalysis. He substituted for a phylogenetic theory the ontogenetic perspective. It will be seen that the black man's alienation is not an individual question. Beside phylogeny and ontogeny stands sociogeny" (F. Fanon 1967b: 11).

Fanon's book was published in its original French version in 1952, one year before the publication of the Watson and Crick paper cracking the DNA code specific to the genomes of all species, including the human being. This therefore helped to emphasize that, given the genetically determined narcissism that would be endemic to all living beings in their species-specific modality, the fact that a black person can experience his or her physiognomic being in anti-narcissistic and self-alienating terms (as iconized in the tragic figure of a Michael Jackson), means that human beings *cannot* be defined in purely biogenetic terms, i.e., from a purely phylogenetic *cum* ontogenetic perspective, that is, from the perspective of the purely physiological *conditions* of being human (i.e., phylogeny and ontogeny), as we are now defined to be within the terms of our present Liberal or bio-humanist order of knowledge. Indeed, as we are induced as contemporary subjects, to psycho-affectively experience ourselves to *be*, within the terms of our also bio-humanist mainstream aesthetics.

However, if, in Fanon's terms, the prognosis for Black self-alienation is to be favorable, the human must be redefined in terms of the hybrid phylogony-ontogeny *cum* sociogeny mode of being that it empirically is, which is comprised of descriptive statements (G. Bateson 1968) or modes of sociogeny, in effect of *genres* or *kinds* of being human, in whose always auto-instituted and origin-narratively inscribed terms, we can alone experience ourselves *as* human. Let us note here in passing that the term *genre*, meaning *kind* of human (as in the case of our present *kind* of human *Man*, which *sociogenically* defines itself, in biocentric terms, on the model of a natural organism), as the model which aprioristically underlies all our present disciplines (M. Foucault 1973), stems from the same etymological roots as the word *gender*. This, given that from our origins on the continent of Africa until today, gender role allocations mapped onto the biologically determined anatomical differences between male and female have been an

indispensable function of the instituting of our *genres* or sociogenic *kinds* of being human. This latter as a process for which our species-specific genome as uniquely defined by the co-evolution of language and the brain has bioevolutionarily pre-programmed us.

In effect, because the systematically induced nature of Black self-alienation is itself (like that correlatively of homosexual self-alienation) only a function (a map), if an indispensable one, of the enacted institutionalization of our present genre of the human, *Man* and its governing sociogenic code (the *territory*), as defined in the ethnoclass or Western bourgeois biocentric descriptive statement of the human on the model of a natural organism (a model which enables it to over-represent its ethnic and class-specific descriptive statement of the human *as if* it were that of the human itself), then, in order to contest one's function in the enacting of this specific genre of the human, one is confronted with a dilemma. As a dilemma, therefore, that is not so much a question of the essentializing or non-essentializing of one's racial blackness as Gates argues, but rather that of the fact that one *cannot* revalorize oneself in the terms of one's racial blackness and therefore of one's biological characteristics, however inversely so, given that it is precisely the biocentric nature of the sociogenic code of our present genre of being human, which imperatively calls for the devalorization of the characteristic of blackness as well as of the Bantu-type physiognomy, in the same way as it calls, dialectically, for the over-valorization of the characteristic of whiteness and of the Indo-European physiognomy. This encoded value-difference then came to play the same role in the enactment of our now purely secular genre of the human *Man*, as that of the gendered anatomical difference between men and women had played over millennia, if in then supernaturally mandated terms, in the enactment of all the genres of being human that had been defining of traditional, stateless orders. This therefore led, in our contemporary case, to the same asymmetric disparities of power, as well as of wealth, education, of life opportunities, even of mortality rates, etc., between whites and Blacks that, as the feminist Sherry Ortner has pointed out in her essay "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" was defining of the relations between men and women common to all such orders (S. Ortner 1974).[3]

If, therefore, it is the very institutionalized production and reproduction of our present hegemonic sociogenic code, as generated from its Darwinian origin-narratively inscribed biocentric descriptive statement of the human on the model of a natural organism, which calls, as the indispensable condition of its enactment, for the systemic inducing of Black self-alienation, together with the securing of the correlated powerlessness of its African-descended population group at all levels of our contemporary global order or system-ensemble, then the explosive psychic emancipation experienced by Black peoples in the US and elsewhere – as in the case of the indigenous "black fellas" people of Australia and Melanesia, as well as among the Black peoples of the Caribbean and of the then still apartheid South Africa – can now be seen in terms which can explain both the powerful emotional influence of the three movements which arose out

of the sociopolitical Black movements of the 1960s (i.e., the Black Aesthetic, Black Arts, and Black Studies movements in their original conception), with this experience only coming to an end with their subsequent erasure and displacement. And this logically so, given that while the psychic emancipation which these movements' revalorization of the characteristics of blackness had effected had been an emancipation from the psychic dictates of our present sociogenic code or genre of being human and therefore from "the unbearable wrongness of being," of *desêtre*, which it imposes upon all black, and to a somewhat lesser degree, on all non-white-peoples, as an imperative function of its enactment as such a mode of being, this emancipation had been effected at the level of the map, rather than at the level of the territory. That is, therefore, at the level of the systemic devalorization of blackness and correlated over-valorization of whiteness, which are themselves only proximate *functions* of the overall devalorization of the human species that is indispensable to the encoding of our present hegemonic Western-bourgeois biocentric descriptive statement of the human, of its mode of sociogeny. In other words, because the negative connotations placed upon the black population group are a function of the devalorization of the human, the systemic revalorization of Black peoples can only be fundamentally effected by means of the no less systemic revalorization of human being itself, *outside* the necessarily devalorizing terms of the biocentric descriptive statement of *Man*, over-represented as if it were by that of the human. This, therefore, as the territory of which the negative connotations imposed upon all black peoples and which serve to induce our self-alienation, as well as our related institutionalized powerlessness as a population group is a function, and as such, a map. As, correlatively, are all the other "ism" issues that spontaneously erupted in the US in the wake of the Black social liberation movement, all themselves, like the major "ism" of class also, specific maps to a single territory – that of the instituting of our present ethnoclass or Western bourgeois genre of the human.

Nevertheless, because it is this territory, that of the instituting of our present biocentric descriptive statement of the human on the model of a natural organism that is both elaborated by our present order of knowledge and its macro-discourse of Liberal humanism, as well as enacted by our present mainstream aesthetic, together with the latter's "monopoly of humanity" (P. Bourdieu 1984), with our present order of knowledge being one in whose foundational "regime of truth," objects of knowledge such as Fanon's auto-instituted modes of sociogeny or Bateson's "descriptive statements" at the level of the psyche (G. Bateson 1968), in effect, our *genres* or *kinds* of being human, cannot be imagined to exist, neither McWhorter's call for another "truth" able to secure the good life for Black and all other peoples, nor indeed, Larry Neal's call for a post-Western aesthetic, could have been incorporable, as they themselves had hoped, within the terms of our present order of knowledge and its biologically absolute conception of the human. That is, in the way in which a later reterritorialized and ethnicized "African-American Studies," as exemplarily elaborated and brilliantly put into place by Harvard's Henry Louis Gates, Jr., would prove to be.

In this context, Jones/Baraka's implied call for the exoticization of Western thought, in order to make this thought itself, its presuppositions, together with, in Gates's terms, the "absent presence" of its framework, into new objects of knowledge, to be examined from the landscape or perspective of the *blues* people – and therefore from the perspective, not of the-people-as-*Volk* as in the cultural nationalist aspects of the Black Aesthetic and Black Arts movements, but, as in the *popular* aspect of these movements, of the people as the movements of people who are logically excluded, as "the waste products of all modern political practice whether capitalist or Marxist" (J. Lyotard, citing Grand 1990: 93), with their exclusion being indispensable to the reproduction of our present order – links up with Fanon's recognition that "black self-alienation" cannot be detached from the devalorized conception of the human on the purely phylogenic/ontogenetic model of a natural organism, that is defining of this thought as, indeed, of its correlated aesthetics. In the case of the former, as an episteme, one whose bio-centric order of truth calls for the human to be seen as a "mere mechanism," and as such, one whose members are all ostensibly naturally deselected by Evolution until proven otherwise by his/her or that of his/her population group's success in the bourgeois order of being and of things: "The advancement of the welfare of mankind," Darwin wrote at the end of his *Descent of Man* (1981: 403), "is a most intricate problem: all ought to refrain from marriage who cannot avoid abject poverty for their children . . . As Mr. Galton has remarked, if the prudent avoid marriage, whilst the reckless marry, the inferior members of society will tend to supplant the better members of society." Against this bio-centric, eugenist thought, and the "absent presence" of its bio-evolutionary framework or conception of the human, Fanon wrote:

> What are by common consent called the human sciences have their own drama. *Should one postulate a type for human reality and describe its psychic modalities only through deviations from it*, or should one not rather strive unremittingly for a concrete and ever new understanding of man? . . . All these inquiries lead only in one direction: to make man admit that he is nothing, absolutely nothing – *and that he must put an end to the narcissism on which he relies in order to imagine that he is different from the other "animals."* . . . Having reflected on that, I grasp my narcissism with both hands and I turn my back on the degradation of those who would make man a mere mechanism. (Fanon 1967b: 22–3)

Notes

This chapter appears here in radically shortened form as the framing of the question further elaborated in the longer version in Gordon and Gordon (2005) – eds.

With apologies to June Jordan, riffing on Milan Kundera, and to Aimé Césaire for the term *desêtre* (translated as *dysbeing* on the model of *dysgenic*).

1 See A. Baraka (1997). For some of the differing aspects of the Black Arts/Black Aesthetic movements in terms of their original dynamic, see the following: C. Gerald (1971); H. Fuller

(1971); A. Gayle, Jr. (1971); M. Karenga (1971); M. De Costa (1977); L. Neal (1971: 370–8); R. Martin (1988); A. Baraka (1963); L. Jones and L. Neal (1968); W. Van Deburg (1992); C. Taylor (1988).

2 Recently, as China has become integrated into the Western economic system of capitalism and therefore into the absolute single criterion or standard of being and of beauty of ethno-class (Western-bourgeois) *Man*, young Chinese middle-class women – in addition to resorting to plastic surgery to change the shape of their eyes to a Western European model – are also enduring great agony in order to get their legs stretched so that they will become longer, assimilating them to the impossible ideal of paper thin, long-legged, white, Western bourgeois models.

3 Ortner argued that the functioning of a code specific to human beings, that of symbolic life and death, as a code which from our origins as a language-capacitied species, was mapped onto the anatomical differences between the male and the female sex, thereby transforming the *male/female* categories into *linguistic* ones (i.e., *man/woman*, *wife/husband*, *mother/son*, *brother/sister*, etc.). In consequence, if we redefine the Western cultural conception of *nature/culture* into the transculturally applicable conception of the code of symbolic life and death (Fanon's modes of sociogeny), one which enacts a value-differential between, on the one hand, the purely biological life to which women give birth, represented as symbolic death, and on the other, that of symbolic (or "true") life to which the category of the men analogically and therefore symbolically "give birth," then Ortner's conception can be seen as a member of the universal class. What, therefore, were and are the central functions of this code? Given the imperative function of each such code in the instituting and reproduction of human societal orders, the connoted value differential between (in traditional orders) the category of women and biological life, on the one hand, and that of the men and symbolic life on the other, would have to be systematically produced and reproduced. This, in parallel to the way in which, in our contemporary order, the code of ethnoclass *Man* has been mapped onto the physiognomic and skin-color difference between peoples of Black African descent, on the one hand (as the ostensible embodiment of symbolic *death* defined as that of barely evolved, biological life) and, on the other, the peoples of Indo-European descent (as the ostensible embodiment of fully evolved and thereby symbolic life). Hence the way in which the positive/negative value connotations *cum* differential between "whites" and "non-whites," and most totally, between "whites" and "blacks," must be rigorously maintained in our present order of being and of things, as the condition of the instituting of our ethnoclass, or Western bourgeois conception of the human *Man*, over-represented as if it were the human; as, in Lewis Gordon's term, *Absolute Being* (L. Gordon: 2002c).

CHAPTER **TEN**

The New Auction Block: Blackness and the Marketplace

Hazel V. Carby

In an essay entitled "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," first published in 1979, Fredric Jameson observed:

> The only authentic cultural production today has seemed to be that which can draw on the collective experience of marginal pockets of the social life of the world system: black literature and the blues, British working-class rock, women's literature, gay literature, the *roman québécois*, the literature of the Third World: and this production is possible only to the degree to which these forms of collective life or collective solidarity have not yet been fully penetrated by the market and by the commodity system. (F. Jameson 2000: 136–7)

I would like to tell a story that begins with this observation but takes as its subject not "authentic cultural production" as an object but as a process – the authentication of black cultural production and black intellectuals. I also want to acknowledge and probe the intellectual hesitation about appearance and qualification of authenticity implicit in Jameson's phrase "has seemed to be," as I focus on the issue of public presence, appearance, and image. I will trace what I argue is a transition from the utopian moment in which it was possible to imagine black literature as an example of "authentic cultural production . . . not yet penetrated by the market and by the commodity system," to what Pierre Bourdieu has called "the utopia of unlimited exploitation" (P. Bourdieu 1998: 94–105), a tyranny of the market which is most effectively embodied in Salman Rushdie's novel *Fury*, a vitriolic condemnation of the commodification of black intellectual production.

In the summer of 1974 a picture of Zora Neale Hurston, then a relatively unknown writer, appeared on the cover of one of the last issues of *Black World* above the caption: "Black Women Image Makers." In the spring of 1990 a picture of Henry Louis Gates, Jr. appeared on the cover of the *New York Times Magazine* with the heading: "Black Studies' New Star." These two moments signal the first stage of a shift in interest in the literary, cultural, and political imagining of the

possibilities of black intellectual endeavor from a black magazine to the press of the white establishment. They also frame the gendered nature of the public face of African-American Studies.

Barbara Christian wrote about the significance of the August 1974 issue of *Black World*, a significance which she felt lay neither with the black female writer on the cover (for Gwendolyn Brooks had been featured on the cover of the previous issue), nor with the inclusion of literary analyses of black women's fiction (which was not new). Rather, Christian argued, the configuration of this particular issue of *Black World* marked

> the growing visibility of Afro-American women and the significant impact they were having on contemporary black culture. The articulation of that impact had been the basis for Toni Cade's edition of *The Black Woman* in 1970. But that collection had not dealt specifically with literature/creativity. Coupled with the publication of Alice Walker's "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens" only a few months before in the May issue of *Ms.*, the August 1974 *Black World* signaled a shift in position among those interested in Afro-American literature about women's creativity. Perhaps because I had experienced a decade of the intense literary activity of the 1960s, but also much antifemale black cultural nationalist rhetoric, these two publications had a lightning effect on me. Afro-American women were making public, were able to make public, their search for themselves in literary culture. (B. Christian 1989: 59)

This essay mapped Christian's own personal trajectory as a literary critic, but it also created a genealogy of black feminist literary criticism while providing a trenchant assessment of its debates and the state of the field from her fiercely claimed feminist perspective. What Christian celebrates is her sense of a utopian moment, the transformative effect – what she calls "the impact" – of a growing public awareness of the collective presence of black female creativity and intellectual life, experience drawn from the "marginal pockets of the social life of the world system," and presented as a force against "antifemale black cultural nationalist rhetoric." Christian's essay appeared in a collection edited by Cheryl Wall, *Changing Our Own Words* (1989), which grew from papers presented at a symposium hosted by Wall at Rutgers University a few years earlier. Wall's introduction makes clear that its publication is intended to contribute to this transformation, consolidating the public presence of a black female literary culture and confirming that "the community of black women writing in the United States now can be regarded as a vivid new fact of national life" (H. Spillers 1985: 245). Wall states: "Over the last two decades, Afro-American women have written themselves into the national consciousness. Their work is widely read, frequently taught, and increasingly the object of critical inquiry" (C. Wall 1989: 1). The publication of the symposium was tangible evidence of a substantial critical community and of the collective nature of the project. However, Wall could also see that curricular transformation was not accompanied by a transformation in the constitution of the faculty in educational institutions. She acknowledged that

while the work of a number of black women writers had and would continue to maintain this public presence in the culture of the United States and be written about by a wide and diverse body of literary critics, black female critics wrote from a position or place "assigned on the margins of the academy." While not wanting "to claim a 'privileged' status" for black female critics, she did hope that their "words will have resonance beyond the community of black women writing" (ibid: 2). The aim of black feminists and their allies in the project of the promotion of black female intellectual and creative endeavor was the expansion of the possibilities of critical and analytic engagement, not about exclusivity, and retained the utopian hope that broadcasting the words of both creative and critical black women intellectuals would enable the community of black women to become equal citizens of the world. But, of course, voice cannot substitute for the lack of political power that men hold.

However, just as Barbara Christian had been haunted by the anti-female black nationalist rhetoric of the recent past, Deborah McDowell, in the same anthology, reminded us that an expansion of consciousness, justice, and toleration did not always flow from an encounter with powerful black female voices whose vision of the world had been fiercely opposed by male critics (D. McDowell 1989: 75). McDowell demonstrated what was at stake in the frequently contentious debate over the work of Toni Morrison, Gayl Jones, Ntozake Shange, and Alice Walker, writers who were accused of portraying black men in an "unflinchingly candid and often negative manner" as "thieves, sadists, rapists, and ne'er-do-wells" (M. Watkins 1986: 1, 35). She argued that while these types of accusations and arguments were easy to discredit and the reputations of the writers were unaffected by such rantings, it was important to consider them because:

> for all their questionable arguments, from the perspective of readers more informed, these are men whose judgments help to influence the masses of readers largely untutored in Afro-American literature, who take their cues of what and how to read from the *New York Times Book Review*, *New York Review of Books* and other organs of the literary establishment.

And, as McDowell shows, this debate was waged primarily in the pages of the very influential journals and newspapers of the New York literary establishment that tended "mainly to employ black men to review and comment on the literature of black women" (D. McDowell 1989: 76–7). What was an apparent debate over the portrayal of black men by black women writers was not, in fact, about that issue at all. McDowell concludes: "what lies behind this smoke screen is an unacknowledged jostling for space in the literary marketplace . . . which brings to mind Hawthorne's famous complaint about the 'damn'd mob of scribbling women' of the 1850s" (ibid: 83).

My interest lies in this issue of public presence, the public face of the relation between black intellectuals, their work, and the field of African-American Studies.[1] I want to follow McDowell's suggestive comment about "jostling" in

the marketplace and examine some of the publications of the New York literary and cultural establishment – the *New York Times*, *New York Times Book Review*, the *New Yorker*, and the *Atlantic Monthly* – because although their discussions of black intellectuals are parochial and paternalistic, their sphere of influence extends far beyond Amtrak's Northeast corridor, and many regard them as national publications.

Because the United States is still such a deeply segregated nation, universities have become an important site on which battles over the future racial formation of the country are being fought. The outrageous fact is that for many undergraduates their first experience of integration, of living and working in a racially and ethnically diverse community occurs on university campuses. I recognize that these campuses are only minimally, unevenly, or patchily integrated, but they have the potential for enabling their students to imagine the possibility of a diverse society. The significance of this has been recognized by the right as well as by liberals, as confirmed by the timing of President George W. Bush's direct intervention in support of the white plaintiffs in the University of Michigan's affirmative action case on January 15, 2003, Martin Luther King's birthday. I would argue that this case is not really about the white students who claim that their admission to the university was unfairly rejected, but that the suit is actually about halting in its tracks any potential for imagining the radical transformation of the racial formation of the United States. The recognition of the importance of university campuses as sites of (limited) diversity by the liberal press may be of a different order than the Bush administration's fundamentalist vision, but it is ambiguous about racialized social transformation. I would argue that while the fascination of the liberal press with black intellectuals is, seemingly, more sympathetic to increased diversity, their interest lies in the management and containment of any potential for imagining any profound transformation in the racial or ethnic order. Beneath the appearance of attention paid to African-American Studies and/or the work of black intellectuals, the liberal press deliberately turns its gaze away from intellectual production and consistently reduces and displaces ideas in favor of the promotion of celebrity, a reflection of its desire for and fascination with issues of style, not substance.

As C. Wright Mills insisted in his 1959 essay "The Cultural Apparatus," interpretation does not take place in a vacuum: "Every man *interprets* what he observes . . . but his terms of interpretation are not his own" (I. Horowitz 1963: 406). The elaborate and complex system of institutions that Mills describes as constituting the "cultural apparatus," "composed of all the organizations and *milieux* in which artistic, intellectual, and scientific work goes on, and of the means by which such work is made available to circles, publics, and masses" (ibid), stands as a very accurate portrait of the Eastern seaboard's literary and cultural journals, magazines, publishing houses, and foundations (most based in New York) that have played a crucial role in shaping the public representation of the field of black cultural politics and the designation of its major players. An important facet of the national establishment for the public at large, this cultural

apparatus has, in its own terms, authenticated and legitimated certain black intellectuals and particular aspects of the field of Black Studies, while it also delegitimated the insurgency of radical and feminist politics.

In hindsight to imagine that the collective nature of the feminist project undertaken by marginalized but deeply committed black women intellectuals in the academy in the 1980s would gain a strong public presence appears a naive utopian dream. For in spite of pioneering studies like *The Black Woman*, edited by Toni Cade Bambara in 1970, groundbreaking work from critics Mary Helen Washington, June Jordan, and Ellease Southerland in the 1974 issue of *Black World*, from Frances Smith Foster, Barbara Smith, Audre Lorde, and Claudia Tate, and from Cheryl Wall, Abena Busia, Barbara Christian, Mae Henderson, Gloria Hull, Deborah McDowell, Valerie Smith, Hortense Spillers, and Susan Willis in *Changing Our Own Words*, and many others, many women who undertook the excavation and critical evaluation of black women's writing, the ultimate management of black women's public presence, when it became a commodity, would be placed, securely, in the hands of a male establishment. Indeed, the deaths of Barbara Christian, Audre Lorde, June Jordan, and Claudia Tate made barely a ripple in the press of the New York establishment.

Writing in the early 1990s, Ann duCille analyzed how, "within the modern academy, racial and gender alterity has become a hot commodity that has claimed black women as its principal signifier . . . the peasants under glass of intellectual inquiry in the 1990s" (A. duCille 1996: 81). She asked why this interest, "which seems to me to have reached occult status – increasingly marginalizes both the black women critics and scholars who excavated the fields in question and their black feminist 'daughters' who would further develop those fields" (ibid: 87). She then asked a series of questions about the politics of the discipline and the inequities of the cultural apparatus, among which were the following:

> What does it mean, for instance, that many prestigious university presses and influential literary publications regularly rely not on these seasoned black women scholars but on male intellectuals – black and white – to review the manuscripts and books of young black women just entering the profession . . . What does it mean for the field in general and for junior African Americanists in particular that senior scholars, who are not trained in African American Studies and whose career-building work often has excluded black women, are now teaching courses in and publishing texts about African American literature and generating "new scholarship" on black women writers? What does it mean for the future of black feminist studies that a large portion of the growing body of scholarship on black women is now being written by white feminists and by men whose work frequently achieves greater critical and commercial success than that of the black female scholars who carved out the field? (Ibid)

Ann duCille has no interest in what she calls "territoriality," the essentialist reduction of particular fields of knowledge to "raced" bodies, but she does demonstrate the inequities inherent in how the field was being valued, judged, and

taught in relation to the paradoxes of market forces. In my experience academic institutions daily reduce bodies to fields of knowledge when black or ethnic scholars are thought suitable only for, and appointed only in, programs of black or ethnic studies. The majority of African Americanists have argued that their field should be open to all who have a rigorous training in the discipline, like any other academic discipline would demand, and yet the commonsense attitude that dominates the academy assumes that while black scholars are fit only for black studies, anyone else can "just do it," without any previous training or expertise required. At my home institution African-American Studies is the most integrated department in the university. Adam Begley, in the *New York Times Magazine*, named Henry Louis Gates, Jr. "Black Studies' New Star" at the end of the decade and listed "literary archeology," particularly the discovery of Harriet E. Wilson's *Our Nig*, and the editorship of *The Schomberg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers* and the Perennial Library's Zora Neale Hurston Series, among his many other accomplishments (A. Begley 1990). In this move the *New York Times* rendered invisible the substantial community of critics and their work that had made possible ventures like *The Schomberg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Woman Writers*. Black women's expressivity, argues duCille "is not merely discourse; it has become lucre in the intellectual marketplace, cultural commerce. What for many began as a search for our mother's gardens, to appropriate Alice Walker's metaphor, has become for some a Random House harvest worth millions in book sales and university professorships" (A. duCille 1996: 92). The Eastern literary establishment anointed its own midwife of black women's writing, a production manager of black women's texts and authentic interpreter of the field, ignoring and effectively erasing the collective work of generations of scholars – men and women, black and white – who were the actual laborers in the critical process. While one black male scholar could be legitimated as the production manager of profitable black women's texts for the marketplace, there was no profit in engaging the work of multiple black women critics. Ignoring the multiplicity of critical presences also produced value through the invention of scarcity.

Marketing the field has led to a preoccupation with the "newness" of African-American Studies, an arena in which scholars constantly make "discoveries" erasing the history of any previous critical engagement with these texts. Just as successful corporations realized in the mid-1980s that they should produce brands as opposed to products, African-American Studies was marketed as a series of brand name individuals. The field was presented as producing black stars, or celebrities, not insurgent knowledge. Instead of presenting the field as a collectivity of multiple critical presences the *New York Times* created an easily recognizable brand name for the literary field in Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Prominent in the article are references to entertainment, to the success of Professor Gates's "entrepreneurial P. T. Barnumism." Being characterized not only as an entrepreneur, but also as a circus manager, works simultaneously to discredit him as an intellectual but increase his value as celebrity (A. Begley 1990: 26). Adam

Begley makes claims to the uniqueness of his subject and thereby increases not only the value of his discovery, but also his own value as pioneering journalist in previously unknown territory by emphasizing the supposed scarcity of black scholars in his opening paragraphs, describing how universities had to enter bidding wars to obtain one of these valuable commodities (ibid: 25).

In the next few years the media would become obsessed with the newness or novelty value of African-American Studies and the originality and rarity of their "discovery" of black intellectuals. In 1995 blackness arrived packaged on the cover of the *New Yorker*. The double April and May issue was titled "Black in America" (at least it wasn't a February publication); its red, white, blue, and black cover was the head of a black statute of liberty by Michael Roberts, presumably after the style of Aaron Douglas.[2] As C. Wright Mills observed, "the essential feature of any establishment is a traffic between culture and authority, a tacit cooperation of cultural workmen and authorities of ruling institutions. This means of exchange between them includes money, career, privilege; but above all, it includes *prestige*" (I. Horowitz 1963: 409). With prestige, I would add, was granted the authority to define and exclude. The "traffic between culture and authority" would be apparent in the 1990s, when contemporary black intellectuals were "discovered" and in the process authenticated by the New York literary establishment. Media investigations into African-American Studies and the role of black intellectuals read like journalistic sorties into the colonial wilderness of the academic outback. But, although they note their existence, these accounts do not stray so far into the outback as to confront the ideas of its indigenous, feminist women.

In a paternalistic fashion black intellectuals were presented as "coming of age" in a debate that fashioned itself as a response to Russell Jacoby. In *The Last Intellectuals*, published in 1987, Jacoby had declared that Philip Rahv, Edmund Wilson, Lionel Trilling, Alfred Kazin, Irving Howe, and Daniel Bell – all associated with *Partisan Review* in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s and known as the New York Intellectuals – were in fact the last public intellectuals in the United States.[3] In January 1995 in the *New Yorker*, in what appeared to be a review of books by Derrick Bell, Michael Eric Dyson, bell hooks, and Cornel West, Michael Bérubé announced "a new African-American intelligentsia has become part of this country's cultural landscape. First, both groups of intellectuals," Bérubé argued, "seek to redefine what it means to be an intellectual in the United States" (M. Bérubé 1995: 74). Second, both Cornel West and Lionel Trilling wrote bestsellers, *Race Matters* and *The Liberal Imagination*. Third, "though bell hooks (née Gloria Watkins) looks and sounds nothing like the later Irving Howe, she now has the same title that he once held at CUNY; namely distinguished professor" (ibid: 74). In this bizarre series of analogies the marketplace and academic prestige are the most important signifiers of authentic intellectual practice. For Bérubé, "what's distinctive about this generation of African-American intellectuals is that their work has become a fixture of mall bookstores, talk shows, elite universities, and black popular culture" (ibid: 75). But Bérubé's review, instead

of being a review of this work, of books and ideas, turns out to be a review of the authors; they are paraded like models on the catwalk of the latest academic fashion show.

In March 1995, Robert S. Boynton, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, without acknowledging Bérubé's previous discovery, countered Jacoby's thesis with his own "discovery" of a new group of post-Cold War public intellectuals that differed from the New York Intellectuals in what he calls "striking ways":

> Whereas Jacoby's intellectuals were freelance writers based in New York, most of this group is ensconced in elite universities across the country. Whereas the New Yorkers were predominantly male and Jewish, this group includes women and is entirely gentile. In contrast to the New Yorkers, who were formed by their encounters with socialism and European culture, these intellectuals work solidly within the American grain, and are products of the political upheaval of the 1950s and 1960s. And, most significant, they are black. (R. Boynton 1995: 54)

The symbol of this newly discovered group of public intellectuals emblazoned on the cover of the *Atlantic Monthly* was a dark brown fist and arm raised in a Black Power salute clutching a pen.

Boynton's observations are more elaborate than Bérubé's, though they clearly articulate many of the same premises. Boynton argues the "core elements of a definition of the public intellectual" were in place by the late nineteenth century as "a writer, informed by a strong moral impulse, who addressed a general, educated audience in accessible language about the most important issues of the day" (ibid: 53). Because they address "a large and attentive audience about today's most pressing issues," Boynton concludes that the contemporary black intellectuals he names are the direct inheritors of "the mantle of the New York Intellectuals." Whereas Bérubé argues that what had been lacking for earlier generations of black intellectuals was "a black public sphere of commensurate size" (M. Bérubé 1995: 74), Boynton insists that black intellectuals have become popular for four reasons: first, because of their "unprecedented access to the mass-circulation print media"; second, because "they have been sought out by the electronic media, and shows like *Nightline*, *Today*, and *The Oprah Winfrey Show* give them extraordinary visibility"; third, because they have "used their prestigious university positions to extend their influence beyond the academy"; and fourth, because "they have benefited from America's current concern about race" (R. Boynton 1995: 56).

For Bérubé, politics are also a ground of comparison between the New York Intellectuals and contemporary black intellectuals:

> What Marxism was to Lionel Trilling, Clement Greenberg, Philip Rahv, and company, black nationalism is to West, Gates, hooks et al.: the inspiration, the springboard, the template, but also the antagonist and the goad. Just as the postwar Jewish intelligentsia largely abandoned radical politics but remained committed to rethinking America's progressive traditions . . . the black intelligentsia of our fin

de siècle has largely abandoned cultural nationalism while remaining committed to rethinking forms of African American collectivity. (M. Bérubé 1995: 75)

But it is the issue of race, not politics, that Boynton utilizes as the ground for his comparison, in his attempt to give coherence to an otherwise totally absurd thesis. Whereas Bérubé thought that both the New York Intellectuals and black intellectuals "redefined what it meant to be an intellectual in the United States" (ibid: 73), Boynton argues it is "the particular burden of the American intellectual . . . to reflect on what it means to be an 'American.'"

> The New Yorkers devoted much of their careers to grappling with the demands of being both American and intellectuals, as well as to pondering the significance of their Jewish identities in their work. The current focus by many black thinkers on the significance of their American citizenship is further proof that they are reviving America's rich public-intellectual tradition.
>
> Like so many stories these days, this one is about blacks and Jews – or, more precisely, about how one ethnically marginalized group of public intellectuals has followed in the footsteps of another. (R. Boynton 1995: 56)

Later in the article Boynton is forced to admit, just as Bérubé conceded in his review, that contemporary black intellectuals are not, of course, the first generation of black public intellectuals and that issues of race and ethnicity were not the core focus of the work of the New York Intellectuals during the 1930s. The latter, he states, only confronted their Jewish heritage in their work after learning of the horrors of the Holocaust at the end of World War II.

So if Boynton admits that an earlier generation of black intellectuals that included W. E. B. Du Bois (and Ida B. Wells, I and Bérubé would add) were by his own definition public intellectuals "informed by a strong moral impulse, who addressed a general, educated audience in accessible language about the most important issues of the day," and confronted what it meant to be American, why doesn't he create an alternative genealogy, a genealogy in which the New York Intellectuals inherit the mantle of the previous generation of black intellectuals? This earlier generation of black public intellectuals interrogated the relation between Americanness and blackness in their confrontation with the legacy of enslavement and the continuing horror of lynching and, by Boynton's own definition, they predate by half a century what he describes as the turn of the New York Intellectuals to ethnicity in the 1940s.

But, of course, it is not intellectual history that is at stake in this story, it is marketing. The point is to erase history and to deny an organic relation between contemporary black intellectuals to a past of collective struggle. Whereas Boynton claims that the New York Intellectuals were first concerned with broad issues of Americanness and American politics and only later focused on ethnicity, he reverses this paradigm for contemporary black intellectuals. Described as the generation to emerge "between the civil-rights and the Reagan backlash," Boynton insists that they were initially concerned with "a race-based identity

politics" but have redirected their attention to "the importance of American citizenship for race relations" (ibid: 56). Of course, it can be argued that Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*, published in 1903, among many other works by black intellectuals, has been concerned with "the importance of American citizenship for race relations," but Boynton insists, in the most paternalistic manner, that black intellectuals are maturing and becoming more sophisticated in their thought and he invents a paradigm to prove it.

Bérubé's and Boynton's "discovery" of black public intellectuals in 1995 was a fraudulent journalistic invention that ranks with the historical recording of the "discovery" of America by Europeans as if the peoples already in residence were incapable of conceptualizing their own material existence. Their claims of discovery, the assertions of the newness of black, public, intellectual life, allow them to tell and sell their stories. Boynton wonders how substantial the legacy of his group of black public intellectuals will be, as if he did not already know that two centuries of substantial work by black thinkers in the Americas already exists, and then he questions whether this legacy "will be compromised" by their media popularity: "As public intellectuals gain greater access to mainstream culture," Boynton asks, "do they become more important thinkers or only better known?" (R. Boynton 1995: 70). But while Boynton speculates about the ways in which the work of black public intellectuals could be compromised by the culture industry, he and Bérubé remain totally unselfconscious of the ways in which they are trading in "blackness" in the journalistic marketplace with their newly "discovered," designer-brand black intellectuals.

Deborah McDowell's observation about an "unacknowledged jostling in the literary marketplace" could be extended to apply to the black intellectual marketplace as resentments between and among black intellectuals surfaced. In 1992, in Boston, the Reverend Eugene Rivers, in a letter to the *Boston Review*, issued a direct challenge to "black intellectuals at elite universities," naming Cornel West, Henry Louis Gates, bell hooks, Orlando Patterson, Jerry Watts, K. Anthony Appiah, and Martin Kilson, to discuss their relationship to the black urban poor in open debate (E. Rivers 1992). As a model of accountability Revd. Rivers used Noam Chomsky's 1967 essay published in the *New York Review of Books* on "The Responsibility of Intellectuals." Chomsky had asked: "What are the special moral responsibilities of intellectuals, 'given the unique privileges that intellectuals enjoy' in Western capitalist democracies?" and answered "that intellectuals have a 'responsibility . . . to speak the truth and to expose lies' and a duty 'to see events in their historical perspective.'" Rivers called his letter to black academics, "On the Responsibility of Intellectuals in the Age of Crack." What followed were two public forums. The first was held at the Arco Forum at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government on November 30, 1992 and the second a year later at MIT.[4] Accused of abandoning the black poor in their pursuit of large salaries, honoraria, and academic success, for many it seemed as if resentment had brought black academic celebrities to trial and many of them were on the defensive. Rivers issued yet another challenge to them in

1995 (see E. Rivers 1995). But, as Robin Kelley asked, "Do we need yet another call for annual conferences of high profile academics to examine the crisis in black America?" Targeting black celebrity academics was going to get Rivers publicity, but it would not tell him anything about the social and political commitments and achievements of black public intellectuals:

> Today there are many vibrant, dynamic collaborative projects that already bring together scholars and activists, but stories about these efforts don't sell as many papers as ad hominem attacks on Black intellectuals. We might acknowledge, for example, the wonderful work being done by the Children's Defense Fund, particularly its Black Student Leadership Network and its Black Community Crusade for Children where young activist-intellectuals – including Lisa Sullivan, Matthew Countryman, Greg Hodge, Keith Jennings, and Stacey Shears – work with such faculty and community organizers as James Jennings (whom Rivers mentions), Geoffrey Canada, Carl Taylor, Farah Griffin, and others. We might point to Walter Davis and the Southern Empowerment Project, or the important work being done by Elizabeth Higginbotham of the Center for Research on Women at the University of Memphis. There is the Washington, DC group that produces Black Political Agenda – Clarence Lusane, James Steele, and CDF activists Lisa Sullivan and Keith Jennings. On drug and alcohol policy, we might point to Makani Themba of the Marin Institute and public health scholar Denise Herd at Berkeley. Eugene Rivers sacrificed a chance to actually debate and gain a wide audience for the actual work that non-celebrity black intellectuals were undertaking to improve the lives of the poor outside of the glare of the media, in favor of targeting black celebrities. (R. Kelley 1995)

The mass marketing of blackness, via the branding of black intellectuals as media stars and as logos for the field, has been an overwhelmingly masculine project. In Boynton's broadest list of thirty contemporary black public intellectuals, six are women but he has a subgroup of six key people from the list – those he describes as getting the most attention – of whom only one is a woman: Cornel West, Stanley Crouch, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Stephen Carter, Shelby Steele, and Toni Morrison. In Boynton's supposedly in-depth discussion of black thinkers only the ideas of men (the former plus Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Albert Murray, Randolph Kennedy, and Glenn Loury) are engaged, while there is only one reference to anything Morrison actually wrote, plus a one-sentence quote from Patricia Williams. Though Boynton is at great pains to assert that his new intellectuals are not of one mind and inhabit different points in the US political spectrum, in the shift that he tracks from concerns with blackness to citizenship, issues of gender or feminist politics are not included as one aspect of the range or diversity of political thought about which the new black public intellectuals concern themselves, despite the fact that all the black female intellectuals in his list have made major national and international contributions to a feminist and gendered understanding of the world among their other intellectual accomplishments.

Of course, Boynton is not alone in his masculine focus on and definition of black intellectual activity. In July 1994 Don Terry in the "Ideas and Trends" section of the *New York Times* examined the contemporary role of the NAACP. The article was headed by six portraits of black male intellectual and political leaders: Revd. Benjamin Chavis, Louis Farrakhan, Prof. Cornel West, Revd. Jesse Jackson, Robert Woodson, and Revd. Al Sharpton. The point of the story was the number and range of differing opinions about the future role of the NAACP. As Adolph Reed, Jr. characterized it: "It's not just a diversity of opinion . . . It's a diversity of interests. There used to be at least a common denominator. There isn't any more" (D. Terry 1994: E6). For Don Terry and the *New York Times*, diversity in a Civil Rights organization was constituted in, by, and through the interests of an all-male body.

In 1994, in a very thoughtful analysis of the contemporary situation of the black creative intellectual, Hortense Spillers marked the years that had passed since the publication of Harold Cruse's *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* in 1967:

> Yielding apparently little resistance to the sound intrusion of market imperatives on the entire intellectual object, including that of African American Studies, today's black creative intellectual lends herself/himself – like candy being taken from a child – to the mighty seductions of publicity and the "pinup," rather like what an editor of *Lingua Franca* only half-jokingly dubbed, once upon a time, the "African American du jour." (H. Spillers 1994: 73)

The media production of and fascination with the antics of black celebrity intellectuals is not only a displacement of a lack of concern for the general condition of black existence in the United States, but also an effective erasure of concern with poverty, lack of education, and imprisonment as a form of racialized social control.

In Salman Rushdie's novel *Fury* the spectacle of the self-indulgence, over-indulgence, and aggressive and insatiable appetites of wealthy Americans evokes a bloated and parasitic empire devouring the globe to satisfy and sustain its desires and ways of life:

> Professor Malik Solanka . . . in his silvered years found himself living in a golden age. Outside his window a long, humid summer, the first hot season of the third millennium, baked and perspired. The city boiled with money. Rents and property values had never been higher, and in the garment industry it was widely held that fashion had never been so fashionable. New restaurants opened every hour. Stores, dealerships, galleries struggled to satisfy the skyrocketing demand for ever more recherché produce: limited-edition olive oils, three-hundred-dollar corkscrews, customized Humvees, the latest anti-virus software, escort services featuring contortionists and twins, video installations, outsider art, featherlight shawls made from the chin-fluff of extinct mountain goats. (S. Rushdie 2001: 3)

During the course of the novel its protagonist, Malik Solanka, confronts and attempts to resolve the contradictions that arise from his move from Britain to New York City, despite the fact that he hates American political, economic, and cultural claims to world domination. Solanka is a professor, "a retired historian of ideas," a Cambridge don who, in despair about academic life, resigns as an act of protest against its "narrowness, infighting, and ultimate provincialism." In lieu of an academic income Professor Solanka lives on the wealth created by his invention, a series of "Great Minds" dolls including Bertrand Russell, Kierkegaard, Machiavelli, Socrates, and Galileo, figures for whom he has created complex, imaginary, historical, and philosophical lives. When Solanka quits the academy his dolls, originally a hobby, go to work for him as the protagonists of a popular history of philosophy television show. With the addition of "Little Brain," a female "time-traveling interrogator," a "questing knowledge-seeker created to be an audience surrogate," these dolls become media stars and *The Adventures of Little Brain* a primetime hit (ibid: 14–15). Once famous, the dolls remain Professor Solanka's creatures for only a very short time; he is replaced by a cultural industry which emerges to sustain and reproduce their imaginary lives. Solanka vehemently despises the product, but it makes him rich.

Solanka's rage grows to potentially murderous proportions and fearing that he will vent his feelings on those he loves, he runs away from his family and friends and toward that which epitomizes all that he despises: the USA. As Solanka has long been a diehard critic of "the immense goddam *power* . . . [and] immense fucking *seduction* of America," his friends are amused by the irony of his decision "to relocate . . . in the bosom of the Great Satan." But Solanka is unable to explain this act of self-abnegation. He ponders "how to say, America is the great devourer, and so I have come to America to be devoured"? (ibid: 68–9).

Fury is extraordinarily prescient of events that would only intrude on the consciousness of most American citizens on September 11, 2001. One night, while standing in Washington Square, Solanka feels his own internal demons shrink in significance when confronted by the commitment of revolutionaries and the solidarities formed in the cauldron of American injustice and resistance to American might:

> He looked at the bloodstains drying on the darkened square, evidence here in New York City of the force of a gathering fury on the far side of the world: a group fury, born of long injustice, beside which his own unpredictable temper was a thing of pathetic insignificance, the indulgence, perhaps, of a privileged individual with too much self-interest. (Ibid: 193–4)

The novel strains to make incremental connections between Solanka's individual rage and what remains as a rather amorphous and vague gesture to a global order in which "everyone was an American now, or at least Americanized." Solanka fears "his terrorist anger that kept taking him hostage," and he recognizes that he too has succumbed to America's vast potency and its brilliance, that he is

compromised, desiring what America promises but constantly withholds. Solanka concludes that what he opposed in America he must attack in himself (ibid: 67, 87). Though *Fury* does not – and one could argue, cannot – resolve this tension, Rushdie's dissection of intellectual anxiety is powerful.

Rushdie writes with intense passion and tempestuousness. A powerful satire and virulent condemnation of the politics and culture of the American empire, *Fury* analyzes both the process of attraction and consequences of its seductions for intellectuals. A close friend and colleague of Solanka, Jack Reinhart, is seduced into the imaginary and material world of intellectual celebrity in the United States. Once a radical black journalist "with a distinguished record of investigating American racism and a consequent stirring of powerful enemies," Reinhart becomes a chronicler of the rich and famous, of "today's Caesars in their Palaces," and, in the process of recording their lives, becomes part of the "gilded milieu." Solanka realizes that Reinhart is only apparently a critic of the superficiality of the world about which he writes and with which he has fallen in love and concludes that it suits the elite to keep him around as "a sort of pet," the "house nigger" of the rich and famous. Rushdie's critical eye, however, is focused on the individual and social cost of being seduced by American wealth and power.

> Behind the infinite layers of Reinhart's cool was this ignoble fact: he had been seduced, and his desire to be accepted into this white man's club was the dark secret he could not confess to anyone, perhaps not even to himself. And these are the secrets from which the anger comes. In this dark bed the seeds of fury grow. And though Jack's act was armor-plated, although his mask never slipped, Solanka was sure he could see, in his friend's blazing eyes, the self-loathing fire of his rage. It took him a long while to concede that Jack's suppressed fury was the mirror of his own. (Ibid: 57–8)

Much of the power and persuasiveness of *Fury* lies in Rushdie's fierce but subtle presentation of the particularities of the processes of this seduction: of the contradictions that shape intellectual critiques of capitalism and American dominance of the world, contradictions that are simultaneously located in and implicated by those same structures of power and domination; of the necessity of recognizing, naming, and condemning collaboration; and of the self-hatred and intellectual paralysis seduction produces. *Fury* raises, though it cannot resolve, contradictions pertinent to any discussion of intellectual life in America, from a broad condemnation of the anti-intellectual nature of late capitalism to the complex satirical portraits of the seduction of Professors Solanka and Reinhart courted and celebrated by the media on both sides of the Atlantic.

I admire and empathize with Rushdie's portrait of the dilemma of the displaced transatlantic intellectual striving for a location from which to launch a global critique of Anglo/American power while sitting securely, if with some discomfort, within its borders. Within the Anglo/North American transatlantic world that Rushdie portrays, intellectuals are either uncritical tools of powerful elites or rendered inarticulate and impotent by their own inner rage. In an era in

which ideas are of little value, the only possible "public" role for intellectuals is circumscribed by the extent to which they can perform for the market. The contemporary penchant for the intellectual sound-bite is represented by Rushdie as the antics of "little brains" disseminated by the cultural conglomerates. *Fury* is an ambitious attempt to construct a narrative of consistent contradiction between the internal discontent of its displaced protagonist, the poverty of whose intellectual life is signaled by the mass marketing of the fruits of his imagination, and a global discontent, the result of rampant capitalist exploitation, inequality, and injustice.

While it is true that the field of African-American Studies has its origins in a social movement, it is also clear that we serve a number of institutional functions for our employers. As social institutions, universities act to maintain the hierarchical nature of the status quo by excluding most of the population from its classrooms while ensuring that a small number are trained and certified to supervise others. In Gramscian terms, in the post-Civil Rights era black academics have functioned and continue to function as intellectuals in particular and politically contradictory ways in the "ensemble of the system of relations in which these activities have their place within the general complex of social relations." Are we meant to function as the black gatekeepers, ensuring the production, perpetuation, and maintenance of a small, black, middle-class elite, in the hope that this elite will act as a force to control the rebellious tendencies of the black oppressed?

If, in 1979, Jameson could argue that "the only authentic cultural production today *has seemed to be* that which can draw on the collective experience of marginal pockets of social life" in which he had included black literature, now Slavoj Žižek sees a very different reality:

> The problematic of multiculturalism – the hybrid coexistence of diverse cultural life worlds – which imposes itself today is the form of appearance of its opposite, of the massive presence of capitalism as *universal* world system: it bears witness to the unprecedented homogenization of the contemporary world. It is effectively as if, since the horizon of social imagination no longer allows us to entertain the idea of an eventual demise of capitalism – since, as we might put it, everybody accepts that *capitalism is here to stay* – critical energy has found a substitute outlet in fighting for cultural differences which leave the basic homogeneity of the capitalist world system intact. (S. Žižek 1997: 46)

We need to ask ourselves what role we play in the "unprecedented homogenization" and unprecedented corporatization of the contemporary world.

Roland Barthes recounted that he was in the barbers when someone offered him a copy of *Paris Match*. On the cover there is a black boy of approximately ten years of age. He is wearing a black beret and "in French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolor." What this cover signifies, Barthes continues, is "that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any color discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there

is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors" (R. Barthes 1972: 116).

I was in my kitchen when I opened my copy of the *New Yorker* and saw Professor Henry Louis Gates paying homage to the IBM Thinkpad, or IBM paying homage to Professor Gates, and thought immediately of Barthes's black soldier.[5] It is a beautiful picture, with rich colors, the warm tones of wood, the window looking out onto Harvard Yard, and the scholar, frowning in concentration as he writes on his laptop. The advertisement brings to a culmination my argument about the process of authentication of the black intellectual and his integration into the utopia of unlimited exploitation. Two logos exist in perfect harmony, and to mutual benefit: the figure of Professor Gates, the brand name of African-American literature and the field of African-American Studies, attests to the presence of capitalism as a universal world system, through multiculturalism. IBM becomes the conduit to the black past. As Barthes claimed, "history evaporates" (R. Barthes 1972: 117) and, I would conclude, the corporate world is past, present, and future and authenticates our being through the market.

Our current political moment is characterized by the public conflation of the terms "black intellectual," "black academic," and "black leader," and the black academic world reduced to the chin-fluff of extinct mountain goats, fulfilling desires and unspoken needs like yellow Hummers. The authentication of blackness has become celebrated and defined through the body and through the valorization of the impoverishment of ideas. Critical complexity is replaced by clichéd generalities and easily digestible sound-bites. The abandonment of intellectual insurgency in favor of the self-promotion of celebrities and the production of formulaic and acceptable interpretations of black America for general consumption is an indication of the extent to which academic entrepreneurs can function as the products and allies of corporate America.

The conflation of black intellectual leadership with academic entrepreneurialism is one sign of the "tyranny of the market" and promises a dismal if not bleak political and intellectual future. The alliance of the media, New York intellectuals, educational foundations and institutions, and corporate America with a small black celebrity elite influences and limits the possibilities of what can be written, filmed, published, and distributed through the granting, or the withholding, of patronage and financial support. There are great dangers in the attempt to retain power and influence in the hands of the few, as we should know from the history of the Tuskegee machine. It is the young scholars and creative artists who are the most vulnerable to being silenced and it is the possibility of radical, transformative work that is most at risk. Booker T. Washington sought to hold in his hands the power to approve appointments, to control and dominate access to the media, white institutions, and mainstream sources of support. One hundred years later, dominant institutions and foundations, for example, are still only too eager to assign to one or two black celebrity figures the right to grant a seal of approval to black intellectual and cultural work.

Our function then, as the generation of post-Civil Rights intellectuals, should be compared to that of postcolonial elites who perpetuate the interests of their former colonizers. We participate in the reduction of a sphere of knowledge to equate with particular bodies – ethnicized and racialized bodies for ethnicized and racialized forms of knowledge. As incorporated, if not corporate, racialized bodies, we need to talk about the extent to which a multiculturalism "which is the form of appearance of its opposite" is the product of an unrepentantly capitalist world order that has completely reneged on any commitment to social equality and justice. Perhaps that is why the media are most comfortable with black intellectuals who function as an extension of black entertainment, as professionally racialized bodies reduced to perform spectacular acts of blackness in intellectual face.

Acknowledgments

For the students in the African-American Studies graduate program at Yale University – in admiration of your commitment and visions of possible future worlds.

Notes

1 For the purposes of this essay, by "public" I mean publications outside of academic journals and presses.
2 Seventeen men and eight women contributed to the issue, but there was a vast disparity in the substance of their contributions. Most of the female contributions were one page or less.
3 Russell Jacoby's *The Last Intellectuals* (1987) as cited in S. Boynton (1995).
4 See *Boston Review* 18: 1, Jan./Feb. 1993; and 19:1, Feb./March 1994.
5 IBM, "in the past, resurrecting texts that the world forgot," *New Yorker*, November 11, 2002: 22–3.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Black Studies, Black Professors, and the Struggles of Perception

Nell Irvin Painter

After more than a quarter-century in academe, including a couple of stints as the director of a program in African-American Studies and countless conversations with colleagues around the country, I have reached some conclusions regarding black faculty members and Black Studies. First, Black Studies: the time is right for a reassessment of the field. Last year, several prominent departments and programs in African-American/Afro-American/Black Studies celebrated their 30th anniversaries – including Cornell University, Harvard University, the University of California at Berkeley, and my own Princeton University. (The pioneer department at San Francisco State University was founded three years earlier than those others.) Second, black faculty members: our numbers remain small, although not inconsequential. Third, both Black Studies and black faculty members, often seen in countless academic minds as kindred phenomena, still face familiar frustrations. For the widespread American assumption that black people are not intellectual affects everyone in higher education who is black or who does Black Studies.

What has changed? Certainly, there is good news. Black Studies has experienced extraordinary intellectual growth over the span of a generation. Recent bibliographies amount to hundreds of pages, and scholars in the field produce interdisciplinary work of stunning sophistication. Research centers (for example, the Carter G. Woodson Center at the University of Virginia, the W. E. B. Du Bois Center at Harvard, and the Schomburg Center at the New York Public Library) have fostered much new research, and scholarly and trade publishers compete to bring out books in what they see as a hot field. A handful of departments (for example, at Cornell, Harvard, Temple, and Yale) offer graduate degrees, usually in collaboration with other departments. And traditional departments like history, English, and sociology support doctorates in Black Studies and employ its specialists.

In essence, what began as a way of keeping peace on newly desegregated campuses (appeasing black students and their allies who were demonstrating to

demand curricular reform) has grown into a wide-ranging interdisciplinary field that encompasses the histories and cultures of people of the African diaspora, in particular, and the meaning of race and difference, in general. Today's field is very different from what it was in its infancy. When I was a graduate student in history in the 1970s, those of us interested in Black Studies undertook the most basic kind of work on prominent figures like Frederick Douglass and Du Bois and events like Reconstruction and the black migration to Kansas in the late nineteenth century. Today, my dissertation advisees regularly take on interdisciplinary topics that we could not have imagined back then. My current advisees, for instance, are investigating the interplay of race, disease, and citizenship; the evolution of Kwanzaa; marriage, race, and class; and twentieth-century black men as makers of history and symbolic figures in American culture.

More good news: the academy has changed over time and brought us the saving grace of allies who are cognizant of the value of Black Studies and black faculty members, and who are willing to say so out loud. They realize that knowledge regarding peoples of African descent and of race enriches their own fields and that a more diverse faculty strengthens intellectual exchange. Scholars from a variety of backgrounds now engage the Black Studies field and, at a major institution like Rutgers University at New Brunswick, black women specializing in Black Women's Studies chair the departments of English and history.

The numbers of black faculty members have grown as well. According to US Department of Education figures, 568,719 full-time faculty members were employed in colleges and universities as of the fall of 1997; 4.9 percent of them were black. Also in 1997, 5.8 percent of the 421,094 part-time faculty members were black. Of the entire professorate (989,813), 5.1 percent were black. The "Statistical Abstract of the United States" for 1999 says that 5.8 percent of the 919,000 college and university professors in 1998 were black, up from 4.4 percent in 1983.

The temptation to stop with the good news appeals to many people, but we cannot discount the bad news. On the quotidian level, even departments and institutions generally hospitable to Black Studies often test the stamina of individual black faculty members. The times, too, present challenges. I have to reluctantly acknowledge that the late 1990s were a meaner time than we old-timers ever expected to see again. It wasn't just the television news, featuring black men being dragged to death and rampant, sometimes fatal, cases of racial profiling. Academic culture in the 1990s also regressed, as if to remain in sync with atrocities outside academe. The degree of degeneration came home to me personally last year when a student journalist at Princeton asked me whether I had a PhD.

In 1998 and 1999, before I stepped down as director of Princeton's program in African-American Studies, it sometimes seemed to me as though the great eraser in the sky had wiped out thirty years of progress, that we had been remanded to a version of 1969. Same dumb 1960s assumptions, same dumb 1960s questions. Even though our courses enroll masses of non-black students, even though prominent Black Studies departments have had non-black

leadership, and even though non-black faculty members are commonplace in Black Studies departments all around the country, the presumption still holds that Black Studies serves only black students and employs only black faculty members. From time to time administrators still intimate their belief that the main purpose of Black Studies is to forestall student dissent. And it seems that people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds can still harbor attitudes detrimental to the health of Black Studies. While non-black people may be more likely to ignore the field's development, a black skin does not automatically make its owner an advocate of either Black Studies or black faculty members. Black and non-black people can throw obstacles in the way.

Continuing stereotypes and prejudices about Black Studies and black people (including about people who teach in higher education) perpetuate the relationship between the two. In predominantly white institutions, students and administrators – of all backgrounds – commonly equate black faculty members and Black Studies. In historically black institutions, in which the plurality of the faculty is likely to be of African descent, the link between physical appearance and field of study does not present such a cause for confusion. However, where black people are few, we are likely to be housed in Black Studies departments or programs.

Complicated reasons account for the continuing conflation of Black Studies and black faculty members, some of which are well founded. Many black academics entered our profession with an intellectual mission: to correct erroneous and pernicious notions about African Americans. Our scholarship is often a scholarship of struggle, concentrating on our own, stigmatized group. Meanwhile, despite some changes, most teaching about American history and culture still ignores racial themes. As a result, Black Studies offers the most hospitable setting for the pursuit of racial issues.

Further, Americans, for the most part, place a high value on physical authenticity when it comes to Black Studies (and, of course, to racial/ethnic studies generally); to many – black, white, and other – it just feels right to have a black professor teach Black Studies. Finally, the silent, even unconscious assumption still prevails that Black Studies and black faculty members suit each other perfectly, because the field is simple and the people are not so smart. "Now, to white people your colored person is always a stranger," Patricia Hill Collins, a professor of African-American Studies at the University of Cincinnati, quotes a black woman as observing, "Not only that, we are supposed to be dumb strangers, so we can't tell them anything."

In light of American intellectual history, the first of those three phenomena makes sense; the other two manifest conventional assumptions. Together, they lead to false, even harmful conclusions: that Black Studies is the only place where black faculty members teach, and the only people considered eligible to teach Black Studies are themselves black.

Both conclusions are wrong. That it still needs to be said that black faculty members with appropriate training can teach anything is sad. Anyone with appropriate training can teach Black Studies. But in the context of American

race relations, the conclusions are understandable and merit investigation by anyone interested in the health of Black Studies or the survival of black faculty members.

Black Studies and black faculty members are different, but related. The relationship lies in the conviction I mentioned above – that black people and intellectual activity do not go together. The reluctance to accept that blackness and intelligence are not mutually exclusive affects black faculty members, whatever their field, and it affects faculty members in Black Studies, whatever their personal racial identity.

Over the years, I have listened to colleagues around the country describe their experiences and their circumstances. One by one, they have offered their confidences. Taken together, a multitude of anecdotes reveals the existence of phenomena – *phenomena*, not just chance occurrences. The first belies the existence of color-coded allies and enemies. Evidence from across the nation shows that both support and problems for black faculty and Black Studies can come from people of all racial and ethnic identities.

A second phenomenon is harassment. Black faculty members and faculty members of any race in Black Studies are likely to become the subjects of treatment that can only be described as harassment: hate mail, hate speech, constant questioning of qualifications, personal attacks, and an increased level of everyday undergraduate complaint about teaching styles, grades, reading assignments, and on and on. Sometimes, the news media become involved. After I denied, in the *New York Times*, that there had been intellectual consensus among academics in the 1960s about which scholars and issues merited investigation (I saw some of the then-prevailing unanimity as coerced), I received a threatening letter purporting to come from the National Association for the Advancement of White People (which denied having written it). News of the threat appeared in my local newspapers, creating a source of support, but also a distraction. Most often, though, black faculty members endure the harassment, hoping it will eventually go away. It usually does, but not before leaving a faculty member exhausted and anxious. I still will not open any piece of mail without a return address.

Two other, related phenomena are unexpected delay and heightened scrutiny in career advancement, which cannot always be separated. Routine procedures break down and paperwork gets lost, necessitating additional bureaucratic steps, repeated submissions, and the answering of multiple, sometimes demeaning questions. Delay may lead to catastrophe, but usually additional effort solves the problem. A colleague on the west coast told me he felt as though he were subject to repeated PhD qualifying examinations, as he was expected to prove his competence at every turn. Again, things eventually work out, but not before taking their toll. When each new encounter entails a test of one's fitness, pleasant equanimity suffers.

Vague demurrals may discourage the hiring of faculty members, black or non-black, in Black Studies, even when the publication record of the person in question obviously merits respect. Black faculty members who have survived long

enough – to have become tenured, to have waged battles in professional associations and home institutions, and to have published work that others may disagree with – gain reputations by virtue of their longevity. They become targets of vague accusations of being "too political," "hard to get along with," or "difficult," as though each individual faculty member had his or her own peculiar problem, unrelated to the environment. While listing scholars in their field, colleagues may simply forget the existence of even senior black faculty members or assume – without reading it – that their scholarship is "not good enough."

That phenomenon of invisible scholarship involves the absence of one's publications from other people's footnotes and bibliographies. It may continue with a kind of *de facto* shunning within one's department. Senior faculty members with joint appointments in Black Studies and other departments report that colleagues in those other departments have discouraged graduate students from working with them. No explanations need be offered, for an intimation of unsuitability suffices to unnerve graduate students.

The graduate students of a prominent colleague on the east coast, who studies black people, worried him in a different way. The visibility of his published scholarship brought him numerous dissertation advisees, but he wondered why none took his work to heart by criticizing it or building upon it. Meanwhile, graduate students in other institutions were studying his work, perhaps disregarding the work of black scholars in their own institutions. My colleague saw his problem as isolated, but I hear of it from all over the country: a variant on the prophet ignored in his own country. The black scholar at a distance gets held up as an intellectual paragon.

My readers from all backgrounds, especially women and feminist faculty members, will recognize such frustrations, for they pervade American higher education and affect many who are not black and who do not teach Black Studies. Nevertheless, the experiences of black and non-black faculty members are not the same, for the effects are cumulative. Being black adds one layer of hassle; doing Black Studies adds another, additional layer of hassle; being a black female adds another, additional layer of hassle, and so on.

I have intentionally repeated myself several times in this essay, both to stress the similarity of experiences over time and across cases and to provide an inkling of what it feels like to encounter the same issues repeatedly. So yes, I am oddly heartened by the knowledge that we have lots of company in frustration beyond the ranks of black faculty members and Black Studies. But the realization that so little has changed also disheartens me. After thirty years, fresh black PhD's face too many of the same old difficulties. I offer three remedies, none of which is original.

First, students, faculty members, and administrators need to inform themselves about the history of black faculty members and Black Studies. As usual, libraries, which contain bound and electronic resources, are the place to start. In 2001, the Ford Foundation (www.fordfound.org) issued the latest in a series of reports on Black Studies. The quarterly *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*

(www.jbhe.com) bristles with facts, figures, and useful articles, including the numbers and percentages of black faculty members at leading institutions. *Black Issues in Higher Education* (www.blackissues.com) features interviews and commentary.

Second, to attract and keep black faculty members an institution needs to have a critical mass of black students and faculty members. Black students and faculty members and Black Studies flourish in good company and wither in isolation. Hence, an institution with a strong Black Studies program will find it relatively easy to hire black faculty members and Black Studies faculty members. Barren institutions will need to take heroic measures to get the ball rolling. Enough institutions have succeeded in offering Black Studies and hiring black faculty members to annul these tired – and insulting – old excuses: "Bright young black people can make more money as lawyers and doctors, so they don't go to graduate school" (the "pipeline problem"); "programs in Black Studies ghettoize the field, so it's better not to support a separate program or department." Those excuses never were adequate, and the passage of thirty years proves it.

While the numbers are not massive, a steady trickle of black graduates receive PhD's every year. They are finding academic jobs, often in places with strong departments or programs in Black Studies. Institutions like Columbia, Duke, the University of Michigan, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill have succeeded in racially diversifying their faculties by dint of making doing so a priority. The existence of a Black Studies program or department facilitates the effort.

Third, Black Studies constituencies need to support themselves intellectually by organizing regionally. Princeton hosts the Mid-Atlantic African-American Studies Group (MAAASG), which meets each September and March to discuss topics of interest and to schmooze. Through the organization, graduate students and faculty members advance the field, learn about their colleagues' research, and, just as important, talk to people who share their interests, ideals, and frustrations. Focused on Black Studies, MAAASG attends to the individual needs of black faculty members without closing out non-blacks interested in the field.

So where are we thirty years later on? Utterly exhausted! A look at faculty demography and college and university curricula shows that much good has occurred. But it seems like every single change has required struggle, and no improvement automatically becomes permanent. I wonder whether that will always be true.

Note

This chapter is a slightly revised version of the original, which appeared in the www.chronicle.com, section: *The Chronicle Review*, B7 (eds.).

CHAPTER TWELVE

Autobiography of an Ex-White Man

Robert Paul Wolff

This is the story of a journey – not in space or in time, but in understanding. It has been for me a journey both exhilarating and humbling: exhilarating because on this journey I have learned much that before was closed to me; humbling, because on this journey I discovered how blind I had been to a world that I thought I understood.

Kierkegaard observes somewhere – I think it is in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* – that just as it is harder to jump into the air and land exactly on the spot from which you took off, so it is more difficult to become a Christian when you have the misfortune to have been born a Christian. I faced just such a problem with regard to the subject of race in America. Before I began my journey, I thought of myself as a sensitive, knowledgeable, politically committed advocate of racial justice. But as I took the first steps along the way, I began to realize that I understood little or nothing at all about that color-line called by W. E. B. Du Bois the problem of the twentieth century. So, rather like the conventional Christian who seeks to become truly a Christian, my task was to undergo a difficult process of reeducation and self-examination, in order to end up where I thought I had begun – as a committed advocate of racial justice. Perhaps I can take comfort from Socrates' teaching that the first step of the journey toward wisdom is the acknowledgment that one is ignorant.

I did not set out on my journey deliberately, with forethought and planning. It began as a lark, a *jeu d'esprit*. Only after I was well begun did I even realize what I was doing, and what was happening to me. Ten years ago, after a long career as a professor of philosophy, I was unexpectedly invited to join an Afro-American Studies department in order to participate in the effort to create a groundbreaking doctoral program. I was bored with philosophy and very unhappy in my home department, which was a narrow, unfriendly, unenlightened place, so I jumped at the chance for what sounded like an interesting change of pace. I had no inkling that before too many years had gone by, my whole way of seeing the world would change.

I was helped by my new colleagues and by my students to see America through their eyes. I have tried not only to describe the process of enlightenment, but also to put into words, as well as I can, the new vision of America that I finally achieved. To some readers – certainly to those who are Black – this will be old news. But I think there are many thoughtful, progressive, well-meaning Americans whose eyes are as closed as mine were to the real story of America.

Even now, after ten years spent officially as a professor of Afro-American Studies, I am no sort of scholar at all of the subject. I have made no new archival discoveries, crafted no new readings of literary texts, arrived at no understandings of race in America that were not already voiced by scholars, activists, and other observers. But I have come to believe that my own personal journey may provide some signposts for others who are willing to set out on a similar journey.

I will tell a story I have learned – a new Master Narrative for all of America. It is very different from the story Americans have all learned in school, at Fourth of July celebrations, and in countless political speeches. It lacks the comfortable self-congratulation of which we are all so fond. But it is a true story, and I believe only the truth can set us free.

I will also explain why I have come to believe that among the many bearers and tellers of this story, a special place should be reserved for those scholars and teachers who work and write in Black Studies departments at America's colleges and universities.

North America is now in its fifth century of racial oppression and injustice. Even the most undaunted optimists, among whom I count myself, must surely grant that things are not going to be all right if we are just patient. Only concerted, unrelenting action for racial justice will change half a millennium of injustice. I am mindful of the young Karl Marx's call to arms in his famous Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach: "The philosophers have *only* interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it." I think Marx would agree that we can succeed in changing the world only if we understand it.

The books piled up on the coffee table until they threatened to block the view of my living room. Fifty-three books, 20,000 pages of African-American history, politics, fiction, essays, and poetry. It was the first day of June 1996, and I had to read them all by September 3. On that day, seven eager young Black men and women would show up at New Africa House on the University of Massachusetts campus, ready to start a demanding new doctoral program in Afro-American Studies. We would require them in the first year to read all 53 books and write a paper on each one. They would look to me as graduate program director for guidance, encouragement, and wisdom, and there I sat, knowing next to nothing about the history, the trials, the triumphs, the artistic creations, the experiences of Black folk in America.

My field was philosophy, not Afro-Am, and at that moment I probably knew less about the discipline of Afro-American Studies than one of our undergraduate majors. I thought that my politics were impeccable, my commitments clear.

I had managed an anti-apartheid organization of Harvard graduates for two years, and for the past five years I had run a little one-man scholarship organization raising money for poor Black university students in South Africa. I had picketed Woolworth's in the 1960s, supporting the young Black students who started the modern Civil Rights Movement with their sit-in in Greensboro, North Carolina. But I knew virtually nothing about slavery, Reconstruction, share-cropping, Black Codes, Jim Crow, the Harlem Renaissance, the World War I riots, or the Black Arts Movement.

I am a slow, methodical reader, incapable of skimming lightly through a book. This is fine if you are going to be a philosopher. Close reading of a small number of famous texts is what philosophers do. I often pointed out to my students during my days as a professor of philosophy that you could get a pretty fair education as a student of philosophy by mastering perhaps 25–30 texts from the Western tradition. Indeed, if you were willing to treat all of Plato's Dialogues as one enormous book, you could probably bring the list down to 20 titles. So the mountain of volumes awaiting me was daunting indeed. It was going to be a long summer.

I sighed, and reached for the first book on the pile. It was the seventh edition of John Hope Franklin's classic work, *From Slavery to Freedom*. I didn't take notes. I just read carefully one book after another, in the order prescribed by our syllabus, making marginal comments, as I have always done. My goal was to immerse myself in them, so that I would have a grasp of the overarching shape of the story of Black Americans.

As the title suggests, Franklin's work is an up-beat history of African Americans, beginning with the torment of the Middle Passage and slavery, and taking the reader out of that darkness and into the sunlight of freedom. First published in 1947, the text has been revised again and again to incorporate the tribulations of postwar Jim Crow, the triumph of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the drama of the Civil Rights Movement, and the struggles over affirmative action. Every page is filled with names, dates, and events about which I knew next to nothing.

John Hope Franklin is the Dean of African-American historians, held in the highest esteem by younger Black historians, many of whom he trained at Chicago and Duke. In a profession that for generations did not even acknowledge the Black presence in America, save in the most dismissive and abusive of terms, John Hope had to struggle to gain any sort of professional recognition. Eventually, his White colleagues were forced to admit the weight of his scholarly contributions, and elected him the first Black president of the Southern Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians, and the American Historical Association. I knew none of this on that day in June. To me, the book was just the first in a large pile waiting to be read.

After plowing through Franklin, I read a collection of four famous slave narratives, edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and followed that with *Black History and the Historical Profession, 1915–1980*, by August Meier and Elliott Rudwick.

This last work struck me as an odd pairing with the Franklin and Gates, but my colleague John Henry Bracey, Jr. was the protégé of Augie Meier, and later his collaborator on a number of scholarly essays and editorial collections, so it seemed that we were engaging in the time-honored academic practice of introducing our students to those who had been our own mentors.

I read on. Eric Williams's *Capitalism and Slavery* is a classic thesis book about the role of Caribbean slavery in the growth of British capitalism. Originally his doctoral dissertation, it argues the striking and controversial thesis that the growth of British industry was funded by the profits from the slave trade and the sale of slave-produced Caribbean sugar. *Black Majority* by Peter Wood, another classic work, focuses on the early period of slavery in South Carolina. This is a natural successor to the Williams, because of the important link between Barbados and South Carolina during the eighteenth century. Reading the book, I learned for the first time of the hideous practice of "seasoning" newly captured Africans in Barbados – which is to say beating them into submission – before selling them to South Carolinian plantation owners. Peter is an old friend of mine from my struggles against apartheid at Harvard, and I was delighted to encounter him in the pile.

Early in the summer I read Herbert Gutman's *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, written by Gutman as a response to Patrick Moynihan's notorious "benign neglect" memorandum on the African-American family. Through the sort of painstaking archival scholarship that Moynihan did not trouble himself with, Gutman demonstrated that against all the odds, in the face of the brutality and disruptions of slavery, Africans and their descendants had created and maintained strong family units. Often, they were forced to counter the destructive effects of slave sales by substituting extended kin relations for those of the nuclear family. If a father or mother was sold down the river, an "aunt" or "uncle" would step in to take over the burdens of childrearing. This practice of kin caring for children continues down to the present day, putting the lie to Moynihan's claim that the economic troubles of Negroes are due to an absence of what are today called "family values."

As the weeks passed, I became more and more absorbed by my reading. Some of the historical works were fascinating and beautifully written. Judge A. Leon Higgenbotham's *In the Matter of Color* deals with the law of slavery in six of the American colonies prior to the Revolutionary war. For the first time, I learned something of the extraordinary complexity of the early attempts by judges and lawyers to find in the English Common Law some justification for the racial oppression of chattel slavery.

I was ravished by the outpouring of vivid contemporary detail in Leon Litwack's *Been in the Storm So Long*, an astonishing book about the ways in which the slaves experienced and reacted to liberation at the end of the Civil War. In Litwack's pages, the slaves and freed people began to come alive to me as individuals, with passions, skills, and a fully developed ironic understanding of their own situation. More perhaps than any other single work in the pile, this book

weaned me away from my tendency to look *at* Black men and women rather than to look at the world *through* their eyes.

Some of the books were solid, workmanlike monographs, useful for fleshing out the story of the African-American experience: Gary Nash's *Forging Freedom*, a portrait of free Blacks in Philadelphia; *They Who Would Be Free*, by Jane and William Pease, telling the story of Black abolitionists. Another old friend from anti-apartheid days, Nell Painter, turned up with *Exodusters*, her account of the migration of freedmen and women from the South to Kansas in the years just after the Civil War.

Later in the summer I worked my way into the twentieth century, reading *Black Metropolis* by St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, a massive work, more than 800 pages long. This is a classic sociological study of the Black community in Chicago, one of the first major works of urban sociology. Only years later would I learn that Drake had been one of John Bracey's teachers, and a major figure in Pan-African and American Negro political movements. For the moment, I was content to learn something about the Black community in the South Side of Chicago, which I had lived next to but had never explored during my two years at the University of Chicago.

The literary half of the list started slowly, with *Clotel*, *Iola Leroy*, *The Conjure Woman*, and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* representing pre-Civil War fictions. *Clotel*, a novel by an escaped slave, William Wells Brown, is based on the belief widely held in the Black community that Thomas Jefferson had fathered mulatto children by one of his slaves. It took the miracles of modern science to demonstrate to the White community that the oral traditions of Blacks are frequently more reliable than the written assurances of established scholars.

Near the end of the summer I read *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Jonah's Gourd Vine* by Zora Neale Hurston, *Native Son* and *Uncle Tom's Children* by Richard Wright, *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison, *If He Hollers Let Him Go* by Chester Himes, and *Go Tell It On The Mountain* by James Baldwin. Our students were in for a treat!

I was so absorbed in the enterprise of reading this huge stack of books – checking off titles, shifting volumes one by one from the to-read to the already-read pile – that for much of the summer I did not take the time to reflect on the experience I was undergoing, but slowly, little by little, as I drew closer to the end of the list, I began to realize that something quite remarkable was happening to me, something I had not anticipated when I began my labors.

This was actually the third time in my life that I had attempted a concentrated bout of reading of this magnitude. The first time had been in the spring of 1958, when I read the major works of Western political theory, and then went on to read 20,000 pages of European history in preparation for teaching freshman history at Harvard. The second time had been just 20 years later, when I immersed myself for a sabbatical semester in theoretical economics so that I could master the modern mathematical reinterpretation of the economic theories of Karl Marx. Each of these efforts had greatly broadened the scope of my knowledge

and insight, but neither had in any fundamental way changed me. I was the same radical philosopher after the political theory, history, and economics that I had been before.

But as the story of the African-American experience washed over me in all its horrible and glorious detail, the very structure of my perception and conception of America underwent an irreversible alteration. I saw everything differently – I saw the Puritans differently, and I saw Rodney King differently; I saw the Civil War differently, and I saw O. J. Simpson differently. I saw my colleagues differently; I even saw myself differently. By the time the summer was over and nothing remained in the pile of books to be read save *The Negro Caravan* (which I never did manage to plow through), I found myself living in a world I had never before inhabited, seeing the world through entirely new eyes.

How exactly had my perceptions, my conceptions, and I myself changed? It is not so easy to put the changes into words. The change was not merely a matter of accumulated information. I now knew about the Stono Rebellion, and I understood the structure of the triangular trade that circulated slaves, raw materials, and finished goods among Europe, West Africa, and North America. I had for the first time some feel for the complex detail of the laws governing slavery in the Colonies and then in the United States prior to the Civil War. Perhaps most important of all, I understood that the long, painful saga of Black men and women in America was not a story of slow, steady improvement, but rather an endless repetition of hopes raised and then dashed, of advances followed by brutal reversals.

But facts were not the substance of what had happened to me, though they played a role, to be sure. Rather, I was for the first time beginning to see America from the standpoint of African Americans. Let us be clear. I was still, as I had been and am now, a New York Jewish professor from a non-religious middle-class family. I was under no illusions about being Black or thinking Black. But because I had made the life choice to change my departmental affiliation, with everything that meant, I found myself beginning to be able to see how the world might look to my colleagues. And it was starting to look the same way to me.

I think more than anything else my perceptions were altered by the sheer repetition of detail in the books I had read – the fictions as well as the historical accounts. Reading about one whipping or one lynching is upsetting. Reading statistics of the numbers of whippings or lynchings is an education. But reading description after description, in book after book, of maimings, killings, whippings, and lynchings in the seventeenth century, the eighteenth century, the nineteenth century, and the twentieth century made me finally understand why so many of my colleagues seemed deeply, irreversibly pessimistic about the prospects for anything resembling racial justice. To them – and, by the end of the summer, to me as well – the beating of Rodney King was neither remarkable nor unexpected. It was an episode that was continuous with almost four centuries of oppression.

The images of the fictions blended in my imagination with the factual accounts dredged from archives by historians. The Battle Royal in *Invisible Man*, the lynching in *Uncle Tom's Children*, the bitter unfairness of the ending of *If*

He Hollers Let Him Go were no more terrible, no more implausible, indeed no more powerfully realized in their literary settings, than the purely factual accounts of the Negro who was lynched on the stage of a theatre before Whites who had paid to see the show.

Stories have a power to shape our experience, to impose interpretations on what we think we know – both true stories and fictional ones. The story of America organizes our collective social memory, highlighting turning points, bringing some facts into sharp focus, concealing others. If our national story is told wrongly, we shall forget our real past, and then – because stories have this power – we shall misunderstand our present and lose the ability to shape our future. Freud says somewhere that if there is any one subject that it is not permitted to discuss in an analysis, sooner or later the entire analysis comes to be about that one subject. Race is the dirty little secret of the American story – not greed, not sex, not power. Until the American story is rewritten with the fact of slavery and its aftermath given its true place, none of us in the White community will be able to understand the story of America aright.

I am a White 67-year-old New York Jewish intellectual. What on earth am I doing in a Black Studies department?

I was educated in philosophy at Harvard in the early 1950s, where I studied with the logician Willard van Orman Quine, the epistemologist Clarence Irving Lewis, and the great medievalist scholar Harry Austryn Wolfson. I started out to be a logician, moved on to the study of the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (to this day, the license plate on my car is "I KANT"), went from there to political philosophy, and then to Karl Marx's economic theories – pretty much the road to Hell as things were viewed back in those days.

I grew up in Queens in a non-religious home. When I was 12, my mother told me that I was the product of a mixed marriage. "Your father is an agnostic and I am an atheist," she said. "All the other boys are going to go to Hebrew school, get bar mitzvah'd, have a big party and get lots of presents. You can do that, or your father and I will give you a hundred dollars and you can get yourself something." I took the hundred and bought Natie Gold's set of model trains, which I coveted. That was my last encounter with organized religion.

The politics in my home were a curious mixture of hatred and piety. My father hated communists, he hated Zionists, and – though the connection is somewhat tenuous – he hated the board of education, for whom he worked as a science teacher and then high school principal. The piety was simple enough – my mother and father voted the straight Democratic ticket, and it never crossed their minds, or the minds of any of their friends, to consider voting for a Republican. My aunt and uncle were friendly with one light-skinned upper-middle-class Black couple, but I think my parents figured that was quite enough broad-minded outreach by the extended family.

I began my political life as a Truman supporter in 1948, and have drifted steadily to the left as I have grown older. Marx and Engels had a little private

joke they liked to repeat in their correspondence. They would say that they got their philosophy (or religion) from the Germans, their politics from the French, and their economics from the English. I have always thought that if you knew someone's stand on religion, politics, and economics, you could pretty well tell where he or she would be on any important issue, so when people ask me what I believe, I say I am an atheist in religion, an anarchist in politics, and a Marxist in economics.

During most of my life, I have had progressive opinions on matters of race, but little or no personal experience or understanding of the real dynamics of race in America. To be sure, I picketed Woolworth after the Greensboro sit-ins. But my closest connection with the Black community in America came in the early 1960s, when I served for a time in an all-Black Army National Guard regiment in Chicago. This requires a little explanation, for those of you too young to remember the draft.

Back when I was a teenager, in the aftermath of World War II, all men were required to register for the draft when they reached 18. The army actually got around to calling you when you were 21 or 22, but if you were in college, you could get a deferment until you graduated. If you went on to graduate school, you could keep getting deferments until you reached the magic age of 26, at which point, even though you continued legally to be eligible up to 35, the army wouldn't call you. For this reason, almost no one with a graduate degree from my generation served in the army.

But I was precocious, alas. By the time I received a draft notice, just before my 22nd birthday in December 1956, I was six months away from finishing my doctorate. I got my draft board to postpone my order of induction so that I could get my degree that next spring, and before they could draft me again, I joined the Massachusetts National Guard. In June, I walked with my bright crimson robe in the commencement ceremonies, and then went off to Fort Dix to do basic training.

I owed the government five and a half years of Guard meetings after my six months on active duty. I did the first three and a half years at Harvard, where I was an instructor in philosophy and general education. Then, in 1961, I got an assistant professorship at the University of Chicago, and transferred to the nearest Guard unit, which was an all-Black regiment in the heart of the Black community of south Chicago. By this time I had risen all the way to the rank of Private First Class (or Specialist 3rd Class, as they called it in the "New Army"). At my first Guard meeting, I was assigned to Headquarters Company, where my job was to carry the equipment of the Regimental photographer, a Master Sergeant by the name of Jewell Starks.

Starks had been raised a Catholic, but was now a member of the Nation of Islam. He told me he had been one of the Black Eagles at Tuskegee during World War II – the group of Black men who were trained as fliers by the Army Air Corps. At the time, this bit of information meant very little to me, but 35 years later, I would gain some sense of its significance.

From the time of the Revolutionary war on, Black Americans have demanded the right to serve as soldiers, in the face of the persistent contempt heaped on them by Whites. Despite having served bravely in the American Revolution, and having made a critically important contribution to the victory of the Northern armies during the Civil War, they have been summarily brushed aside each time the country no longer needs their blood and courage. As America's entry into World War II drew closer, once again Black men asked to be permitted to serve. In 1941 Franklin Delano Roosevelt gave orders that led to the establishment of a program at Tuskegee University to train Black fliers – the Black Eagles. Eventually, the 99th Fighter Group and the 332nd Fighter Group, both composed of Black aviators, united to form one of the most successful and highly decorated units in the Army Air Corps. Leading bombers on air strikes over Europe, Black fliers were so effective that even racist White pilots asked that their units be protected by the 99th and 332nd.

Starks was a Master Sergeant when I knew him, so I infer that he served with the ground crews, since the fliers all held officer rank. Though I did not realize it at the time, his casual remark to me testified to his connection with a proud and groundbreaking unit. By the time I came along, of course, the integration of the armed forces was well under way, and all of the noncoms in my basic training camp had been either Black or Latino.

The regiment into which I transferred had a long and proud military record, of which I was completely unaware back in 1961. The other men in the unit were Black residents of South Side Chicago. They knew all too well about the racially exclusionary policies of the University of Chicago, about its practice of buying up Hyde Park real estate so that it could turn away Black renters, *including even its own Black students*. So when a White professor showed up from the University and was handed the job of fetching and toting for Master Sergeant Starks, it must have been a source of some ironic amusement to them.

But I was completely blind to these nuances of race and authority on the South Side of Chicago. All I knew was that I had a little patch on my arm that showed I was a Spec 3, and Starks was a Master Sergeant with almost twenty years of service. He had stripes and hash marks all the way up his arm, and to my naive anarchist mind, it seemed natural that I should take orders from him and carry his gear.

My next encounter with the matter of race occurred fifteen years later, and once again the story betrays my insensitivity at that time to the realities of race in America. The events were to bear a strange relationship to my membership in a Black Studies department.

In the intervening years, I had gone on to teach at Columbia, where I was fortunate enough to be deeply involved in the 1968 building seizures and student uprisings. Eventually, I became disenchanted with the elite Ivy League segment of the academy, and accepted a position in the philosophy department at the University of Massachusetts, a big, rural second-tier state university. In the middle 1970s UMass was in the remarkable position of having both a Black chancellor and a Black provost.

The chancellor was a widely respected geologist who had been a member of the UMass faculty for some time. The provost was a political scientist who had been recruited in a national search from his position at Florida State University. UMass had just come to the end of a rapid and somewhat chaotic period of growth, transforming itself from a small agricultural school into a university with 23,000 students. The top administrative positions had for many years been controlled by a small group of senior science professors, who more or less rotated deanships, provostships, and chancellorships among themselves. Although the chancellor was a scientist, he was not a part of that circle, and they actually formed an ad hoc "advisory" group to keep an eye on him (a group into which I was invited, I am now embarrassed to admit).

Shortly after arriving, the provost launched an attempt to shift resources and faculty lines away from arts and sciences and toward the professional schools. This was hardly unusual; indeed, it was merely part of a national trend that had been going on for some years, and continues to the present day. But he moved quickly, and without elaborate consultations of the sort preferred by faculty, and very soon, massive opposition to him grew in some sectors of the campus.

Almost immediately, he alienated large segments of the campus by trying peremptorily to carry out a rather far-reaching restructuring. In the late spring of 1977 things came to a head, with a call for an extraordinary meeting of all of the faculties of the university, for the purpose of issuing a vote of no confidence in the provost. I was asked by a group of professors opposed to the provost to give a public speech to the hundreds of professors gathered in the campus's largest lecture hall.

This effort was unprecedented at UMass, and was fueled by a variety of motivations, some of which were racial. I registered none of this at the time. To me, this was just one more opportunity to attack authority, something I had done at Harvard as an undergraduate, at Chicago as an assistant professor, and at Columbia as a senior professor. I loved nothing better than to stand before a crowd and call for the resignation of a dean, a provost, a chancellor, or a president. Indeed, my very first publication had been a letter to the *Harvard Crimson* written when I was barely 17, calling on President James Bryant Conant to resign.

The members of the Afro-American Studies department knew better. Regardless of the provost's administrative style, which some of them had serious doubts about, they saw a concerted attack to get rid of a Black provost, in the name of academic collegiality and due process – shibboleths that had for generations been invoked to keep Black men out of positions of authority.

I was in hog heaven. I like nothing better than joining with my colleagues to rail at the powers that be. At Columbia in the midst of the uprising, I had defended the building seizures in a debate against the great historian Peter Gay during a mass meeting, and – not surprisingly – was cheered to the echo by enthusiastic students. Here was another chance to make a big public splash by denouncing someone in authority.

My opponent in the public debate on this occasion was Michael Thelwell, a tall, elegant, well spoken, witty Jamaican who was a senior professor in the Afro-American Studies department, and had been its first head. Thelwell is a graduate of Howard, a comrade of the late Stokely Carmichael (whose authorized biography he is currently writing), and during the 1960s ran the SNCC office in Washington. He is a genuine hero of the movement, and one of the most brilliant orators I have ever heard.

Well, it was a warm spring day, and I chose to wear a white suit, one of my few bits of reasonably nice clothing. I looked like one of the plantation owners in the ball scene in *Gone With the Wind*. The larger meaning of the event was not lost on Thelwell. In a long piece published in the Black students' newspaper under the heading, "The Savaging of the Provost: Ritual Murder Among the Humanists," he used his quite considerable rhetorical powers to excoriate those who were calling for the head of the provost. After ridiculing the pretensions of the attackers who had invoked the sanctity of the cultural, intellectual, and aesthetic traditions of Western civilization in their assault on the provost, he took dead aim at me. "It would all have been infinitely more moving had there really been barbarian hordes at the doors threatening to rape 'the life of the mind,' pillage 'the spirit of a great university,' and worse burn the articles of governance. Or if one did not know that the most self-righteous, smug, and unctuous of the lot was himself a failed candidate for the position of provost. I am talking about Robert Paul Wolff of the philosophy department, lest there be any doubt."

It is nothing short of miraculous that, fifteen years later, I was invited to join the W. E. B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies at the University of Massachusetts.

Which brings me to April 22, 1992. Esther Terry and I were having lunch at the Lord Jeffrey Amherst Inn in the middle of Amherst, Massachusetts. Esther and I sat next to a big window, looking out on the picture postcard New England Common, drinking wine and talking. The occasion for the lunch was my appointment as Esther's co-director of a tiny operation at the University of Massachusetts rather grandiosely called the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities. This was a consolation prize awarded to me behind the scenes after I ran for the deanship of humanities and lost.

Esther Terry is a tiny black woman with a radiant personality that fills any room she is in and makes everyone she meets believe that she is their best friend. When she walks through the halls of the administration building, vice-chancellors and secretaries come out of their offices to throw their arms around her and greet her. Being with her makes me feel as though I were in the train of the Queen of Sheba as she entered King Solomon's court. She is the daughter of North Carolina share-croppers, the descendant of slaves, and has, I think, the shrewdest political mind I have ever encountered.

As a young woman at Bennett College in the 1950s, Esther was one of those brave students who launched the modern Civil Rights Movement with their sit-

in at the Greensboro Woolworth lunch counter. Esther was there at the counter from the very first day, and she has earned the right to show her scars when veterans of the movement gather to tell war stories.

Esther came to UMass from North Carolina to do a doctorate in literature and drama, and stayed to become a founding member thirty years ago of the W. E. B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies, which she now heads. Her life has been devoted to educating, caring for, and fighting for the rights of Black students both on the UMass campus and elsewhere. Esther has spent time doing theatre, and when she is in the mood, she will do wicked parodies of academics who have ticked her off.

We were supposed to be discussing institute business, but truth to tell, there wasn't much to talk about. UMass was going through one of its periodic budget crises, and the provost had actually wanted to close the institute down rather than continue to come up with its annual $20,000 budget.

As we ate, Esther talked more and more animatedly about her dream of establishing a full-scale departmentally based doctoral program in Afro-American Studies. At that point, there wasn't but one such program in the country – the Afrocentric program created at Temple University by Molefi Asante. Esther and her colleagues were not at all sympathetic to Asante's approach, so the program of which she dreamed would be the first of its kind in the world. She talked about how difficult it had been simply to keep Afro-American Studies alive in the quarter century that had passed since the uprisings of the late 1960s brought the Civil Rights Movement to Northern campuses. After the initial enthusiasm of the early 1970s, Black Studies had been sharply cut back across the country, with five hundred programs or more dwindling to two hundred. The UMass administration had been supportive – much more so than at most other schools – but repeated budget crises had taken their toll, and the department was now only half as large as at its height.

Finally, after the second glass of wine, Esther looked up at me and said, "How would you like to come over and teach philosophy in Afro-American Studies?"

What could possibly have prompted so unexpected a question? Somehow, I had managed in the intervening years to redeem myself in the eyes of the members of the department. They saw something in me that perhaps I did not even see in myself – something that persuaded this proud and accomplished group of scholar-activists that I deserved to be a member of the oldest freestanding Black Studies department in America, and that I might be able to contribute something to their plans for a groundbreaking doctoral program.

I have turned this puzzle over in my mind for almost ten years now, and I may never fully solve it. Perhaps it was the fact that I had been active in the anti-apartheid movement, heading up a group of Harvard graduates who were pressuring their alma mater to divest. Though I did not know it at the time, the Afro-American Studies department and the Black chancellor had spearheaded a successful effort to make UMass the second university in the country to divest. Almost certainly, the department decided that my enthusiasm for creating new

academic programs could be put to good use in their own efforts. During my years at UMass, I had started an interdisciplinary undergraduate social theory major and a doctoral track in social and political philosophy. Esther had served on the search committee during my unsuccessful run for the deanship, and she had heard me speak about the great pleasure I took in working to establish new educational programs. Having roots in the traditions of the Black church, although none of them now is a believing Christian, perhaps they were simply moved by the parable of the prodigal son. But I may never know the answer, for the subject is never mentioned.

At any rate, when Esther asked her question, without missing a beat, I said, "Sure." Needless to say, not by the most generous stretch of the imagination could I claim the slightest scholarly competence in Afro-American Studies. But Esther's enthusiasm was infectious, and I immediately began spinning plans in my head of ways that I might be part of the effort to create a new doctoral program. That night I wrote a three page single-spaced memorandum suggesting steps we could take to win approval for a doctoral program. My memorandum was appropriately tentative, because I was not sure I had really heard Esther invite me to join the department, but my excitement was obvious, and within days she called me with the news that she had won a unanimous vote of approval from her department for the invitation. It was only years later that I realized how delicately and carefully she had dropped that suggestion into the conversation, very much like an expert fly fisherman casting a Royal Nymph over a pool harboring a deep-lying trout.

Ordinarily, moving a senior professor from one department to another is a bureaucratic nightmare, requiring months or years to bring off. In this case, however, my colleagues in philosophy were happy to see me go. Scarcely two months later the transfer was completed, and I became a professor of Afro-American Studies. It seemed like a lark – one more change of field in a career in which I had taught classes in philosophy, political science, history, and economics departments.

As I walked across the campus on a warm June day, I scarcely realized how completely that simple move was to transform my perception of American society, and the world's perception of me.

The office buildings at the University of Massachusetts are for the most part ugly functional structures, with neither charm nor history. Bartlett Hall, where philosophy is housed, could pass for the regional offices of the Veterans' Administration. My new department was located on the east side of the campus in a four story brick building that was indistinguishable, architecturally, from the dormitory across the street.

As I walked up to the front steps, I saw a striking black and red wooden plaque over the door proclaiming that this was "New Africa House." As I stepped inside, I found the walls covered with brilliant murals, painted, I later learned, by the students of my new colleague, Nelson Stevens. It was years before I was told something of the history of the building and the role it had played in the struggles of Black students and faculty on the campus.

The building had indeed originally been a dormitory, as the layout of rooms and large communal bathrooms on each floor testify. But in 1969, during a protest against the racial policies (or lack of policies) of the university, a group of Black students was chased by threatening White students back to their dormitory. The Black students barricaded themselves in the dorm, told the White students there either to join forces with them or get out, and liberated the building, declaring it to be their space. The newly formed Afro-American Studies department responded by moving itself collectively into the now-emptied dorm, and the building became New Africa House.

This seizure of space was symbolic of the ambitious dreams of the department, for the founding faculty were not simply seeking to establish yet another academic department. Instead, they sought to create what can only be described as an entire counter-university in which the experiences, struggles, triumphs, and wisdom of Black Americans, and more broadly of all the peoples of the African diaspora, would take their rightful place in the academy.

The first and most pressing need was to give the small but growing number of Black students on the campus a structure of support, counseling, and legitimation. To that end, members of the department, who had been providing these services on an ad hoc basis in addition to their normal teaching duties, created the Committee for the Collegiate Education of Black and Other Minority Students. CCEBMS (or "Sebs"), as it came to be called, began the work of overcoming the hostile and unwelcoming environment that routinely confronted Black students (and students of other minorities) when they came to UMass.

In pursuit of its dream, the department began to recruit a broad spectrum of scholars and artists. Over the next few years, historians, political scientists, anthropologists, sociologists, writers, literary critics, painters, sculptors, dancers, and musicians came on board. Simply calling the roll of the faculty in those early days gives some sense of how grand the vision was. Among those who taught in the department in the early days were jazz immortal Max Roach, Johnetta Cole (later to become president of Spelman College), sociologist William Julius Wilson, Shirley Graham Du Bois (the second wife of W. E. B.), the great James Baldwin, and Africa's most distinguished writer, Chinua Achebe. Still in the department are jazz saxophonist Archie Shepp and Stevens, one of the founding members of the Black Arts Movement.

New Africa House quickly became not a classroom building or an office building but a world. In addition to the department and CCEBMS, it soon housed a restaurant, a barbershop catering to Black customers, a radio station, and even a daycare center. Old-timers tell stories of groups of six-year-olds marching up and down the steps chanting revolutionary slogans.

The memories of these struggles, of three decades of triumphs and defeats, were gathered in New Africa House as I approached it that day, though at the time I was oblivious to them.

My very first day in New Africa House was something of a revelation. I walked up to the third floor, and wandered down the hall looking for the department

office. As I drew near, I heard a sound that was entirely new to me in academic surroundings: loud, unforced, hearty laughter. Not snickers, or smirks, or hedged giggles, with which I had become all too familiar during my many years in philosophy departments, but big, healthy belly laughs. My new colleagues were clearly people confident of their accomplishments and commitments, comfortable with themselves and the world around them, free of the convolutions and status anxieties that make most university departments so ready a target for satire.

Esther wasted no time. In July, shortly after my transfer, we began work in earnest on the proposal to create a doctoral program in Afro-American Studies. Almost immediately, someone – I think it was John Bracey, Jr. – had the idea of building the program on the foundation of a required first-year seminar in which our students would read masses of classic works in Afro-American Studies and write scores of papers. In this way, we would define a core of intellectual material that would be shared by every student in the program, no matter what he or she went on to specialize in. At that first meeting, we began the exciting and exhausting task of choosing the books.

The first dispute was over how many books to require. John argued hard for 100, but the rest of us didn't think we could get even the best of students to read carefully 100 scholarly works in two semesters. In the end, we agreed on 50 as a reasonable number. If the seminar met two afternoons each week during the fall and spring semesters, that would work out to just about one book for each meeting. A paper on each book – 50 books, 50 papers. Now began the debates over which 50 books to include.

Internal politics as well as intellectual demands dictated that we devote half the list to history and politics and the other half to literature and culture. John is a historian, and faced with the prospect of being forced to limit himself not to 50 works of history, but to a mere 25, he made one last effort to expand the list to 100. We beat him down, and went to work.

This is perhaps as good a time as any to say a few words about the people engaged in this collective creation of a canon. My new colleagues, I learned very quickly, are an extraordinary group of people, quite unlike the members of any philosophy department I have ever been a member of. Virtually all of them came to the University of Massachusetts from some form of radical Black activism, and a quarter of a century later, their worldview, intellectual style, and personal commitments have been shaped by that origin.

Esther, as I have said, came from the sit-ins in Greensboro. John Bracey, although an academic brat (his mother taught at Howard University) with an archivist's encyclopedic knowledge of documents, texts, and sources in Black history, came out of a Chicago Black Nationalist experience. John is a man of enormous presence and intellectual power, very much the scholarly center of the doctoral program, who is as much at home teaching in a local prison as he is poring over documents in the Library of Congress. He has edited countless collections of documents both from the antebellum period of slavery and from twentieth-century political movements in the Black community. A burly man

with a full beard now streaked with gray, John was the first academic in the United States to teach courses on the history of Black women, and he has just finished co-editing a large volume of materials on the relations between Blacks and Jews. John is an inexhaustible source of bibliographical references, archival information, and stories about Black scholars, most of whom he seems to have known personally. One day, after he had given a one hour impromptu lecture in the Major Works seminar on the location of Herbert Gutman's scholarship within the entire sweep of modern historiography, I complimented him, and told him how impressive I found his command of the literature. "That's just what historians do," he replied, but I suspect there are few scholars now teaching who could have pulled that lecture out of their memory banks.

Michael Thelwell was the founding chair of the department. Mike is a novelist and essayist, and also an expert on the Civil Rights Movement, in which he played an important role. He has a special affection and respect for the work of Chinua Achebe, who is in fact the godfather of Mike's son, Chinua. Soon after joining the department, I sat in on the course Mike teaches from time to time, on Achebe's novels, and had my first sustained introduction to the literature produced by the great African writers.

One day in the fall of my first year in Afro-Am, I was a deeply moved participant in a little ceremony – there is really no other word for it – that brought closure to that awful moment fifteen years earlier when I had done my imitation of an antebellum plantation owner. Mike, whose office is catty-corner to mine across the hall, invited me in for a cup of tea. With an air of great formality, he told me about an old West African custom among the Igbo and other peoples. Young men of the same age, who together go through the rituals of passage to adulthood, form a bond of comradeship, and ever after think of one another as brothers. Boiling water on a little hot plate and carefully putting tea bags in two cups, Mike noted that he and I were of roughly the same age, and hence should think of one another as part of the same age cohort. Not a word was said of the confrontation all those years ago over the Black provost, but I knew that he was once and for all offering to forgive me, and was welcoming me into the brotherhood of those who had together created and sustained the department for a quarter of a century. We have never spoken of this, but when he reads these words, he will know how grateful I am to him for the generosity of that gesture.

Directly across the hall from me is the office of William Strickland. Bill is a political scientist and activist who ran the New England part of Jesse Jackson's campaign for the presidential nomination in 1984 and 1988. He grew up in Roxbury with Louis Farrakhan, and went to Harvard after preparing at Boston Latin. Bill is a talented polyglot who is prone to lapse into Spanish, French, or German. He has longstanding connections with scholars and political figures in Cuba, and recently took part in a ceremony in Havana celebrating the publication of the first Spanish translation of W. E. B. Du Bois's classic work, *The Souls of Black Folk*. Bill and others worked with Vincent Harding thirty years ago to

found the Institute for the Black World in Atlanta, and more recently served as a consultant to the prizewinning television series *Eyes on the Prize*. Although our colleagues would almost certainly dispute it, I think Bill and I are currently the politically most radical members of the department.

The last member of the group who crafted the doctoral program is Ernest Allen, Jr., currently the acting chair.[1] Born in Oakland, California he was part of the Black Nationalist Movement there and in Detroit, Michigan before coming to UMass. Ernie is an expert on Black intellectual and religious movements, and has done groundbreaking work on the Nation of Islam and the various Black Masonic lodges of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although he is, like the rest of us, thoroughly secular in outlook, his speech is peppered with the images and expressions of Black evangelical Christianity, and he is prone to cry "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!" as he walks down the hall toward the department office.

There we all were, gathered into Esther's office, arguing endlessly about which 50 books constituted the core of the field we were seeking to define. Mike argued unsuccessfully for the inclusion of at least one of Achebe's novels. Bill insisted that Gunnar Myrdahl's classic work, *An American Dilemma*, be added to the list, but John countered that it is full of mistakes and has long since been superseded. And so it went.

What was my role in this high-powered intellectual argument? The simple answer is scribe, amanuensis, and general dogsbody. If I may digress, the experience reminded me of my very first teaching job. During my stint as instructor in general education and philosophy at Harvard University, I was handed the job of sharing the teaching duties in a large staff-taught history of Western Europe. As my last encounter with European history had been Mr. Wepner's class in junior year of high school, I was, to put it mildly, rather underprepared. My colleagues in that enterprise were five brilliant young historians, for whom teaching Europe from Caesar to Napoleon was no strain whatsoever. The six of us, including such stars as Hanna Gray, later to be the provost of Yale and the president of the University of Chicago, James Billington, currently the Historian of Congress, and Arno Mayer, now a distinguished Princeton scholar, would gather periodically to make up lists of readings that the students could consult while writing their required essays. As the other five showed off to one another by mentioning all the latest scholarly monographs, I would nod knowingly and scribble the names as fast as I could, pretending that I was merely reminding myself of titles with which I was, of course, thoroughly familiar.

And here I was, 34 years later, doing exactly the same thing. As John or Mike or Bill or Esther or Ernie would mention a book, I would write it down, pretending that the title wasn't complete news to me. There were some embarrassing moments. Since it was my job to type up what we had agreed upon for our next meeting, my ignorance was on display to all. "Sinclair Drake," John gently pointed out to me, was actually "St. Clair Drake," a distinguished Black sociologist and co-author of the classic work *Black Metropolis*. *Cane* was of course not

written by Gene Tumor, but by Jean Toomer, *Plum Bun* by Jessie Fauset, not Jessie Faucet. And so on and on. My colleagues were endlessly tactful with this new member of the department. After a while, Bill Strickland took to drifting into my office from across the hall and asking whether I had read this or that work of Black political theory. The answer was always no (despite the fact that I featured myself something of a political theorist), and he would answer, gently, "Well, you might be interested in looking at it."

After several more meetings, we nailed down our list, and with relatively few changes, it has stood the test of five successive classes of doctoral students. Every one of the students who enters our program must start his or her education with us by reading all "50 books" (although with successive additions and subtractions, the number has crept up to 56).

Scholarly argument, activist credentials, laughter – these were my first impressions of my new department. But very quickly, I was exposed to a rather darker side of the African-American experience. Since getting official approval for a new doctoral program is a forbiddingly difficult process at the University of Massachusetts, involving review not only by a hierarchy of committees and administrators on campus but also by the president's office, the board of trustees, and a state agency called the Higher Education Coordinating Council, we decided early on that it would be prudent to consult the chief academic officer on our campus, the provost and vice-chancellor for academic affairs. So we invited that luminary to visit with us in our offices in New Africa House.

The provost at that time was a pleasant political scientist of no discernible scholarly accomplishments or intellectual distinction. He had never actually set foot in New Africa House, and over the phone displayed a certain uneasiness about venturing to what he obviously thought of as the other side of the tracks, but at last he agreed, and on July 13, 1992, at 3:30 p.m., we all sat down in Esther's office for a chat.

As soon as the meeting began, it became clear that the provost had grave doubts about our ambitions, and it was very difficult to avoid the conclusion that he just did not think a group of Black people were capable of putting together a satisfactory proposal. "There is a great deal of paperwork," he kept emphasizing, conveying the impression that he was not entirely sure we were literate.

The rest of the department had had a lifetime of experience with the condescensions and racism of White administrators. They had long since learned to choose when to give voice to their outrage, and when to refrain in the service of some larger end. But I was accustomed to being treated with deference and respect in academic settings – one of the fringe benefits, I now realize, of being White. So as the provost went on, I started to get angry.

Then, abruptly, the provost changed his tune. Something we said – I cannot now recall what it was – suggested to him that this project might be viewed as a contribution to multiculturalism, then becoming a popular cause on our campus. So long as a doctorate in Afro-American Studies were viewed in that light, and not as a standard academic degree, he could see his way clear to supporting it.

I completely lost my cool. "If the philosophy department didn't have a doctoral program, and came to you with a proposal to create one, the only thing you would ask is whether it was academically sound. But when the Afro-American Studies department comes to you with a proposal for a doctoral program, you ask whether it is a contribution to multiculturalism. Are you saying that you hold our department to a different standard than the one you hold the philosophy department to?"

This was 1992, and academic administrators had become accustomed to the most meticulous even-handedness and punctiliousness in any matter even remotely touching upon race. My question was little more than a rhetorical flourish. No department chair, dean, provost, chancellor – or, for that matter, admissions officer or dorm counselor – could actually admit to treating Black people any differently from anyone else, for all that they routinely did.

The provost thought about my question for a moment, and replied, "Yes."

We looked at each other. It had become clear that we were in the presence of someone who was a greater danger to himself than he was to us. Very gently, Esther brought the conversation to a close and sent the provost on his way. It was my first lesson in the realities of what it meant to be Black on a White campus.

In the next few weeks we drafted a full-scale proposal for a graduate program in Afro-American Studies, complete with a massive volume of attachments as specified by the documents from the administration. September rolled around, and as usual, UMass began its new academic year right after Labor Day. At the beginning of the semester, Esther called a department meeting – one of the very few formal meetings held each year.

The meeting was held in a large classroom down the hall from the department office. We sprawled in the uncomfortable chairs with their writing arms, and gossiped as Esther got the meeting started. In addition to the six of us who had drafted the doctoral program proposal, there were several other members of the department present, including Femi Richards, a soft-spoken gracious West African scholar of African art and culture, and an expert on the design and creation of textiles.

As the meeting proceeded, Nelson Stevens, who lives in Springfield, kept getting up and looking out the window to make sure that the parking police were not ticketing his car at a metered place down below. (I try hard to resist the temptation to paranoia, but it does seem that they pay closer attention to the meters in front of New Africa House than to any other row of meters on the campus.)

Nelson's exaggerated concern triggered some comments, and then, slowly, something quite remarkable began to happen. Mike, John, Ernie, Esther, and the others started telling stories about their run-ins with the campus police. Mike told about rescuing a stranded undergraduate one evening and being stopped by a campus policeman who saw only a Black man in a car with a White woman. Esther, who is perhaps the most widely recognized person on the entire campus, told of being called to a meeting in the administration building during one of

the periodic racial crises, and being refused entry by a campus officer until a colleague – a White man – vouched for her. John talked about being called out in the middle of the night to speak on behalf of Black students arbitrarily rounded up by campus officers during post-game revels.

For a while, I simply listened, fascinated by stories of events so completely unlike anything I had experienced during my more than twenty years on the UMass campus. But then I grew puzzled. This group of professors had been colleagues for more than two decades. They were all natural storytellers. Surely, they had all heard these stories a hundred times. Why on earth were they rehearsing them yet again?

And then, of course, the scales fell from my eyes and I realized what was really going on. My new colleagues were telling *me* the stories, although they were apparently talking to one another. My arrival in the department had confronted them with a rather delicate problem of communal etiquette. On the one hand, I had been on the campus for twenty years, and courtesy required that I be presumed to know something of what routinely occurred there. On the other hand, I was obviously completely ignorant of what it meant to be a Black professor at the University of Massachusetts. How to initiate me into the collective experience of the department and educate me to the elements of the racial reality of the campus without unduly calling attention to my ignorance? Their exquisitely gracious and tactful solution was to engage in an orgy of storytelling in my presence, so that, like a child permitted to sit up of an evening with the grown folks, I could become a participant in the ongoing life of the community. I was deeply touched.

But that was not the end of the matter. Later on, as I thought over the stories I had heard, I realized something both startling and humbling. In two decades, I had not so much as spoken to a member of the campus police force. My colleagues seemed to know many of them by name, and could tell you which ones were likely to give a Black student a fair shake. It dawned on me that they and I had been inhabiting two entirely different campuses all these years.

This is not a novel or very profound observation. At some abstract level, I had long been aware of the fact that the privileged and powerful see the world differently from those who are forced each day to deal with the insults, constraints, and worse visited on those stigmatized by race. But this had always been for me a knowledge derived from reading or inference, not from immediate experience. Now, by the simple act of transferring from one academic department to another, I had changed the ground on which I stood, and quite literally, my *perspective* changed as well. I was a professor of Afro-American Studies – *these* were my colleagues, not the philosophers I had left behind in Bartlett Hall. I was beginning to stand beside my colleagues, if not in their shoes, and to see the world from their place in it. That world was starting to look strikingly different.

I settled into my office on the third floor of New Africa House, and went about the usual business of being a professor, something I had done every year since 1958. Rummaging about in the drawers of the heavy old desk that I had inherited,

I found several name plates, the remnants of former inhabitants. I was delighted to see that one of them read "James Baldwin." Another read "John Wideman." I was following in the footsteps of giants.

Almost immediately after changing departments, I confronted a tiny personal dilemma that, in my eyes, took on an unusual significance. Once more, some background is called for. When I joined the Afro-American Studies department, I was in my 35th year of full-time university teaching. For all of that time, I had gone through the world introducing myself, when asked, as a philosopher, or perhaps as a professor of philosophy. Now, philosophy has a very special cachet in our culture. It is quite possibly the most prestigious of all the Humanistic academic fields in the eyes of the general educated public. (Though not in the eyes of *everyone*, to be sure. In the army, my doctorate so impressed my basic training sergeant that he rewarded me by making me chief of the latrine cleaning squad – head head man, as it were.) Whenever I identified myself as a philosopher, I could feel, ever so slightly, a *frisson* of respect, of deference, even on occasion of awe. Oh! A *philosopher* – I could see it in their eyes, on their faces, hear it in the half-voiced acknowledgment that I was something special – not merely a professor, but a professor of philosophy. By 1992 I had long since become accustomed to these fleeting recognitions as somehow my due. I realize now – though not at the time – that I was indulging myself in a bit of ego-massaging each time I was called on to identify myself in a new setting. Inasmuch as there are roughly nine thousand professors of philosophy in the United States, there is a certain measure of misleading advertising in the announcement. Not all of us, presumably, can genuinely claim descent from Socrates. Nevertheless, I had come to view those moments as one of the perks of my job.

But now I was a professor of Afro-American Studies, though I had retained my membership in the philosophy department in order to continue directing several doctoral dissertations. How ought I to introduce myself from this point on? The very first time the question arose – I cannot now recall the circumstances – the entire array of possibilities flashed before my mind, and I recognized that I had to make a choice that was for me (though not, I think, for my new colleagues) profoundly significant. There were four possibilities: I could continue to identify myself as a professor of philosophy, which was at least technically true; I could identify myself as a professor of Afro-American Studies *and* philosophy, or perhaps, of philosophy and Afro-American Studies; I could describe myself as a professor of Afro-American Studies, but add some explanation, to the effect that I used to be a professor of philosophy; or, I could simply reply, without explanations or elaborations, "I am a professor of Afro-American Studies."

I was not merely passing through the Afro-American Studies department. I had been invited to join the department, and to my rather conventional and old-fashioned way of thinking, that invitation was the greatest honor the faculty of a department could bestow upon me. To conceal or fudge my new identity would, I felt very keenly, be an act of betrayal to colleagues who had welcomed me into

their world. At the same time, of course, I was fully aware that I could at any moment, if it suited my *amour propre*, revert to being a professor of philosophy and exact that small moment of respectful recognition to which I had become accustomed. Odd as it sounds coming from someone thoroughly secular, I experienced this permanent possibility as what Catholics call an occasion of sin. It was a temptation that it was important for me to put behind me.

I did not know it then, but I later learned that in enacting this private drama, I was reenacting a very important and public choice that had faced all of my colleagues a quarter of a century earlier when the department had been established. In the early days of Black Studies, the question arose again and again what the status would be of the men and women invited to teach the new discipline. The academy lives and dies by tenure, and tenure is granted within departments. At many universities, such as Yale and Harvard, the administrators who were responding to pressure from Black students and the Black community wanted to get the protestors off their backs, but they did not really want to make a permanent commitment to something that they were unprepared to acknowledge as a genuine academic enterprise. So they hedged their bets, appointing Black historians, sociologists, and writers to visiting lectureships, short-term contracts, non-tenure track contracts, and – where these dodges were denied them – tenure-track professorships jointly with some already established department. When the heat died down, the temporary, non-tenure track folk could be quietly terminated. Those in real tenure-track joint appointments would have to clear the tenure review process not only in the Black Studies department, but in their other departmental home as well, where, administrators could permit themselves to hope, the candidates would face insurmountable obstacles to approval. Finally, if all else failed, and the Black Studies faculty actually were awarded tenure, it would still be possible to close down the Black Studies department as a separate unit and farm its tenured faculty out to their second departments, where they could be absorbed and ignored.

In the late 1960s precisely these choices and options faced my colleagues, who were then young, untenured, and quite unsure how long their experiment at UMass would last. It is a testament to their wisdom and courage that, led by Mike Thelwell, without hesitation they insisted on regular non-joint tenure track appointments solely in Afro-American Studies. Indeed, there were several scholars to whom they refused the option of joint appointments, believing that it would weaken the department's position in the university. One scholar of Black literature asked for an appointment jointly with English and was told, gently, that he had to choose. He taught for many years in the UMass English department before accepting a position elsewhere. Thirty years later, it is clear to me that my colleagues made the right choice, a choice that undergirds our new and very successful doctoral program.

Having made the decision to express solidarity with my new colleagues by identifying myself solely as a professor of Afro-American Studies, I now confronted the sharply different reception of my new self-description. A while later, my wife

and I were at an elegant little luncheon given by an Amherst couple – she had been my older son's kindergarten teacher twenty years earlier. I was seated next to the host, who oversaw with considerable pretension the pouring of the three different wines that accompanied the meal. After a bit, just to make conversation, he asked me what I did. "I am a professor of Afro-American Studies," I replied sweetly. He did a double-take worthy of Buster Keaton, stared at me intently for a long moment, and finally blurted out, "You're not Black, are you?"

I got a somewhat less amusing reaction while on a visit to Atlanta, Georgia with my wife to have Thanksgiving dinner with her older son and his wife. Susan and I are accustomed to a glass of wine each evening before dinner, but her son and his wife do not drink, so we walked down the street to a local neighborhood establishment. I think it was the first time in my life that I have ever been in what could genuinely be called redneck territory. They didn't have wine, of course, so we settled for beer and bellied up to the bar. There were maybe ten people in the bar in all, including the bartender. Seated next to Susan was a middle-aged man, wearing a T-shirt with a pack of cigarettes in a rolled up sleeve that revealed a tattoo. Susan and I were not talking loudly, but we were obviously out of place, and everyone in the little place could hear us. After a bit, the man leaned over and said, "Are you Yankees?" I allowed as how I was (it was the first time I had ever been called that), and we got into a desultory conversation about the weather up North as compared with the local weather. After a pause, he asked, "What do you do?" Not really thinking, I said, "I am a professor of Afro-American Studies."

The bar fell silent and the temperature dropped abruptly about twenty degrees. "I suppose you think they have been treated pretty badly, should be given jobs and all," he said. I didn't have to ask who "they" were. "Well," I pointed out quietly, "they built your homes, nursed your children, grew your food, and then cooked it and baked it, so I guess they have pretty well proved their abilities." He muttered something I couldn't pick up, and then said grudgingly, "Well, I suppose they work all right under direction." This from a man who didn't look to have held a steady job in some years. Susan and I finished our beer and left. When I told this story to Esther and Ernie the next Monday, they both said, with genuine concern, "Bob, don't do that again."

There were lighter moments, during which I enjoyed some of the sheer fun of being a member of the Afro-American Studies department. In October 1993 I drove to New York City with Bill, John, Ernie, and Nelson to attend an enormous celebration at Carnegie Hall of the 125th anniversary of the birth of our patron saint, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois. (Du Bois was actually born on February 23, 1868, but the celebration was being held in October.) The event was intended as a fundraiser organized by our colleague, Du Bois's stepson David Graham Du Bois, son of Shirley Graham. The idea was to raise a ton of money for the Du Bois Foundation, which David heads. After dinner at a small restaurant, we all walked up Seventh Avenue to Carnegie Hall. Nelson got it into his head that it was time to teach the White boy how to walk Black, so as Ernie, Bill,

and John collapsed in laughter, Nelson strutted up the avenue and I followed, imitating him as best I could (Nelson's walk is a wonder to behold, and I am not sure my highly amused colleagues would have done much better).

When we got to Carnegie Hall, we ran into Esther, who had come down from Amherst in another car. Everyone was there. I have never seen so many well-dressed Negroes and superannuated Jews in my life. I held onto Esther's coat and tailed along as she greeted one luminary after another. One short woman rushed up, threw her arms around Esther, and gave her a big kiss before going off. "Who was that?" I asked.

"Betty Shabazz," Esther said, searching the crowd for more friends.

"You mean the widow of Malcolm X?" I sputtered, astonished.

"Yes," she said, "Betty did a degree in the Ed School at UMass. We are old friends."

As the evening wore on, I began to realize that my colleagues knew, and were known by, just about every Black man or woman who had become famous in the struggles over the past thirty years.

In the end, despite the fact that Carnegie Hall was sold out, the event lost money. The last straw was Bill Cosby, who went on so long on stage talking about his friend Herbert Aptheker that the union stage hands had to be paid overtime, which ate up the slender profits. I took that as a cautionary lesson for my own fundraising efforts.

My friends from pre-Afro Am days always had two questions about my new academic home. Why had I transferred from philosophy to Afro-American Studies? And what did I do in my new department? Each question had a subtext, of course. The simple answer to the first question was that I joined the department because they asked me to. But the unexpressed assumption behind the question was that I was on some sort of good works or social welfare mission, bringing the wisdom of the ages to the benighted savages of New Africa House. The truth was a good deal simpler. As a philosopher, I have always prized intelligence, which is, after all, a philosopher's sole stock in trade. My former colleagues in philosophy were, by and large, very smart, though in a narrow and uninteresting way. But with the noteworthy and happy exception of my old comrade-in-arms Robert J. Ackermann, few of them were capable of carrying on a genuinely interesting conversation. Indeed, during my 21 years in that department, again with the exception of Bob Ackermann, I cannot recall ever learning a thing from any one of them, or hearing any of them say something that struck me as genuinely fascinating.

By contrast, my new colleagues in Afro-American Studies are smart, knowledgeable, politically engaged, and interesting. Talking to them, I never have the distressing feeling that I am speaking a foreign language to someone intellectually challenged. It is not merely that I have learned from them – vastly more, I suspect, than they can ever learn from me. It is something much more fundamental: there are levels of irony and nuances of moral and political judgment in

their conversation that keep me perpetually on my toes. When Mike Thelwell saw my son, Patrick (a chess grandmaster) on television, playing and beating the first Black International Master (now Grandmaster) Maurice Ashley, he called me up and in perfectly deadpan Jamaican English, asked me why I had not instructed my son not to humiliate a brother. I had to do a good deal of verbal tap-dancing to conceal my failure to realize that he was teasing me. In later years, when I worried endlessly about how few applicants we had to our doctoral program as the deadline approached, John Bracey would say, in avuncular fashion, "Bob, stop worrying, they are out there, but they are operating on CPT" (Colored People's Time). John was right, of course.

The second question also concealed a suppressed premise. Since I knew considerably less about Afro-American Studies than one of our undergraduate majors, what could I possibly teach in my new department? Well, I had a go at it. I taught an undergraduate course on the political economy of race and class, drawing on my knowledge of radical economics. I cobbled together a course on Black philosophy, using collections of writings by such Black philosophers as Bernard Boxill and Lucius Outlaw, and writings by African philosophers debating the existence of an authentically African philosophy. I taught in Afro-Am a seminar on ideological critique that I had first offered in the philosophy department. But I knew, and my colleagues knew as well, that Black Studies is not my field of scholarly expertise.

So I undertook to handle all of the departmental chores that absorb the time and try the patience of senior professors. I took on the chairmanship of the personnel committee, a time-consuming administrative task. In time, I became graduate program director of the new doctoral program. I run the admissions process for that program. I am the sole fundraiser for the department, endlessly seeking funds to support our graduate students. An ethnic allusion will perhaps make clear just how my role in the department evolved. In the shtetls of Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century, the orthodox Jews faced a problem imposed upon them by the rigor of the Talmudic laws to which they submitted themselves. Religious law forbade them to work on the Sabbath, and "work" was interpreted so broadly that even such simple tasks as lighting Sabbath candles were forbidden. So the practice arose of hiring a little Gentile boy from a nearby town to come in on Friday evening and perform these proscribed chores. This lad was called the "Shabbes goy." I became the Shabbes goy of the Afro-American Studies department.

Meanwhile, our doctoral program proposal was slowly ascending the administrative ladder, though not nearly fast enough to satisfy me. There were hitches along the way. No sooner had we drafted a full-scale proposal, with multiple attachments, in conformity with the official documents sent to us by our campus administration than the Higher Education Coordinating Council promulgated an entirely new set of guidelines, designed to make the process nigh on impossible to complete satisfactorily. We dutifully recast our proposal to meet the new guidelines, and sent it on its way again. At the very first stage of campus approval,

we ran aground, thanks to the racial anxieties of a professor on a faculty senate standing committee whose job it was to recruit a three-person review subcommittee from the faculty as a whole. After nine months of stalling, she allowed as how she couldn't find anyone to serve because they were all afraid of saying anything negative about a proposal put forward by a group of Black people. In 24 hours we rounded up three very senior unimpeachable scholars to perform the review, and the proposal resumed its journey.

In the first flush of excitement, at the end of the summer of 1992, with a completed proposal in hand, I rashly predicted that we would surely complete the approval process in time to launch the program in the fall of 1995. This was not merely misplaced optimism. I was at that point 58 years old, and I was beginning to worry that I would not be around to see the first class of students get their degrees. But nothing can be done that quickly on a university campus. Even getting approval to offer a new course usually takes an entire year. So 1992–3 passed, and 1993–4, and 1994–5 began. Finally, the proposal made its way to the office of the president, then to the trustees, and on a triumphant day in October, was approved by the Higher Education Coordinating Council. We would have our doctoral program, after all. I mailed out a host of the 18,000 new brochures I had designed and ordered, and we were officially launched. The next spring, we selected seven promising applicants from the 29 who applied, and sat back to await their arrival.

Meanwhile, I put my feet up on the sofa, took John Hope Franklin down from the teetering pile, and at the age of 62, began my reeducation.

Notes

This chapter is an abbreviated excerpt from Robert Paul Wolff's book bearing the same name, which will be published by the University of Rochester Press. It appears here by permission of its author.

1 As of 2005, the chairperson is Esther M. A. Terry (eds.).

PART TWO

Such Fertile Fields . . .

A The Blues Are Brewing . . . for a Humanistic Humanism

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Homage to Mistress Wheatley

Rowan Ricardo Phillips

> She was a shadow as thin in memory
> As an autumn ancient underneath the snow,
> Which one recalls at a concert or in a café.
> Wallace Stevens

The above epigraph is from a Wallace Stevens poem unfortunately titled "Like Decorations at a Nigger Cemetery" . . . and I found it appropriate, I must admit, in part due to its inappropriateness. The poem itself is indirect, relatively long for a lyric, and typically modernist in its conceit (meaning that it revels in its difficulty with an underlying, polemical sense that both aesthetically and culturally it will cohere). Furthermore, it is separated into 50 brief apostrophes. There is little criticism on the piece, which is unlike the critical canon of the Stevens long poem, and what criticism on the poem that does exist (such as Helen Vendler's chapter on the poem in her *On Extended Wings*) has nothing at all to say about the one idea most prevalent in the poem's creation – blacks. As Stevens himself wrote in a correspondence regarding the poem (letters received about the poem were basically entirely of the "What does it mean?" variety): "The title refers to the litter that one usually finds in a nigger cemetery and is a phrase used by Judge Powell last winter in Key West" (W. Stevens 1966: 272). The "litter" Stevens referred to was instead a longstanding tradition of African Americans in the American South and in the Caribbean of placing significant objects owned by the deceased around and beside the graves of those loved ones. The art historian Robert Farris-Thompson (1983) has found that: "Today the gleam of seashells illumines and identifies Kongo- and Angola-influenced graves

from St. Louis, Missouri, through Algiers, across the Mississippi at New Orleans . . . to Jacksonville, Florida, and from the United States to Haiti . . . and Guadeloupe."

Stevens, one of the major aesthetes of twentieth-century literature, does not from his choice of titles envision *art* at the graveyard but rather like the typical, ungifted observer, "decorations." He does not regard these things as the creative flotsam of a living presence, of continuity; but rather fixates on death, on ruin. Thus, the difference between the use of the word "litter" in Stevens' letter to Morton Dauwen Zabel and his use of "decorations" within the poem highlights different ways of speaking of poetry in these separate contexts. The letter understates the situation by which a black presence in the art of this emerging major American poet (Zabel was at the forefront of a cadre of critics promoting Wallace Stevens in *Poetry* as well as in other high literary journals as the puckish heir to Eliot's throne) could be easily configured as a happenstance of trash. In the letter this backgrounds the more genteel relations of Stevens and his friend "Judge" Powell (instead of "Arthur" as it appears in the poem). However, as Michael North argued convincingly in *The Dialect of Modernism*, these affectations of race are axiomatic to the idea of modernism: what seeks to make "Like Decorations at a Nigger Cemetery" cohere is that "blackness became apparent" there at that African-American cemetery (M. North 1998). There is at the heart of Stevens's poetics a sense of death being beyond the language of poetry (let us recall a poem such as "The Emperor of Ice Cream") and yet it is within that graveyard where Stevens found what he refers to in "Decorations" as "the base of design." Where there is "blackness," "nigger," "negress" in Stevens's poetry there is usually also poetic action, the crucial turn of the idea of the poem, or some relational complexity that makes itself most apparent within that poetic instant. In this instance, however, Stevens at the graveyard is not elegiac but rather obtuse and philosophical, almost to the point of distraction. What is it that he wants to say? Perhaps the poem is an *ars poetica*, where the most memorable part of the poem, that atypical moment for Stevens of depicting at the poem's beginning an ebullient Walt Whitman, is a momentary anodyne against distraction, and an added dose of canonicity to protect the poem from its African-Americanist derivation (W. Stevens 1990: 150):

> In the far South the sun of autumn is passing
> Like Walt Whitman walking along a ruddy shore.
> He is singing and chanting the things that are part of him,
> The worlds that were and will be, death and day.
> Nothing is final, he chants. No man shall see the end.
> His beard is of fire and his staff a leaping flame.

That "Like" at the start of the title draws attention to itself as the subversion of another noun. What is "Like"? What is the submerged sign? Clearly, it is "poetry." Stevens's title as a completed phrase would be

[Poems] Like Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery

and in the elision of that very sign – somewhat similar to Lowell's elision of "Ode" in his "For the Union Dead" – we encounter the poet in the act of being modern; not in the rejection of genre, but rather in the poet's transgression, that elliptical avoidance, of genre's heavy signification. But also, the implications of the full realization of Stevens's title would illicit a poetic relationship that would have been too difficult for the poet or his readers to swallow: black dialect or idiom of modernism is one thing; an entire language motivated in its most sublime imaginings by blackness, is quite another.

Why the digression from Phillis Wheatley to Wallace Stevens and now back again? Precisely because it *is* a digression. The two, signposts of their respective scholarly fields, are among the strangest of bedfellows and that is perhaps the most unfortunate fact of all. They are both lyric poets; they both emerge as American writers during a major aesthetic turn in their respective centuries; they are both highly open to New Critical, Deconstructive, and New Historical interpretations . . . yet they are as far apart as two poets of the same language can be.

Randall Jarrell said three things regarding Wallace Stevens that always remind me of Phillis Wheatley. The first involves Stevens's conception of the American wilderness in his first book of poems, *Harmonium*: "In *Harmonium* he still loves America best when he can think of it as wilderness, naturalness, pure potentiality (he treats with especial sympathy Negroes, Mexican Indians, and anybody else he can consider wild)" (R. Jarrell 1953: 138). The second has to do with insufficiency or need, as "Like Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery" is lacking the word "Poetry" in its title:

> His poetry is obsessed with lack, a lack at last almost taken for granted, that he himself automatically supplies; if sometimes he has restored by imagination or abstraction or re-creation, at other times he has restored by collection, almost as J. P. Morgan did – Stevens likes something, buys it (at the expense of a little spirit), and ships it home. (R. Jarrell 1953: 134–5)

The third of Jarrell's comments deals with Phillis Wheatley's eighteenth century:

> When one reads most eighteenth-century writing one is aware of some man of good taste and good will at the bottom of everything and everybody; but in Stevens – who is always swinging between baroque and rococo, and reminds one of the eighteenth century in dozens of ways – this being at the bottom of everything is cultivated and appreciative and rational out of all reason: the Old Adam in everybody turns out to be not Robinson Crusoe but Bernard Berenson. (Ibid: 143)

No one would be wrong for accusing me here of losing the plot. Again, what does Phillis Wheatley have to do with Wallace Stevens? Yet has there been a

more poignant epigraph for Phillis Wheatley, a more suitable summation, than this one from such a doggedly inappropriate poem? What better to say today of Wheatley's legacy? And in turn, what better a response to Stevens is there than Wheatley's own?

> Can *Afric's* muse forgetful prove?
> Or can such friendship fail to move
> A tender human heart?
> Immortal *Friendship* laurel-crown'd
> The smiling *Graces* all surround
> With ev'ry heav'nly *Art*.
> (P. Wheatley 2001: 51)

It is within the space afforded the epigraph that much of the argument of this study began. For in order to perform innovative work in poetry relating to African-American literature today many of the most significant moves must be counterintuitive. Such is the grip of prose on the way in which African-American literature thinks out its problems. Kimberly W. Benston has argued:

> Now, when we seek a revised account of Afro-American tradition, and we turn to the area of criticism specifically devoted to the poetry of that tradition, what we find is perhaps somewhat less satisfactory, less theoretically compelling and practically instructive than the critiques offered in the realm of narrative and dramatic studies. (K. Benston 1989: 165)

The same basically holds true more than a decade later. This is not solely the onus of African-American literature, but also of the fields of poetry and poetics. There are simply not many viable methods by which supposedly incomparable poets can be placed within a useful praxis. One hopes, however, that the strange admixture at the head of this study does as Gérard Genette suggests: "the use of an epigraph is always a mute gesture whose interpretation is left up to the reader" (G. Genette 1997: 156).

The reader, in this instance, will have the idea proposed to them that Phillis Wheatley is an allegory for the emerging narrative base of an African-American literary tradition, instead of a subject. The making into a narrative of her biographical facts places her at the head of a tradition but at the expense of her role as a lyric poet, especially considering the voiceless embodiment allegories generally take. While Phillis Wheatley is treated as a phenomenon of writing she likewise constantly becomes the vehicle of another genre. In other words, she becomes a trope in another author's text; she literally becomes a phenomenon of our own writing.

What does it mean to this literary tradition that Phillis Wheatley was a poet? Perhaps nothing. Perhaps – as the common quip holds – poetry is dead, and Phillis Wheatley is to serve in silence. She is for African-American literature that silent, lacking "Poetry" of Wallace Stevens's title. She is tradition misread, and metastatized. She displays "the epigraph effect."

> The most powerful oblique effect of the epigraph is perhaps due simply to its presence, whatever the epigraph itself may be: this is the epigraph effect. The presence or absence of an epigraph in itself marks (with a very thin margin of error) the period, the genre, or the tenor of a piece of writing. (G. Genette 1997: 160)

Gérard Genette's work mirrors the curious case by which Phillis Wheatley slips from subject to object. She is simultaneously the focus of the emergence of the writing subject, and the objectified allegory of that event of writing. Thus, I would submit, most writing on Phillis Wheatley is engaged with the non-written elements of her work. "The epigraph is most often allographic, that is according to our conventions, attributed to an author who is not the author of the work" (G. Genette 1997: 151). In such instances, African-American poetics reveals the extent to which it is under duress.

Phillis Wheatley, like the very nature of the epigraph itself, is in many ways a literary performance. It is either in the midst of that performance ("at a concert"), or in the remove of that performance's retrospection ("in a café"), that this poet of very particular design often yields her significance; and is likewise yielded as significant by the criticism which encapsulates her. Arguably, next to Langston Hughes, she is the most visible of African-American poets, recognizable to a larger audience by her famed picture if not always by her name. Yet the tradition that has arisen from African-American literature and that bears her so faithfully as a beginning has also revealed at its very heart a crisis regarding how we understand Phillis Wheatley today.

Is Phillis Wheatley's poetry a part of this beginning, or is it – this beginning – the very fact of her writing, the controlled public performance of her authorship, and its subsequent reliance upon the modernity of the book? As with the epigraph, Phillis Wheatley is supposed to be an enabling tenor for how one thinks of literature that succeeds after her. Thus, pronouncements of Phillis Wheatley's "place" in an African-American literary tradition also require that we recognize the poet as a foregone conclusion: an effect which marks as much the constructed presence of the poet as of the text itself. We engage Phillis Wheatley, in other words, in an act of authentication ironically similar to that of the authenticating documents which append Wheatley's *Poems on Various Subjects Religious and Moral* of 1773.

Phillis Wheatley is a phenomenon: Phillis Wheatley is an event. She is recalled more for the contexts of her poetry, than for her poetry itself. Who has put Phillis Wheatley's poems to heart, or thinks to use any of her lines to describe a present day situation? What poet can we say has been influenced by Phillis Wheatley (save for those poets such as Jupiter Hammon, Robert Hayden, June Jordan, and Naomi Long Madgett who have written poems directly *about* Phillis Wheatley)? Indeed, Phillis Wheatley is a sign of context much more so than content or form. Strangely, she is at the center of African-American literary discourse and adamantly outside of it. At this point it is quite clear that Phillis Wheatley exists in a synecdochal relationship to an African-American literary tradition: her parts

(that which is *poetic*) represent the straining toward a whole (that which is *prosaic*, or the manner in which this tradition envisions itself subversively in terms of narrative prose).

In many respects, as this chapter's epigraph attempts to allude, Phillis Wheatley is a thin shadow in the memory (a counterintuitive claim given her growing popularity among those who do literary history). As epigraphs seek to further illuminate the texts they antecede, even the thinnest of shadows affirms an object's presence in the light. That it is prose and history – instead of by poems – which most often engage Phillis Wheatley says as much about where African-American poetics is today in terms of scholarly mass, as it does about anything written in these texts. While absence has been codified into a readable source of intellectual and artistic activity, it is the absence of a developmental poetics where poetry itself appears to be at the crux of the subject that is the absence still rendered as intangible. Hence, while I can list a number of provocative articles and book chapters on Phillis Wheatley, the number of those that concern poetry is minimal. I am not looking here to sound an elegy for poetry, or an indictment of an understudied panoply of minority poets (though there are and have been arguments for both). Instead, I presume a single, and rather simple question: If Phillis Wheatley was a poet and is a celebrated figure, why then is there so little to say about Phillis Wheatley's poetry? And, as an enjoinder, what does it mean that we still speak so comfortably of Phillis Wheatley without having to engage her poetry?

Woman. Black. Poet. Slave. House Slave. How many ruptures does Phillis Wheatley's presence fill? If, like an epigraph, Wheatley projects the gap between the title ("the African-American literary tradition") and its text (the published books that have followed), then her presence likewise offers a constructed pleasure. In terms outlined by Roland Barthes in *The Pleasure of the Text*, pleasure (*plaisir*) serves as moderate enjoyment and passive consumption of texts in a manner that reenacts suitable cultural codes (R. Barthes 1975). *Jouissance* meanwhile calls up a possible maelstrom of stimuli: loss, death, climactic bliss, maenadic violence. Pleasure offers the possibility of tradition as a steady chronology of texts, and suggests that teleological surge underlying what "the African-American literary tradition" seeks to signify. *Jouissance* is, at its most basic, the risk of a descent toward an incurable philistinism.

Wheatley's authorial presence in this literary tradition as it has drawn itself is supposed to indicate the ability of a published volume of verse to transcend an enforced and embodied state of slavery. This is the action of reassurance; it is the work of pleasure. Yet is the idea of tradition, a very modernist idea it must be noted, enough of a critical idiom by which to describe the effect of texts on bodies and, likewise, of bodies on texts? As opposed to the more Dionysian *jouissance*, this pleasure – that in the end may be subjective, aesthetic, or just flatly ideological – self-fashions a mode of reading Phillis Wheatley as a starting, as a suitable beginning, as a calming text from whence to start. The idea of Wheatley's book coupled with Wheatley's image yields the safe illusion that one is participating in an origin, in some terribly flawed beginning in which – as though one saw the

head of Orpheus floating down the river and chased it to reattach it to the flayed body – one can somehow, someway, make the very idea of blacks writing in English in the New World a whole, manageable, narrative of author and identity.

We know of Phillis Wheatley as an enterprise of firsts. From this age of self-conscious succession, where we mark the "post" before so many ways of representing the world, the fact that we are now chronologically "post-Phillis Wheatley" yet in terms of criticism nearly consumed by her, contextualizes the extent to which we treat this poet as a set of extremes. Observe the following statements:

> The birth of the Afro-American literary tradition occurred in 1773, when Phillis Wheatley published a book of poetry. *Despite the fact that* . . . (H. Gates, Jr. 1987: vii; emphasis added)

> It was not natural. And she was the first. (J. Jordan 1986: 252)

> Phillis Wheatley was *not* the first black American to publish. (J. D. Mason, Jr. 1989: 13; emphasis added)

> The American edition of *Poems on Various Subjects Religious and Moral* was published in Philadelphia in 1786, *four years after her death*. (N. Y. McKay 1998: 360; emphasis added)

Two introductions for different editions of Wheatley's collected poetry, one creative essay, and one article from *PMLA* on the state of African-American affairs in the academy. All four, though quite different in their approach, focus on the ontological importance of beginnings. And, as the brief segments I have chosen to italicize display, they dramatize how the very notion of a beginning for African-American literature is fraught with a tragic significance and is bound by a hovering threat of its own failure. This threat in origin is what Slavoj Žižek refers to as "dealing with a *failed* logic, with an endlessly repeated effort to begin" (S. Žižek 1998).

It is precisely this "endless oscillation between contraction and expansion" that leaves Wheatley

> propelled by the impossibility of formulating the "stable" relationship between S[ubject] and P[redicate] that forms the structure of a propositional judgment: the subject (also and above all in the logical sense of the term) "contracts" itself and annihilates its predicative content, whereas in the ensuing gesture of expansion it passes over into the predicate and thereby loses the firmer ground of its self-consistency. (Ibid)

What I am suggesting through Žižek is that "self-consistency" as it pertains to Phillis Wheatley deliquesces and loses any possibility of a "stable" relationship at the point of convergence between "S and P" – precisely if "S and P" are considered also in the vein of S[cholarship] and P[oetry]. S[cholarship] "contracts" itself around the dominant ideology of *prosaic* reading, treating all texts as narrative

prose and annihilating any possible significant poetic content while meanwhile feigning a gesture of "expansion" toward P[oetry] through a wayward expression of "poetics." That term, a way of speaking the system of an idea, is so common today and must give of itself in order to exist under prosaic rule. It thus serves as any poststructural sign of encompassment or idiosyncrasies of literature.

Phillis Wheatley in this regard is a paradigmatic trope of criticism's obsession, simultaneously, with the creation of an origin and the refutation of that same origin. Phillis Wheatley is a slave who published a book of poems – from that point on the tradition of African-American literary production consists largely of: individuals who were enslaved, took their freedom, and wrote a narrative on it; then individuals who were free yet sensed their confinement and wrote a narrative to explain their sense of it; then individuals who were free yet sensed their confinement and wrote a narrative to confound the reader's sense of it. Everything leads to a manner of *not being Phillis Wheatley*. It is a process of relating to tradition eerily reminiscent of late somber Eliot with his "In my beginning is my end" (T. Eliot 1971: 23).

The outcome of this desire to begin with Phillis Wheatley is a series of prosaic encounters with a number of allegorical interpretive contexts: the very material of the book of a slave, the narrative of her highly particularized literary history, the antagonistic relationship between the authoritative command of the book's attestations and the authorial presence of the poet, and the transcendent allegorizing (either privileged or disparaged) of this author's plight in our own era of writing. As Walter Benjamin has asserted, "the Western concept of allegory is a late manifestation which has its basis in certain very fertile cultural conflicts" (W. Benjamin 1977: 197). One of the more fertile and certainly more muted sites of this type of conflict occurs at the discursive ledge where poetry and prose meet. This conflict between one form of blackness (verse as origin) and another form of blackness (prose as an end) configures the vital crux, often unheard and unheeded, through which African-American literature has formed its very identity. It is at this ledge that the drama of blackness attempts its conflicted effort to rhyme with blackness, only to be swallowed by the specious homonymity, the false repetition, of that rhyme.

Though she wrote a fair number of letters, Phillis Wheatley engaged with the world almost entirely as a lyric poet. The lyric was not, in the case of Wheatley, a disembodied voice that a reader could assume, as is one of the more traditional notions of the lyric. Rather, the lyric served as a medium through which Wheatley expressed, or hoped to express, the forms of embodiment and entrapment particular to her. The English lyric poem was still, we must remember, a new genre of English-language poetry. The Romantic comprehension of the lyric still so prevalent today came about at the very *end* of the eighteenth century. Phillis Wheatley, however, was a predecessor to Romanticism and still worked within the genre as it tenuously gained its footing within poetic circles through a preponderance of odes and elegies.

I will be considering the lyric in regards to Wheatley as an extension of Jonathan Culler's fundamental impression of it as "the expectation of totality or coherence" and play this idea against Frantz Fanon's concept of the black body as an "overdetermined" object in a world that asks of its presence *as* absence.

> I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the "idea" that others have of me but of my own appearance.
>
> I move slowly in the world, accustomed now to seek no longer for upheaval. I progress by crawling. And already I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am *fixed.* (Fanon 1967b: 116)

The lyric assumes presence, so much so that the terms of its ontology can be entirely invested in its absence, or in what is not there – the lyric as a floating voice without a particular body; the lyric as pure consciousness, pure perception; the lyric as a brevity of poetic language intended to be overheard – the *cogito*, in other words, is almost always taken for granted. Someone, somewhere, monitors a lyric's progression, or – in the poststructuralist model – someone asserts that there is constantly a nowhere where no one mediates a lyric's declension. Put as simply as possible, if this were not the case there would be no poststructuralism and the fact that there is a poststructuralism has never quite elided the *cogito* of interpretive literary analysis, but rather has brought the *cogito* into question. If the *cogito* remains axiomatic to lyric poetry, then the blurry relationship between people of African descent, such as Wheatley, and being itself would be an antecedent situation to observing the lyric model of a poetics of African Americans.

African-American literary study has premised writing to be the antithesis of the objectified, dehumanized "without" rendered upon the slave. Writing, however, should be supplemented by genre, or at the very least by mode. If writing is to be taken seriously as the subject's move toward a self-determined individuality, then *what* was written must be the first idea. This means not only *what* in terms of close reading, but also *what* in terms of the choices made by the text existing as what it is. Is not self-determined individuality about the power to choose? Thus, that Phillis Wheatley wrote poems during an emergent age of prose needs to be considered alongside the fact that, as a lyric poet, Wheatley was engaged in a conflict of two types of discourse which are not primarily slave and writing (slaves had been writing for thousands of years, including African slaves) but slave and verse.

We are encouraged to read Phillis Wheatley as a phenomenon of literary history, or of textuality. Since Phillis Wheatley was not the first African-American poet to publish in America, we can return to Gates's summation that "The birth of the Afro-American literary tradition occurred in 1773, when Phillis Wheatley published a book of poetry" and find the hard emphasis to be on "book." And, as a slightly more extended example, there is Barbara Johnson's reading of Phillis Wheatley, a remarkably passive analysis of understatement and the passive voice,

in which Wheatley's work exists in and of itself as the expositor of an ambiguous, yet supposedly "glaring contradiction" within which and "by Wheatley's pen, the lessons she has learned self-deconstruct." In this short essay, though Johnson looks briefly at a few Wheatley poems, she does so in topical gestures that simply introduce the content of a poetic passage with no elaboration. "Wheatley describes the dead as winging their way to a happier place" (B. Johnson 1990: 209). Johnson then provides the first six lines of "On the Death of the Rev. Dr. Sewell. 1769" as an affirmation of the prior statement, but curiously with no further exegesis.

> Ere yet the morn its lovely blushes spread,
> See Sewell numbered with the happy dead,
> Hail, holy man, arriv'd th' immortal shore,
> Though we shall hear thy warning voice no more.
> Come, let us all behold with wistful eyes
> The saint ascending to his native skies.

We discover that there is no need for further poetic interpretation because the text as writing is its own self-sustaining object. "By making explicit her history and her status, Wheatley in a sense wrote her way to freedom simply by letting the contradictions in her master's position speak for themselves" (B. Johnson 1990: 210). However, while the *fact* of Wheatley's "history and her status" does what interpretive work there is to be done *for* the poem, the poem then does not retain any such facticity itself (a term used by Jean-Paul Sartre to give a sense of "thingness"). As the essay concludes, it becomes clear that the oppositions in conflict are neither Wheatley's "history and her status" (her supposed beginning), nor her poetry (her cyclic end). Instead, since the poetry is in a sense a simple mimesis of "history and her status," this "genealogy of Afro-American poetry" – as the essay's title announces itself – stages its site of conflict at the prose level. As with Gates's emphasis on "the book" in its beginning, Johnson's essay concludes with the *fact* that prose dominates poetry's interpretive contexts, since – as we have seen in Wheatley's correspondences with Jefferson, Washington, and the Countess of Huntingdon – they exist for African Americans at the prosaic level. The genealogy concludes the only way that it can, with Phillis Wheatley as a Beginning, but also as a figure taken out of her generic context in order to give to the figure some semblance of historical importance.

In the preface to her volume of poems, Wheatley speaks of her own enslavement in the following terms:

> As to the Disadvantages she had labored under, with Regard to Learning, nothing needs to be offered, as her Master's Letter in the following Page will sufficiently show the Difficulties in this Respect she had to encounter.

There follows a letter from "the author's master" detailing Wheatley's prodigious accomplishments as a slave in his household. The *fact* of that letter speaks for itself. Wheatley has placed in her master's hand the boomerang for her compliance. While the Wheatleys send her book into the world as an ambassador of

their own benevolence, it comes back with the response from English readers it was meant to impress: "Why is she still a slave?" (B. Johnson 1990: 210–11).

It is the very qualities of the lyric poem that brought Phillis Wheatley into opposition with the arguments denying slaves their humanity. It was, I will argue, precisely that she was a lyric poet as opposed to a prose writer that placed her at the crux of her era. Therefore, this study will consider Phillis Wheatley's ontology as not only what is and has been the case, but also as – and this is an important distinction – what has been treated as the case, and as what is either realized or ignored as that case's contradiction. For I would like to make clear a relationship of complex conflicts, largely generic and poetry centered, that are more than the foundational situation of two freedoms (writing and individuality) at odds with a denigrated Other (slave); these conflicts should also discover from within this relationship the effort, or choice, which made these ongoing relationships possible in the first place.

In short, theories and criticism on Phillis Wheatley – there being far more of the latter than the former – are almost entirely prose centered. While criticism has pointed out the manner in which the context of Wheatley's writing gave interpretive priority to the authenticating prose documents and book market surrounding her 1773 *Poems on Various Subjects Religious and Moral*, criticism has not addressed the terrible irony that it likewise has sought to authenticate the very case of Phillis Wheatley by replacing poetic tradition (by this I only mean a body of interactive poems) with its own genealogy of prioritized prose documents.

It would be to traverse a slippery slope to claim that an entire field of literature is disregarding poetry. There are, in fact, a number of provocative studies of blacks in poetry and poetics that have emerged in the past number of years, many of which vary greatly in their method used; some being theoretical, some literary historical, and others still more traditional in their approach. It is still rather clear, however, for anyone interested in undertaking an extensive foray into the field, that there are many gaps, ruptures, absences. Often, the onus of the individual project is to be as specific as possible so as not to locate a particular audience. For instance, Smethurst's *The New Red Negro* is likely read more by social historians of that period of 1930–46 than by scholars of poetry. That is not a disparagement of Smethurst's work by any means; it is rather just a simple fact of the way in which studies of poetry have found their niche in the wider academy. Studies of poetry are by and large supplemental material for a larger field of discourses that then can gesture to the subsumed genre. I say "subsumed" as it is a more accurate description of a process often mistaken for marginalization. "Subsumed" speaks to the illusory centrality of poetry, as opposed to a forceful placing to the side. If anything, the force involved here is a forceful consumption of one genre within the body of another. Prose swallows, as opposed to disregards, poetry's difficulties within its narrative body.

The ironic undertones of this process swell largely with the idea of tradition and the rise of the field of African-American literature in particular and of race

studies in general. Why is it that there seem to be fewer studies of verse now, given that there are more books on African-American literature? Phillis Wheatley holds the clue.

June Jordan's paraphrase of Wheatley's poem "On Being Brought from Africa to America" holds that the poet is implying to her audience "*Once I existed on other than your terms*" (J. Jordan 1986: 255). While this statement is set to mark a resistant Phillis Wheatley along racial and cultural lines, a Phillis Wheatley who writes of moral Christian values but simmers over her freedom and her lost African heritage, it also best highlights the *poet's* loss, her alteration from poet discussed in terms of poetry to poet constructed through anything but poetry. In "terms" by which Wheatley's work set about "challenging generic priorities," as Daniel Cottom has observed, her slackness of generic discipline and insistence (if not reliance) upon specific address in her elegies may have in the end cost her the ultimate generic priority of being read as a poet among poets (D. Cottom 1996: 109). While this is also owed certainly to the strange place in the history of modern literature reserved for Wheatley, it is just too difficult to ignore the fact that to speak of Phillis Wheatley is not to speak of poetry at all.

What was a matter of poetry, when dealing with Phillis Wheatley quickly becomes writing. In parlaying "a typical example of Western culture's use of writing as a commodity to confine and delimit a culture of color," Henry Louis Gates, Jr. turns to that "bright morning in the spring of 1772 [when] a young African girl walked demurely into the courthouse at Boston to undergo an oral examination, the results of which would determine the direction of her life and work" (H. Gates 1988: 6–7). This scene, largely conjectured by Gates, is a reenactment of Wheatley's proving herself before the distingué of Boston to be authentic author of the volume of poems she had been unsuccessfully attempting to publish.

Gates's speculative work is an interesting example of how and where the imagination may play a role in even historical literary analysis, and also makes clear the extent to which so much of what we know of Wheatley, indeed how we even think of her, is riven with gaps and ruptures which critical theory attempts to terrain. Here, we should note that what is to become the prose directive, the "Attestation" to *Poems on Various Subjects Religious and Moral*, is thought of originally as a discourse on poetry and poetics.

> We can only speculate on the nature of the questions posed to the fledgling poet. Perhaps they asked her to identify and explain – for all to hear – exactly who were the Greek and Latin gods and poets alluded to so frequently in her work. Perhaps they asked her to conjugate a verb in Latin, or even to translate randomly selected passages from the Latin, which she and her master, John Wheatley, claimed that she "had made some progress in." Or perhaps they asked her to recite from memory key passages from the texts of John Milton and Alexander Pope, the two poets by whom the African claimed to be most directly influenced. We do not know. (H. Gates 1988: 7)

The fact that this imagined passage, a practical finals examination on verse, would be for the pragmatic purpose of creating a prose authentication of the poet is certainly an example of the dynamics of race and authorship in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and even twentieth century (one may think of Allen Tate's preface to Melvin Tolson's *Libretto for the New Republic of Liberia*).[1] Yet what is generally missed in this interaction and is staged here by Gates's prose is the performance by which poetry and ideas regarding poetry becomes subsumed into another, generically blanched, discourse. Yes, there would be later the sentimental novel and before that the slave narrative and captivity narrative. Yet what exactly is it that we are discussing with Phillis Wheatley? A phenomenon? An allegory of the black writer in early America?

We find as we continue to read Gates's essay that this staged scene of poetic competence becomes quickly not poetry, but writing. The stakes are changed from a poet at test to a people whose very ability to write is in question: "If they could, the argument ran, then the African variety of humanity and the European variety were fundamentally related. If not, then it seemed clear that the African was destined by nature to be a slave" (H. Gates 1988: 8). Thus, simply through allegorizing this staged encounter of Phillis Wheatley with her audience (and despite the fact that the very idea of poetry itself was undertaking fundamental epistemological changes at this point in time), poetry becomes "creative writing" and the particularities of poetic discourse become instead the particularities of blacks writing altogether.

> Why was the creative writing of the African of such importance to the eighteenth century's debate over slavery? . . . after René Descartes, *reason* was privileged, or valorized, above all other human characteristics. Writing, especially after the printing press became so widespread, was taken to be the *visible* sign of reason. Blacks were "reasonable," and hence "men," if – and only if – they demonstrated mastery of "the arts and sciences," the eighteenth century's formula for writing. (Ibid)

Writing, in this respect, is always already in conflict with the context of the author's presumed absence. The idea that a person of African descent must prove that they can write almost promotes the idea that the author cannot write, even in the visible sign of that proof (not only the authenticating document, but also the text itself). The threat of the writer's dissolution is a constant. A tradition of writing then becomes most tenable as a shared context of authorship among different people, writing different texts.

Therefore, what George Moses Horton shares with Phillis Wheatley that neither Britton nor Jupiter Hammon did, even though Horton published long after Wheatley and the Hammons were contemporaries, is that he and Wheatley were poets of the book. As such, the discourse regarding their *writing* could take the form of a discourse of the book in its growing context of the novel and the narrative. Thus, despite rhyme, meter, poetic genre, stanzaic form, allusion, address, and self-address, poetry's particularities fell into the ruts of a larger conflict with reason. Wheatley's poetic examination by fire notwithstanding, the

way by which we are encouraged to understand verse is a first stage toward the formation of a more sophisticated book. As Gates concludes:

> For example, scores of reviews of Wheatley's book argued that the publication of her poems meant that the African was indeed a human being and should not be enslaved. Indeed, Wheatley herself was manumitted soon after her poems were published. That which was only implicit in Wheatley's case would become explicit fifty years later. George Moses Horton has, by the middle of the 1820s, gained a considerable reputation at Chapel Hill as "the slave-poet." His master printed full-page advertisements in Northern newspapers soliciting subscriptions for a book. *Writing, for these slaves, was not an activity of mind; rather, it was a commodity which they were forced to trade for their humanity.* (H. Gates 1988: 9; emphasis added)

Criticism has never been prepared to receive Phillis Wheatley as a lyric poet. Robert Hayden rather harshly pointed this fact out along qualitative lines when he wrote: "the poetry of Phillis Wheatley and her fellow poet, Jupiter Hammon, has historical and not literary interest for us now. The same can be said of eighteenth-century American poetry in general" (Hayden 1984: 57). Despite the fact that Hayden was a twentieth-century poet as devoted to merging history and poetry as any of his era, the distinction he makes between "historical" and "literary" interest is an assessment of Wheatley's function within the bounds through which African-American poetry is discussed. Hayden's statement is far more complex than it originally appears. Despite the fact that the eighteenth century is a rather dead period in American poetry (some of the best moments of Freneau notwithstanding), African-American literature must utilize it as the allegorical origin of itself. Thus, despite any inclinations to look elsewhere for a more palatable origin of itself (which is really what is behind the differing debates regarding both Afrocentricity and orality), Phillis Wheatley is the unavoidable trope of the problematic beginning of the book. Again, as stated earlier, Wheatley demonstrates Genette's "epigraph effect" of marking the prescribed discourse she inaugurates with her mere presence. She is an "allographic" form of writing, as one writing (or writing for) the other. After which, the author is, tropologically, what is required of her and nothing more. Hence, Hayden's assessment of Wheatley's "historical" interest for later readers, as the book, and not the poems, the biography, and not the artifice, are what sustains the field that the poet anticipates. When Genette writes of the taste for the epigraph as being a symptom of the growing infatuation with the novel, he is close in sentiment (and era) to making a direct statement on Phillis Wheatley as a meta-epigraph.

> People have rightly seen the epigraphic excess of the early nineteenth century as a desire to integrate the novel, particularly the historical or "philosophical" novel, into a cultural tradition. The young writers of the 1960s and 1970s used the same means to give themselves the consecration and unction of a(nother) prestigious filiation. (G. Genette 1997: 160)

What I am arguing is that Phillis Wheatley authorizes a way of speaking that is not her own. Consequently, poetry as a particular genre loses its sense of signification within African-American literature's emergent sense of "writing" and "history" – both of which configure the possible rendering of all successive poetic signs as meaningless. The vogue and meanwhile very vague slogan to embrace at this moment would be poetry is dead, or dying. Instead, I wish to offer that poetry exists within African-American literature not on the margins, but rather as epigraphic material. It is introductory, referential, and – as all epigraphs are – non-committal. As we see by the manner in which Wheatley is a contextual though hardly a formal referent to the tradition she inaugurates, poetry in terms of the African-American literary tradition as presently constructed, is a paratextual embellishment upon the hard caste of prose. By referring to the epigraph as allographic writing, Genette alludes to the calligraphic (or high-embellishment) of the extra writing bounding textual borders. James Elkins, in his book on visual communication and semiotics, *The Domain of Images*, views allographs in terms of modern Western culture's tendency toward a visual ornamentation of text (or, in this case of writing, letters).

> It is as if the letters were a firm foundation, fixed in shape and denotation, and the allographs merely embellishment. That at least is the way calligraphy has traditionally been understood in the post-Renaissance West: It is an optional refinement, and takes whatever meaning it has from the history of the ornament and from the insecure symbolism of gestures and patterns. (J. Elkins 1999: 95)

Thus, despite the fact, as argued by Cynthia J. Smith, that Phillis Wheatley "considered herself a full-fledged participant in the poetic tradition of Western writing" (C. Smith 1989: 590), it is difficult to resist the impression that the prioritized genre through which we regard Wheatley is pretextual and hardly poetic. As Christopher Felkin asserts, "in the making of Wheatley's poetry, there can be no meaning without noticing its pretext" (C. Felkin 1997: 85). I by no means seek to compromise the criticism that has throughout the years focused upon Wheatley's poetry first and foremost, yet I do maintain that these studies are for the most part extratextual and outside the bounds of Wheatley criticism's relevance to African-American literary criticism as it is discloses itself. The allograph that encapsulates Wheatley is read allegorically as "the history of the ornament" and is shaped by a hermeneutic of the non-poetic aspects of Wheatley's book: the Attestation, the image of the author, and the material facticity (the historicized version of that same moment Sartre would call "thingness") of the book itself. With these three components, and these three alone, one is provided with the vast bulk, the very centripetal force of Wheatley's figuration. Accordingly, Daniel Cottom argues that Wheatley's frontispiece is in actuality the authorizing document of Wheatley's status when he states:

> In fact, although the design of the book has the Attestation coming after the portrait, this document logically must be considered to precede Wheatley's image,

> since we can infer that the book would not have been published or even attributed to "Phillis Wheatley" if the judgment of these men had gone against her. The portrait has its place at the beginning of the volume, then, but then again, it is there only in lieu of the real placeholders, who determine its proper position to be after and under their own names. (D. Cottom 1996: 92)

This inclination to contest one form of non-literary representation within the book (the Attestation) with another (the frontispiece) falsely sets at odds two aspects of *Poems on Various Subjects Religious and Moral* that are at work together. Both figures defer the poetic matter of the text, once deferred by audience and again deferred by a distracting and contrived blackness captioned by the frontispiece.

The high level of iconicity within Wheatley's volume conspired against the verse it contained. Northrop Frye has argued that lyric poetry and imagery were common and useful companions: "there are thousands of lyrics so intently focused on visual imagery that they are, as we may say, set to pictures." Frye went on to argue that as with "the emblem an actual picture appears," providing the poem with a vital associative quality (N. Frye 1957: 274). In returning to Fanon, however, the overdetermination of Wheatley's very image by her audience would have an undeniable effect on the figural function of her lyric poetry. It is a simple equation: if Frye is to assume that pictorialism supplements the structural interpretation of the lyric, then distinct figural history of black images in the minds of readers would then likewise reorder the significance of the lyric. This pictorial resonance, while centered on Wheatley's blackness as a captioned epigraph to her volume of verse, concerns more than just a visual text. The attestation still proves to be another context by which one reads prose as a paraphrase for poetry's significance, or perhaps I should say, of each poem's significance. For the metonymic reduction of each poem's worth, syllable by syllable, allusion by allusion, is sanctioned first and foremost, if not singularly, by these two non-poetic texts: one visual and the other prose-catalogue.

Consequently, readers of Wheatley from both the past and present engage in an act of misreading; not by way of interpretation – instead, this takes place by genre. When recuperated by contemporary scholarship, what promotes a supposedly fresh idea of Wheatley is rarely a matter of the genre specific to the subject (and what, then, is the point of extirpating the subject?). What makes for the possibility critics cherish – Wheatley's epigraphic and inaugural significance – is that the subject streamlines into current academic debates, most of which run counter to, or ignore completely, poetic arguments. "Wheatley's poems are now chained to issues of canonicity and literary merit; the supposedly authentic literary voice recuperated by close reading is opposed to the often clumsy and derivative neoclassicism of her less successful verses" (K. Wilcox 1999: 2). Yet, as opposed to Kirstin Wilcox, as likewise with Daniel Cottom and many others, I maintain that Wheatley's most sustained and consistent reading does not at all consist of a dialogic of more successful (counter-subversive) poems versus less

successful ("clumsy and derivative") poems, but rather of a closed set of non-poetic signifiers we have comfortably come to allegorize as a "poetics" of comprehension.[2] "Poetics" in this instance is a sign much like what Wilcox usefully identifies as the tragic crux of Phillis Wheatley's poetry: that it is "simultaneously possible and irrelevant."

What was and has endured throughout the years in appraising the work of Phillis Wheatley has not been the quality of her verse, this is quite clear. African-American literary studies has developed non-poetic criteria by which to sustain its inaugural poet – the allegorical image of blackness: captioned, wistful, elusive (what is it, after all, that Wheatley is writing in this picture and why is her book closed?), mediated through the writing of the Attestation. However, the Attestation also functioned contemporaneously as an allegorical text for its white readers in London and then Boston. If the Attestation affirmed the authenticity of Wheatley's poems it also circumscribes, if not captions, their aesthetic merit. The Attestation transmogrifies what it supposedly authenticates, not simply along racist lines of power but also within generic ones. Hence, like other ancillary writings surrounding Wheatley's verses, such as copies of the advertisement laid out for the volume by Wheatley's London publisher Archibald Bell, all ancillary texts that accompany *Poems on Various Subjects Religious and Moral* – all of them – are concerned largely with the translation and corroboration of power.

> By encouraging unknown readers to judge for themselves the disparity between the poet's origins and the poetry, the advertisement turns the purchase of Wheatley's *Poems* into an opportunity for every reader to replicate the validating power of Darthmouth and Lyttleton. (K. Wilcox 1999: 12)

The late eighteenth century was a ripe moment for this type of misreading, as the era grew increasingly into the novel. It was more prepared than ever before to supplement and then replace the aesthetic problem of Wheatley (that she was a lyric poet) with the aesthetic narrative of Wheatley, which persisted in having its ultimate referent on the margin of the book. Counter to what one may infer from this assertion, I do not then believe that intensive close reading would solve the problem herein outlined. Instead, I am claiming that while critical theory has provided numerous ways to consider the ideological underpinnings of texts previously thought of as hermeneutically sealed, there is still the fact that though non-poetic texts such as the Attestation and the frontispiece have been incorporated into critical discourses to confound previously held notions of race, gender, and history, they still function in the same manner generically. These texts still perform much of the same work that they did in their original contexts of the late eighteenth century. This is because the particularities of poetry are not read as a difference, but rather are read indifferently.

There are numerous reasons why the era between the decline of Pope and the rise of English Romanticism is regarded by one scholar as the "Age of Prose."

It was a period of major transatlantic transitions as the publishing and purchasing interests in both Britain and America evinced a greater (and perhaps more populist) interest in the novel and its necessary arbiter, the book. In England, with the death of Queen Anne, courtly patronage of poetry was practically at an end (which is something we should always keep in mind when considering the dynamics of Nathaniel and Phillis Wheatley's 1773 visit to London in order to secure the patronage of the Countess of Huntingdon) and accordingly, poets were by the 1770s more at the mercy of a transitional book market consisting of capitalist booksellers and a new middle-class reading audience. "The rising middle class, with its increasingly voracious appetite for books, especially novels, portended a new mass patronage of books based not on a work's appeal to the gentry but on its general popularity," reasons Cathy N. Davidson in her study of the rise of the book within a nascent America (C. Davidson 1986: 16).

Readers at this time were not fitted for what was written by authors, but rather authors became objects of the fancy of a reading public governed more than ever by the imagination of the market, as opposed to the imagination of the singular and isolated mind. Though Wheatley's book circulated among, and was authenticated by, the landed classes of London and Boston, it entered a capitalist market in which the whimsy of the gentry was inevitably to mingle with the whimsy of the other classes. Davidson notes "there is evidence that those of modest to low income increasingly read many books" and that this was due in no small part to the institutionalization of free libraries and a growing common habit of book borrowing, which was "singularly intertwined with not just the rapid growth of reading and readerships but with an increasing demand for novels" (C. Davidson 1986: 27). Therefore – though Susanna Wheatley encouraged Wheatley's love of Pope, Ovid, and most certainly Horace, and though Wheatley clearly sought to establish for herself a reputation as a "poet" as opposed to a "writer" – the work of the book within larger contexts was a counterfoil to this poetic ambition. *Poems on Various Subjects Religious and Moral*, as opposed to the courtier poems that preceded Wheatley and the nudgingly courtly poems she penned for individual publication, spun within an evolving matrix of cultural forces prepared for the consumption of the text within its emergent habit of prosaic reading.

As though aware of this paradox, the circulation of Wheatley's book was intended to be a particular endeavor designed to reinforce the more traditional sense of her work as belonging to an older way of literature being more effuse than object. To this end, however, it was decided that the visual image of Wheatley was indispensable to giving the sense of the work as high art, thus placing the non-poetic material in even greater focus. As Christopher Felker has found,

> Wheatley's book was marketed principally as a literature for "extensive" reading and sold principally in urban port cities (most notably Boston) that dominated long-distance communications. The precise cultural character of communications and commerce in Northern ports is important for understanding the reception of Wheatley's work. The Wheatleys were among that group described by David Hall

> as "beginning to withdraw from [the] common world into a new gentility. The coming of gentlemen's libraries, together with dancing assemblies, the tea ceremony, and the theatre, were steps in the making of a cosmopolitan alternative to the culture of traditional literacy." ("The Uses of Literacy in New England," 45)

Wheatley's *Poems on Various Subjects* was originally intended to circulate in this world, and so it was important to the Countess of Huntingdon that the book contain a fine engraving. The engraving was only the most obvious example of a textual feature designed to convince purchasers that Wheatley's poems were more than a "book"; these poems were "literature." *Poems on Various Subjects* was intended for a fashion-minded clientele prepared to buy the book on "impulse."

Thus, I would like to offer two points. The first is that the difficulty endured by Wheatley in originally gaining an ear for her proposals (she offered four: one each in 1772, 1773, 1779, and 1783) was in some measure a matter of poetry suffering, on both sides of the Atlantic, a wane of interest.[3] Quite a fair number of readers likely managed an initial interest in the work of Wheatley only to turn away in disappointment upon the discovery that, as Marquis de Barbé-Marbois described her, "one of the strangest creatures . . . perhaps in the whole world" wrote calm, temperate verse; which in the end may not have meant the end of "Phillis Wheatley" for them, but would have made her a discourse of "matter" or existence, rather than of poems or poetry. The marquis, stationed in America from 1779 to 1785, we should read as an outside reader to this phenomenon. He was more an ideal reader than most, not only giving praise to the poems but also actually telling of his experience in reading them; though even in his letter one should note how the experience of reading Wheatley's poetry is circumscribed in beginning and end by, respectively, a paraphrase of her biography and a tactile experience with the book as the real, the verifying and verified, object encountered:

> Phyllis [*sic*] is a negress, born in Africa, brought to Boston at the age of ten, and sold to a citizen of that city. She learned English with unusual ease, eagerly read and reread the Bible, the only book which had been put in her hands, became steeped in the poetic images of which it is full, and at the age of seventeen published a number of poems in which there is imagination, poetry, and zeal, though no correctness nor order of interest. I read them with some surprise. They are printed and in the front of the book there are certificates of authenticity which leave no doubt that she is its author. (Marquis de Barbé-Marbois 1982: 37)

The second point is a rather ironic one. Wheatley's narrative as *oeuvre*, what we are supposed to read as the oppositional structure of her origin against her verses, is an allegorical narrative of literacy achieved. Much like that steadily increasing class of common readers who sought out the novel through libraries and borrowing, Wheatley's was a story of counterintuition to the highest degree, with race replacing class in this early *Bildungsroman*. However, unlike Spenser's

allegorical epic *The Faerie Queene* and its author-inspired intention to "fashion a gentleman," a readership now geared toward the novel would seek a fiction sexier than the story of Wheatley.

Though what is attested to is thus supposedly confirmed as real, Wheatley's poems lack any of the pyrotechnics of the seduction novel, the captive narrative, or the travel narrative. As the novel develops the desire of its readers, Patricia Meyer Spacks has argued, "truth" comes at the expense of reality. Plot, in other words, "calls attention to the importance of truth – not realism: *truth* – as an issue in fiction" (P. Spacks 1990: 1–2). And for that very reason Phillis Wheatley's story is less real, for as its veracity is attested to by an outside authorial presence, the imagination of the common eighteenth-century reader is set up to resist the possibility of writing and worse yet, must suffer this resistance within a genre increasingly less fashionable. For every favorable review of Wheatley, there was an unfavorable one. For every elegy (as elegies comprise over a third of her volume) there is a reminder of the elegies' overwrought, over-poeticized treatment of death. We find this in mock-elegies by poets as prominent as Gray and Goldsmith in their "Ode on the Death of a Favorite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Goldfishes" and "Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog" of 1748 and 1766, respectively. The new fictions of the eighteenth century, I would argue, were by and large texts of desire and accordingly provided something closer to a teleological sense of the truth: goals in the form of social codes were attained or tragically lost. Wheatley's *Poems on Various Subjects* in this world worked as it does now, particularly because in both situations it is read for plot. Spacks, discussing the general desire for ends in eighteenth-century novels, strikes a chord also at the heart of the phenomenon of Phillis Wheatley:

> Among the most potent human desires, one must number the desire for teleology, afflicting readers and writers alike. Fictional plots appear to move toward appointed ends, and so do the narratives of literary history. (P. Spacks 1990: 237–8)

Fiction produces Cartesian doubt, a "that couldn't really happen, could it?" without an answer, though the proposal of truth comes closer to fruition with each turn of the page. Wheatley's predecessor of sorts is Oroonoko, and we should remember that Aphra Behn in *Oroonoko; or the Royal Slave* stridently maintains that Oroonoko is by no means a "feign'd Hero whose Life and Fortunes Fancy may manage at the Poet's Pleasure." At the cusp of a more brisk readership, one more interested in common life and seeking to throw off older, aristocratic notions of artifice, it was fiction and the novel – not fancy and the couplet – that rose to fashion the readership of Wheatley's time. With novels such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Moll Flanders* (1722), Eliza Haywood's *The Fatal Secret, or Constancy in Distress* (1724), Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), and Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747–8), the eighteenth century came to distinguish itself as the time during which prose, and specifically the novel, replaced poetry's reign of moral exactitude. The scholar who quipped that the

eighteenth century was the Age of Prose put it rather succinctly: "Reason, moderation, good sense, and the scientific outlook were the ideals of the eighteenth century. They require the existence of a perspicuous and flexible prose, but they are apt to produce dull poetry" (J. Reeves 1961: 123).

Thus, somewhere between Hayden's discernment of Wheatley's "historical" versus "literary" interest to modern readers and Reeves' critical summation of eighteenth-century poetry, rests the conundrum of Phillis Wheatley's situation. It was and is a near impossibility given the construction of our veneration of Phillis Wheatley to substantiate the voice and mode of either genre out of which she worked, namely the lyric and the elegy (barely a lyric poem in itself). In the literal and rhetorical role of the cultural outsider, Wheatley became immediately in her time an inspirational example for a people considered incapable of inspired writing and persuasive intellect. Yet, as the previous sentence reveals, Phillis Wheatley is so easily summed up, her gist so quickly digested. Phillis Wheatley *is* a fiction. No, this is not to say that she does not exist. Rather, read as plot she is the paraphrasable effect of the problems of our literary lives today, as she was of the social ills of the New Republic. As with this essay itself, rather purposefully, she is full of meaning yet through a sublime silence on her part. As with the epigraph, she is not in actuality part of the equation.

Her textual origins are poetic, and produced a rather staid poetry at that. And, as poetry, these origins are difficult, if not impossible, to "push back beyond recall," as critics such as Harold Bloom, Jacques Derrida, and others have urged in the past. Swallowed whole by self-satisfying interpretations of black rhetorical resistance or historical construction, where Wheatley becomes in either case an intimate insider, Wheatley's stance becomes the tendency of these trends: prosaic. In this sense we are critically where we left off with Phillis Wheatley: she is a beginning and an end, sent to cure our ills. She is Prose's peculiar child, a mysterious Athena, a cephalic birth from our supple, ever-altered, prosaic body.

Notes

1 "No one knows exactly how these signees came by their knowledge of Wheatley and her poetry. There is no evidence for the courtroom-like scene of judgment that Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Karla Holloway imagine" (K. Wilcox 1999: 10). The reference to Karla Holloway is to "The Body Politic" (K. Holloway 1995: 481).

2 "Rather than viewing her as one who did or did not learn to be a great poet – thus binding ourselves to an ill-formed question about tradition – we should consider how she was bound to learn lessons both triflingly and all too well, in which complex state she would distribute these conflicting images of herself throughout her writings, where they awaited their captioning" (D. Cottom 1996: 103).

3 "The 1773 proposal was probably written by someone working for Boston publisher Cox & Berry, and the 1784 proposal was probably written by an editor for the Poetical Essays section of the *Boston Magazine*" (Felkin 1997: n. 86).

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Toni Cade Bambara's *Those Bones Are Not My Child* as a Model for Black Studies

Joyce Ann Joyce

In the conclusion to his intriguing study *Turning South Again: Re-Thinking Modernism/Re-Reading Booker T.*, Houston A. Baker, Jr. concludes his point that the South functions as a metonym for the moral and material dilemmas that characterize American culture. He writes:

> It is surely to the South – as emblem or metonym for American "disciplinarity" – that I feel we must turn again. The "South," for America's cultural studies scholars, must be in us. Acknowledging its ambivalent irony, I would like to conclude with lines from a famous Parchman Farm prison song: "It ain't but one thing I done wrong/I stayed in Mississippi just a day too long." The United States at large is always already in Mississippi, and Mississippi – for better or worse for black modernism – is always in the United States. (H. Baker 2001: 97–8)

Earlier citing Herbert Klein's *The Atlantic Slave Trade* as his source, Baker explains: "at the height of the [transatlantic slave] trade in the 1780s . . . some 260 or so ships, almost all with different owners, were needed to move the 79,000 slaves per annum who were sent to America" (H. Baker 2001: 86). According to Klein, "Although slaves were imported into every continental colony," two regions emerged as dominant slave labor colonies: the Chesapeake Bay area, which includes Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina and a region further south, which includes South Carolina and Georgia (ibid).

Perhaps no single contemporary cultural production reflects the continuum of the material value of slaves, the hypocritical denial of this continuum and its modern guises, as well as the "psychological dynamics, anxieties, phobias" (ibid: 57) associated with it than Toni Cade Bambara's last novel *Those Bones Are Not My Child*, a highly documented, fictional account of what has become well known as the Atlanta child murders. Telling the story from the perspective of a female character and Atlanta's Black community, Bambara writes a novel that

evolves as a literary production of what philosopher Lewis Gordon refers to as a philosophy of existence. He explains:

> Philosophies of existence are marked by a centering of what is often known as the *situation* of questioning or inquiry itself. Another term for situation is the lived context of concern. Implicit in the existential demand for recognizing the situation or lived context of Africana peoples' being-in-the-world is the question of value raised by the people who live that situation. A slave's situation can be understood, for instance, through recognizing the fact that a slave experiences it; it is to regard the slave as a perspective in the world. (L. Gordon 2000b: 10)

In Bambara's novel, Atlanta, Georgia is a metonym for Houston A. Baker, Jr.'s South, for America, and for the effect globalization has had on Black lives. Bambara questions the values of a Southern city, of a country that dehumanizes the lives of Black children.

Having died of cancer at the age of 56 and at what I believe to have been the height of her creativity, Bambara bequeaths literary history a work that exemplifies the Black "situation" in a lived context in Atlanta, Georgia. She views her work as moving beyond the theoretical level that Gordon, as philosopher, very aptly describes. Discussing what C. L. R. James referred to as "creative universality," Gordon says: "Writing is one among many activities with creative universal potential, and it is the theorist's work not only to articulate this in the body of literature left behind by prior theorists, but also to draw out creative dimensions for subsequent generations, the effect of which, in each stage, is the complex symbiosis of epistemological, historical, and ontological possibilities" (L. Gordon 2000b: 3). Drawing upon the activism of writers that preceded her, such as Martin R. Delany, Anna Julia Cooper, Maria Stewart, James Baldwin, and Richard Wright, Bambara explains in her interview with Louis Massiah (T. Bambara 1996) that while she originally viewed herself as a community person, her attitude toward her writing changed after her trip to Cuba. She says: "When I came back from Cuba in 1973, I began to think that writing could be a way to engage struggle, it could be a weapon, a real instrument for transformation politics."[1] While I, for years, trapped myself intellectually inside the contradiction between my position in the academy as a literary critic and my call for political activism from other critics, having contemplated the works of scholars like Barbara Christian, Joy James, Patricia Williams, and Kimberlé Crenshaw, and having recently read Baker's *Turning South* and Gordon's *Existentia Africana*, I now understand that a symbiotic relationship exists between the theoretical world of Black creative productions and Black political activism.

The Black artist/community activist and the creative performances of the university professor share a symbiotic relationship in which their ideas and activities can have the mutual goal of what Bambara refers to as "transformation politics." One arena is the ivory or ebony tower, which prepares students to raise questions and to assume leadership positions in a world with questionable values,

and the other forum is the community itself from which these students come and to which they return. In both settings, investigating work requires data. And in the collection of this data, both the activist and the intellectual have the same problem that Gordon defines: "The problem with data is that they must be rigorously gathered. 'Rigorously' here means that the process of gathering and interpreting data must be guided by an understanding of the logic of social action and claims of universality" (L. Gordon 2000b: 91).

When the academy began to respond to students and community demands to institute Black Studies programs in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it was not giving up on the claim that Euro-American intellectual productions were universal and that intellectual and creative productions of people of color were too narrowly focused. It was responding to student unrest at a time when university students played an active role in questioning American values and political policies. Little more than three decades later, with programs and departments of Black Studies in almost every major research university in the country and doctoral programs in Black Studies at Temple University, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Yale University, the University of California at Berkeley, and Harvard University, it is unfortunately fair to propose that the most controversial issue surrounding African-American Studies continues to be the question of whether it is a legitimate academic discipline. This is so in spite of there being much evidence that this question is a moot one. Phillip K. Daniel presents a most sophisticated, "rigorous," and reasoned argument, asserting "that a broader heading than the term 'discipline' is more constructive for Black Studies, because of the way the term 'discipline' is defined and delineated in this society and because the experiences of Black people are too broad to be coded to one academic discipline" (P. Daniel 1980: 197). Daniel defines a discipline as the following: "A discipline implies a set of formally interrelated facts, concepts, and generalizations. It also implies a set of standardized techniques and skills. The components are part and parcel of a body of theory, propositions, and a subject matter. The specific subject matter is normally what separates one discipline from another" (ibid).

While Daniel proposes what he refers to as a "multidisciplinary structure" for Black Studies, I see no difference between multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary. Daniel's next comment alludes to my position:

> Black Studies theorists must . . . be about the business of training people in terms of coping with problem areas rather than just disciplines. Black Studies professionals must train toward specialization, but the kind of specialization that sees a student as a master-craftsman, an Imhotep, who integrates all of the knowledge of the time. In other words, students must be trained to be simultaneously sociologist, historian, educator, political scientist, anthropologist, businessperson, and so on. (Ibid: 198)

I contend that Black Studies is inherently interdisciplinary and that it has been ahead of its time from its inception. Students with a PhD in English and other

disciplines are so specialized that the combination of this narrow specialization and the status of the economy affords them very little job opportunities. Elitism and racism undergird the irony that the Black Studies PhD, from the perspective of many in the academy, is not trained enough to teach in any specific "traditional" discipline. The idea is that each of the "traditional" disciplines require skills and techniques peculiar or specific to English, history, psychology, etc., skills that students learn in the classroom, that they learn through their specific reading and writing assignments. While I have no interest here in illustrating that a Black studies PhD has the training to be an effective teacher and scholar in *every* discipline, I propose strongly that a PhD in the humanities and social sciences, with particular emphasis in African-American literature, demands a scholar who grounds him or herself in the knowledge of numerous other disciplines. Bambara's *Those Bones Are Not My Child* emerges as a literary production that engagingly exemplifies the interdisciplinary nature of Black literary productivity and thus suggests that the humanities play a critical role in the Black Studies curriculum.

While the following observation is not intended as definitive, it is worth mentioning that most of the many novels on my bookshelves do not indicate on the cover whether the books are marketed as Black Studies productions. Among those to the contrary is the more recent publication of Zora Neale Hurston's *The Complete Stories*, published in 1995, whose back cover indicates that the book would be of value to those with interest in fiction and Black Studies. It is traditional or "commercial" practice for publishers to suggest the various disciplines included in the content of their books at the top left of the back cover. Interestingly, Baker's *Turning South Again* lists "African American studies/American studies" and does not include English and history, disciplines whose scholars would certainly find Baker's book enlightening and useful. The back cover of Gordon's book lists "Philosophy/Race and Ethnicity" as subjects of interests to scholars. While it is practical that presses clearly choose subjects that they think will be of value to the largest possible reading audience, these designations are inconclusive or incomplete. A reading of Baker and Gordon's works, mentioned above, not only enhances the discipline of African-American Studies because of their epistemological contributions, but also because both books reflect wide interdisciplinary and multiethnic hermeneutical resources. Many of these resources belong to the humanities and/or literary studies.

Though Toni Morrison spearheaded the publication of *Those Bones Are Not My Child* after Bambara's death, Bambara alludes in her interview with Louis Massiah to the interdisciplinary nature of her other well-known and beautifully crafted novel *The Salt Eaters*. Bambara explains that she received a call from Charles Frye, a philosophy professor at Mount Holyoke, who told her that he used *The Salt Eaters* as a required text in his course in ethics (T. Bambara 1996: 237). Using Bambara's *These Bones Are Not My Child* as a Black Studies text *par excellence*, reflective of the multifaceted knowledge that makes up Black Studies, I define Black Studies as an interdisciplinary body of knowledge that includes issues

related to women's studies, English (literary criticism or language studies), political science, science or medicine, sociology, journalism, law, film studies, psychology, history, philosophy, and criminal justice. Any investigation of this most complicated novel requires that the student and teacher address these disciplines either directly or indirectly. Issues of methodology and paradigm have a symbiotic relationship to the epistemological nature of the text being examined.

In *Paradigms and Promises: New Approaches to Educational Administration*, William Foster addresses the illusions of a universal paradigm. He writes:

> The paradigm, in effect, defines what are researchable questions and answers: it provides the boundaries for investigation into the area of concern. In the orthodox paradigm for natural science, scientists would be trained in accepted methods, read orthodox textbooks, and gradually accumulate knowledge. Thus, for example, when Newton conceived of the universe as a system that operated somewhat like a clock, he enabled other scientists to develop laws that could accurately predict the phenomena of a clocklike system, within the limits of that paradigm. When continuing research probes the limits of such a paradigm's explanatory power, however, unanswered questions arise. (W. Foster 1986: 54)

Consequently, when Black Studies scholars attempt to develop a paradigm that characterizes the discipline as a whole, they make themselves vulnerable to the same pitfalls and imposed limitations described above by Foster. Rather than imposing a paradigm on the subject of inquiry, the subject or text under investigation should symbiotically determine the paradigm.

Those Bones Are Not My Child emerges as a highly documented, fictionalized account of the Atlanta children's murders that, according to newspaper and other accounts, began in July 1979 and continued through 1981. Over 669 pages the novel covers approximately two years of the history of the murders and the Black community's response to them. In the prologue Bambara creates a female persona who has a daughter, as she did, and who keeps a journal of the comprehensive activity that involves the terror and sadness that engulf Atlanta's grassroots Black community. This protagonist may easily be identified with Bambara herself, whose novel reflects that "rigorous" gathering and interpreting of data that Lewis Gordon describes. In her interview with Louis Massiah, Bambara ironically and unwittingly reveals that she was able to master the balance between her emotions and the practice of her craft:

> There was a period too when I went utterly mad in the eighties in response to the Atlanta missing and murdered children's case. That manuscript too started as journal entries and then developed into pieces that I did for the newspapers, and then I finally realized that I had a novel on my hands, and I didn't want it. One of the reasons I didn't want it was because I knew too much, and I thought if I could reconstruct the real case, and know the difference between this and that highly selective media-police-city-hall fiction on which someone got convicted, how safe am I? Everybody in the world was doing research for me. People from *Newsweek*

> and *60 Minutes* would call me up and ask me, "Do you have another angle on this?" I would look in my notes, I would look at something I hadn't researched yet, and I would say, "Yeah, why don't you check out this and get back to me." I didn't have to leave my house. As a result, I stopped going out, I stopped bathing, I stopped washing my hair, I became this lunatic. My daughter would tap me every now and then and say, "Ma, you look like hell." (T. Bambara 1996: 238)

Clearly, in transforming her journal notes into a novel about experiences with the grassroots Atlanta community emotionally terrorized by the murders of its children, Bambara faces the extremely challenging task of distancing herself from her feelings in a manner not that different from our notions of astral projection. Yet, perhaps, Jean-François Lyotard's analysis of terror and the "unpresentable" in *The Postmodern Condition* highlights the contradictions faced by the Black artist who is both writer and political activist. He explains:

> Finally, it must be clear that it is our business not to supply reality but to invent allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented. And it is not to be expected that this task will effect the last reconciliation between language games . . . and that only the transcendental illusion . . . can hope to totalize them into a real terror. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have given us as much terror as we can take. We have paid a high enough price for the nostalgia of the whole and the one, for the reconciliation of the concept and the sensible, of the transparent and the communicable experience. Under the general demand for slackening and for appeasement, we can hear the mutterings of the desire for a return to terror, for the realization of the fantasy to seize reality. The answer is: Let us wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unpresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honor of the name. (J.-F. Lyotard 1984: 81–2)

Having explained that her goal is to use her language skills as a weapon and thus having no choice except to address the terror that Lyotard suggests always remains unpresentable, Bambara understands the "nostalgia of the whole and the one." Though the form of her novels (which is not my subject here) reflects a postmodern use of language, Bambara acknowledges that the English language fails in making the interior life "presentable." In response to *The Salt Eaters*, she says:

> That book taught me how to get well. If I hadn't written it, I'm not quite sure I'd be sitting here. I was writing beyond myself in that sense. Also in the sense that I was stretching, reaching, trying to do justice to that realm of reality that we all live in but do not acknowledge, because the English language is for mercantile business and not for the interior life . . . The only time you see that realm rendered is in science fiction. I was trying to find another way to do it, and I think I did. So I was writing beyond myself in that sense. When I look at that book now, I realize I'm not there yet. I don't understand it yet. It resonates, it chimes in my bones, but I don't understand it yet. It was very hard work. (T. Bambara, 1996: 235)

In spite of the effect of capitalism on language as Lyotard explains, *Those Bones Are Not My Child* reflects an even more difficult work, and Bambara was "stretching" and "reaching," "to seize reality" and to confront terror by objectifying herself through the persona of Marzala Rawls Spencer.

Bambara orders a tremendous amount of information by focusing her story specifically on the lives of one family with a female protagonist whose son becomes one of the missing children as the novel begins. Reading Bambara's novel, the reader experiences the following: Marzala Rawls Spencer's response to her son Sonny's disappearance and her fear that he, too, has been abducted and may be dead; her fixation with finding her son; her neglect of her younger son (Kofi) and daughter (Kenti); her work with STOP (Committee to Stop Children's Murders); her work with her estranged husband (a Vietnam veteran) and his Vietnam vet partners; the growing up of her children; Sonny's return after being abducted and tortured sexually, physically, and psychologically; and her search for his abductors after his return. The reader relives the anxiety, phobias, corruption, and pain Baker addresses in *Turning South* and the Du Boisian quest for "agency, sociality, and liberation" that Gordon describes.

Those Bones Are Not My Child exemplifies how the "traditional curriculum in literary studies" may be restructured, and it encourages a discussion of the interdisciplinary nature of Black Studies. In *Pedagogy Is Politics* Maria-Regina Kecht suggests in reference to English departments: "Rather than offering only genre, period, and author courses, we should, as several engaged teachers and critics have already suggested, structure our courses around issues" (M-R. Kecht 1992: 9). With interdisciplinary approaches, some Black Studies curricula, to some degree, have already adopted the format Kecht describes. The following pages will demonstrate the point I proposed above – that Bambara's *Bones* evolves as a text that could serve as a primary text for a Black Studies curriculum with other texts from women's studies, journalism, political science, medicine, sociology, law, film studies, psychology, history, philosophy, and criminal justice as secondary sources.

Because the following passage serves as a model for the comprehensive nature of *Bones* and its demand for students' critical thinking skills, it is necessarily long. Though Zala has been estranged from her husband Spence, a politically conscious Vietnam veteran, they begin to spend much time together, working to find their missing, oldest son Sundiata (Sonny). Sitting in the screening room of the police station waiting for Zala, Spence muses and observes:

> Arriving early, he'd sat in the back, his mind elsewhere, not immediately registering what he was seeing. He thought he was looking at ordinary, everyday objects – a telephone, a radio, a set of jumper cables on a tabletop. When a cattle prod and a water hose were introduced, they pricked his memory. He changed his seat, moving closer to the projector and the sound, gripping the armrests when the tortures began . . . South American montage growing out of a sandwich on waxed paper next to a salary check – boots, tires growling in driveway gravel, thousands rounded

> up and detained in a stadium. The junta, hit lists, government by torture. The bullet-ridden corpse of Che Guevara; the attacks on the Tupermaro in Uruguay; the overthrow of Allende; the forced sterilization of Andean laborers; the wholesale slaughter of the Quiche Indians in Guatemala; Argentine Jewry one percent of the population, twenty percent of the disappeared. Strikers in US companies in Central and South America disappearing. The Women of the Disappeared petitioning the government, appealing to the populace. Amnesty International's statistics. Floggings, chemical zombification, arrests and executions without trial. The interrogated bound and gagged, suspended from poles, and beaten. Cables plugged into crank-up radios. Jumper-cable pinchers attached to nipples. Electric prods slid past the penis to the anus, then shoved. The utter silence in the screening room when the leader went white, flickering in its sprockets . . . Then the fuzzy color of shaky camera shots: the streets of Greensboro, North Carolina, US of A. An anti-Klan demonstration, an interracial gathering. Gun-toting whites leaping from cars and trucks, a freeze shot of the FBI informant in the lead. Dressed in hunter plaid and heavy boots, the white men spring open the trunks of cars for heavy duty weapons, taking aim in the direction of the camera. "Commie!" "Nigger!" "Kike!" (T. Bambara 1999: 175–6)

Spence's observations and musing reflect perfectly what James Baldwin means by "the Republic" in *The Evidence of Things Not Seen*, his analysis of the Atlanta children murders. Illuminating the interconnectedness of the political and social abuses of people of color all over the planet, the passage above parallels Baldwin's account of the moral chaos that describes our world and suggests that what happens in Atlanta is merely one location of this moral chaos. Baldwin asserts: "The moral vacuum results in the betrayal of the social contract, and, when this contract is broken, Chaos is at everyone's door" (J. Baldwin 1985: 42). Baldwin and Bambara affirm Blacks' central position in the geopolitical marketplace. While Kecht asserts appropriately that the university is a marketplace of ideas, Black Studies is an excellent site in which to study the merger of the global marketplace and the marketplace of ideas. Baldwin explains that without the riches "extorted" from Black labor, there would have been no Industrial Revolution (ibid: 3).

Bambara's novel capsulizes the corporate rule of people of color by demonstrating the relationship between globalization and the history of oppression as it relates to the murders of Black children in Atlanta and the police department's response to these murders, the middle-class Black community's response, and the government's response, represented by Atlanta's mayor, police chief, the GBI, FBI, and Ronald Reagan, US president at the time of the murders. Bambara includes and intricately connects a plethora of seemingly independent circumstances in time and space: the fact that Black youths in Briton, especially those with "reggae style" hair, were being jailed; the bombing of the church in Alabama that killed young Black girls; the US government's complicity with Jim Jones, who was responsible for convincing hundreds of Black people to drink poison kool-aid in Guyana; the US's treatment of its Vietnam veterans; the connection

between apartheid in South Africa and Atlanta politics and the tortures and murders of Black children; the appearance of Klan meetings in Stone Mountain, Georgia (a suburb of Atlanta); evidence of Klan involvement in the murders; the murders of Chaney, Schwerner, and Goodman during the Civil Rights Movement; the fact that Cubans, Koreans, and Vietnamese own far more stores in the Black community in Atlanta than Blacks themselves; why there was a need for a Negro Baseball League; the activities of A. Phillip Randolph with the Pullman Porters; the activities of the KGB and of Nazi Germany; South Africa's attempt to "extend its pernicious influence" into Lesotho, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Mozambique, and Angola; UFO sightings from West Virginia to Utah, where cattle disappeared and returned later with broken legs and shattered ribs.

All of the above issues are interwoven into Bambara's narrative as her main characters Zala and Spence look for their son and interact with STOP, the police, their friends, neighbors, and relatives. While the overarching international and political nature of the text should be clear from the above list of subjects the novel includes, I would like to address some of the specific aspects of the interdisciplinary nature of the novel as they particularly affect Zala, her family, and the Black grassroots community.

Grounding her text in Atlanta's historical, geographical reality, Bambara places at the beginning of her book a map of Atlanta and a map of "The Killer's Route," which shows that the abductions and murders took place in the heart of the Black grassroots community. It is clear, at this point, that I continue to differentiate between Atlanta's Black middle class and those Blacks who make up the low-income community. Discussions of the Black family, particularly the Black low-income family, in the novel should provoke much interest in sociology, political science, and psychology classrooms. Bambara's description of her severely distressed emotional state much describes Zala's worsening condition as the months passed during her son's disappearance: Zala ceased to clean her home, to pay attention to her younger children, to cook for them, to take them to church as she had done regularly, to comb her hair. Her condition became so critical that her husband took the children away for months to live with relatives so that he and Zala would be totally free to consume themselves in looking for Sonny.

Both Baldwin and Bambara affirm that Atlanta's middle class evidence complicity with the White power structure, uninterested in the fate of the children. When Zala shows her anger at the police referring to the Black children as hustlers because they had jobs, Kenti, her youngest child, does not understand. Zala explains: "It's people's prejudice is what it is, and using language in a hateful way. For example, if you look a certain way and live in a certain part of town and you're a kid who rakes leaves and carries groceries, then people say, 'Isn't that nice. What a fine, industrious child to be helping out.' Understand? But if you live in another part of town and are doing the same thing –" (T. Bambara 1999: 200).

Zala's family ordeal (and the experiences of the entire community) manifests serious psychological ramifications. After one boy returned to his family after having been absent for four years, "so changed by his experience with the sales-

man who'd stolen him" (ibid: 324), he does not look or act like himself. This acknowledgment prepares the way for Sonny's return and the tremendous change in his physical and emotional condition. Sonny, who had ended up in a hospital in Miami, was in such deteriorated physical condition that he had to be fed intravenously; the doctors had to clear a passage in his esophagus because he could not eat without choking; he had been beaten and sexually abused. Of course, the family goes to therapy, but Sonny, even though he had always been recalcitrant, has become very introverted and only discusses what happened to him if coerced, and when he is urged to talk, he tells only pieces of his story, and does not tell the truth. At the end of the novel, Zala and Spence, who had been secretly following Sonny's activities, discover that he works with their landlord Gittens, who is either Sonny's abductor and/or who works with those who kidnapped Sonny. Sonny then manifests signs of the "Stockholm Syndrome," in which those who are tortured or kidnapped become emotionally attached to their torturers, feel that they need them, and thus never confront the guilt and shame stimulated by their horrendous experiences.

It is alarming that Zala's family's most dangerous enemy lies within the community and has the most access to her children. Both Bambara and Baldwin clarify how the South is the metonym for American social, political, and economic corruption that Baker proposes and for the dangers of capitalism that Lyotard addresses. Atlanta's Black middle class plays an essential role in this corruption. Both Baldwin and Bambara suggest that without the complicity of this class, Wayne Williams would never have been convicted. Baldwin begins his analysis with the following points: a Black judge, Clarence Cooper, who was nurtured by district attorney Lewis Slaten, and who, Baldwin believes, guided the prosecution of Wayne Williams. Atlanta's commercial prominence in Georgia and the rest of the deep South meant that it was in the best interest of all – both Black and White – to bring the Atlanta children's murder case to a speedy close, given the national and international attention the STOP organization and Camille Bell had brought to Atlanta.

Corruption involving the missing and murdered children is overwhelming. Not only was the judge's integrity at question, but so were the activities and moral values of Maynard Jackson, the Black mayor, and Lee Brown, the Black chief of police. Though many passages from the novel illustrate the integration of law, political science, and criminal justice, I offer the following, necessarily long, passage because of its exemplary comprehensiveness:

> Slick had been followed to the Bureau Training Center in Glyco, where he seemed to be a consultant or liaison officer between the Immigration agent training school and Arms, Tobacco, and Firearms school. Vernon showed a photo of Slick passing Red of the GBI in front of the Federal Annex post office in downtown Atlanta. Speculation turned to whether Slick and Red were investigating or covering up the links that seemed to exist between Immigration and the Stoner convention the weekend of the Bowen Homes [a day-care center] explosion; between the ATF,

> the Innis-McGill cult, and the "Klan justice: threat against victim Lubie Geter" [one of the children who was killed]; between the "clean bill of health" the governor had given the Klan and White pressure for the governor and the DA to arrest Williams. Speaker [one of Spence's Vietnam Vet partners] voiced a possibility that Spence found too plausible to ignore: Maybe the arms deal that the GBI informant alluded to in the memorandum that had been in Judge Webber's possession – the one who'd infiltrated a particular Atlanta Klan family to find out about the arms deal and then heard members boast of their environment in the Missing and Murdered case – maybe the arms deal was bigger than just the Klan. Given the number of mercenaries being signed up all over the southeast region to go down south of the border, maybe it was a government-conducted operation. (T. Bambara 1999: 609–10)

Rather than exploring the complexity of the murders of the children, the law (in all its manifestations), according to Bambara's novel, blamed the victims and their parents.

Bambara also illuminates the need for child protection laws. In the STOP office,

> Karen was handling the mail from angry parents everywhere who wanted STOP to help improve child-protection laws. These parents had lost children to drunk drivers, malpractice, to experiments by pharmaceutical companies, to child molesters who'd plea-bargained for less charges and early parole, to patients released from the back wards because of overcrowded conditions in state asylums, to companies who dumped chemical and nuclear waste near schools, to ambitious developers and corrupt politicians who went ahead and built houses on contaminated sites. (T. Bambara 1999: 320)

Bambara's novel then provides a wealth of epistemological and hermeneutical resources for professors of law, criminal justice, and political science. Much of the information in the novel not only demonstrates the interdisciplinary nature of Black Studies, but also shows how the academy has imposed a disciplinary structure on bodies of knowledge that are symbiotically related. The report of the Boyer Commission entitled *Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America's Research Universities* supports my observation. In the section "Breaking the Disciplinary Molds," the commission explains:

> As research is increasingly interdisciplinary, undergraduate education should also be cast in interdisciplinary formats. Departmental confines and reward structures have discouraged young faculty interested in interdisciplinary teaching from engaging in it. But because all work will require mental flexibility, students need to view their studies through many lenses. Many students come to the university with some introduction to interdisciplinary learning from high school and from use of computers. Once in college, they should find it possible to create individual majors and minors without undue difficulty. Understanding the close relationship between research and classroom learning, universities must seriously focus on ways to create interdisciplinarity in undergraduate learning. (Boyer Commission 1998: 23)

I add that true interdisciplinarity exists in Black Studies and that most Black textual productions, especially contemporary Black literary and cultural texts, would have to struggle to *avoid* interdisciplinarity.

While we more commonly address issues in Black Studies that relate to women's studies, film, and journalism (media studies), I have seen very few Black Studies curricula, especially in those universities that award PhDs in Black studies, that include the study of scientific issues. While the publishers list the "History of Science," "African Civilization," and "Archaeoastronomy" as the subjects discussed in Charles S. Finch III's *The Star of Deep Beginnings: The Genesis of African Science and Technology*, I have seen no references to this work in other Black Studies texts, especially those texts written by the most prestigious scholars in the profession.[2] Despite the fact that Charles Finch is a doctor of medicine and director of International Health at the Morehouse School of Medicine, and despite the controversial nature of the subject of his book, the so-called "pure" sciences seem to suffer from a lack of interest in engaging genuine critique. Because science may be the most elitist of the academic professions, and because of the power scientists wield in universities due to the research dollars they bring in, the history of Black contributions to science remains primarily limited to discussions during Black History Month.

A folkloric reality in the Black community is that Blacks, particularly the elderly, many times wait until their illnesses are severely advanced before they seek the help of a medical doctor. Perhaps this fear or distrust of the medical profession has its roots not only in a generational attitude partly due to a lack of appropriate medical insurance, but also in the racism that characterizes the Black experience with medical science. Nothing illuminates the racism in medical science more than the infamous Tuskegee experiment on imprisoned Black males. Both Bambara and Baker refer to this experiment, coming to the same conclusions. Baker writes:

> I refer, of course, to the infamous Tuskegee experiment inaugurated during the 1930s by the United States Public Health Service in full cooperation with Tuskegee Institute. The Tuskegee study, which continued until it was journalistically exposed during the 1970s, was designed to observe the effects of untreated syphilis on black male bodies. Tuskegee Institute becomes, then – for almost half a century – a place of black "round-ups" in which black male victims of "modern medicine" are maliciously left in the dark about the deathly inhumanity of racialized American "science." Hundreds perished in the Tuskegee experiment, which has been compared to bizarre proceedings of Nazi doctors during the Jewish Holocaust. (Baker 2001: 76)

Paulette, in Bambara's novel, reminds Zala that the "Atlanta-based Center for Disease Control had monitored the Tuskegee Experiment" (T. Bambara 1999: 164).

The most important medical issue that emerges from *These Bones Are Not My Child*, however, is the science of pathology and forensic science. Bambara

carefully includes descriptions of the murdered children's bodies. In her investigations of information regarding the murdered children, Zala observes "glassy-eyed youths languorous against pillows, clothes open, lipstick-painted aureolas round their nipples and the head of their penises, one naked boy with one hand tugging the end of a silken scarf knotted around his neck, the other arm under his balls, a finger, perhaps, stuck up his ass" (T. Bambara 1999: 183). Hysterically worried about Sonny before he was found, Zala feels the pain of those parents who had to view the bodies of their children: "Anna and Kenneth Almond had had to look at the bullet hole in Edward Hope Smith's back. Venus Taylor had had to look at Angel Lanier's mutilated face. Eunice Jones had had to look at wounds on Clifford's head and throat" (ibid: 234).

Zala, the members of STOP, and the rest of the Black community understand clearly that the police department and the FBI demonstrate no real interest in determining the means by which their children were being murdered. Neither before nor after Wayne Williams's incarceration were autopsies used in an attempt to identify the children's murderers. Black Studies scholars and/or literary critics, studying Bambara's novel, may be able to make an invaluable contribution to Black Studies and literary criticism by using the work of pathologists to guide them in a comparative study of the novel and the failure of the state to use forensic science in the Wayne Williams trial. Forensic science goes far beyond any analysis of the fibers from the carpet in Wayne Williams's home. While a pathologist is a physician who studies body parts, forensic science is that division of the legal profession that uses pathology in police investigations and in courts to determine the innocence or guilt of a suspect. In most states, the government can order autopsies. Neither the GBI nor the FBI ordered autopsies, which often lead to the identities of murderers.

One example from a television documentary entitled *Unsolved Mysteries* that frequently airs on the Lifetime Channel (for women) illuminates the incredible value of autopsies in criminal cases. Although I have watched this documentary many times and have many stories, I shall briefly recount here the most gruesome because of its impact and its reflection on the success of forensic science. A White female prison officer, who had been on the job only one month, received a telephone call in the prison near midnight. The next morning her body was found in a garbage dump just outside the prison. She had been sexually abused and had teeth bites in several places on her body. Dr. Michael Baden, the pathologist contacted by police and prison officials, remembered a previous case of a rapist who bit women as he sexually abused and tortured them. The serial killer who had performed such murders had been given a life sentence. Dr. Baden asked prison officials if the killer was in the prison where the officer was killed. The convicted killer was indeed an inmate in the prison. He worked with the prison chaplain; his behavior was so exemplary that he was a prison trustee. The pathologist made a print of the inmate's teeth to see if they matched the previous imprint that had convicted the killer and used the new imprint to determine whether it matched the teeth marks on the female officer's body. The teeth prints

were a perfect match. The killer's status moved from life in prison to life in solitary confinement.

Though the above story may appear to digress from my thesis, it is indeed important. For in the 1980s at the height of the Atlanta children's murder, DNA evidence was not used as frequently in our courts as it is today. But forensic science has long been a part of our legal system. Moreover, forensic science may easily have proven valuable in answering questions as to why the murder of Atlanta's children continued after Wayne Williams was convicted and in police custody. Stories of Illinois Governor George Ryan's moratorium on executions in Illinois appear on television news channels and in newspapers across the country. Unlike the governor of Georgia, Ryan discontinued executions in Illinois because he is convinced of the corruption of the Illinois capital punishment system.[3] Since 1977, at least 13 inmates on death row have been released from Illinois prisons, three because of DNA evidence. The FBI began DNA testing in the US in 1989, and between 1989 and 1996 one quarter of ten thousand cases of DNA testing yielded results in which defendants or prisoners were exonerated.[4] These cases of wrongfully tried and/or convicted individuals corroborate Bambara's depiction of the omnipresence of the corruption and insensitivity of the judicial system.

Bambara demonstrates the complicity of a tightly integrated network that protects Atlanta's image and illusion of safety. Like the police, the GBI, the FBI, the mayor's office, the judges, the district attorney, and the president of the United States, the press plays a major role in illuminating the myth of the Declaration of Independence's comments and the Constitution's supposed safeguards regarding a citizen's rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness/freedom. While driving, Spence thinks:

> Three days in a row, though [he] still ordered his coffee, he'd felt no impulse to pick up a paper. What that old habit since high school had been about anyway was a total mystery to him now. What news had he been looking for all those years, what word so important he braved blizzards till the delivery? What had he thought news was then? Disasters, celebrity divorces, the demented drivel of warmonger industrialists. When word came, it wouldn't come through the press two beats behind the police, the police ten paces behind STOP's volunteer investigators, the VIs miles behind the murdering, and the general populace sleepwalking on a blind road. (T. Bambara 1999: 141)

Zala, Spence, his Vietnam partners, and the volunteers at STOP know what one of our best-known creative writers explained to me years ago: "There is no such thing as a free press." Speaker, one of Spence's partners, thinks that a newsman does not sound serious and that he would not recommend calling such a person for help. The disembodied voice of the narrator, identified with Speaker, explains:

> Yes, he [Speaker] agreed there was a media whiteout on the Atlanta situation, on Blacks in general for that matter, then off he went cataloguing in the waste bin –

> cross burnings, firebombings, snipings, pejorative slogans smeared across Black workers' lockers at Bethlehem Steel, hate drownings, beatings, burnings, truck-loads of bigots with bats ambushing interracial couples in parks, gangs of white youths on the rampage at skating rinks, the police rioting in Black communities around the country. (Ibid: 273)

The press fails to point out the humiliation of the mothers who grieve the disappearance of their children when the police require them to take lie-detector tests to prove that they have not murdered their children. Zala takes such a test.

Film studies scholars would find Bambara's novel a great resource for a comparative study or interdisciplinary investigation of Bambara's recreation of the "situation" in Atlanta and the presentation of Wayne Williams's culpability in the movie *Who Killed Atlanta's Children?* based on the Atlanta child murders. The movie appeared on Showtime's cable channel on July 16, 2000. Having seen it twice, I am very aware that the movie and Bambara's novel provide overwhelming corroborating details that place doubts on Wayne Williams's being guilty of all of which he was convicted. According to the movie, the evidence is quite inconclusive and the involvement of the Klan, the GBI, and the FBI merit close scrutiny.

Finally, and perhaps most obvious, is the subject of the interrelationship between women's studies and Black Studies exemplified in Bambara's novel. I have already made the point that Zala is the heroine of the story, the voice Bambara uses to tell her story and the means she uses to distance her own emotions from the story. Reading the novel, we experience Zala's intense pain, indefatigable energy, and unfailing determination to find her son. She represents all the mothers, such as Camille Bell, who organized the STOP volunteers.

Bambara does not limit her focus to issues related to the mothers in Atlanta; she also addresses the oppression of White women and women in Africa. Zala comes across a letter written by a White woman who was "A victim of father rape, she'd been handed over to the sheriff and other Klan friends of the family to fuck. At twelve, she'd become a regular in home-movie orgies. The minister's wife, the sheriff's wife – or was it the mother? – someone put her in a home for wayward girls and then an asylum because she wouldn't shut up about the death of her brother. He, too, had been raped by the father, then beaten to death" (T. Bambara 1999: 375). In a conversation with Leah and Speaker, Zala also suggests "white feminists should work on the wives" (ibid: 433) of Klansmen and other husbands, such as those who work for the FBI and the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. And when Zala sat for a moment to read, after sending her two younger children to school early in the novel, she opened a "book about the father of gynecology, a man who'd used captive African women as guinea pigs, conducting surgical experiments without anesthesia, one slave woman the subject of seventeen different operations" (ibid: 182). Clearly, *These Bones Are Not My Child* is more than a Black Studies literary production; it is a creative analysis of comprehensive global issues, written from the perspective of a Black woman.

Much of the information included in the acknowledgments at the end of the novel provides overwhelming examples for dialogue for scholars' interest in the differences between historicism and new historicism. Bambara explains: "On my visits to New Orleans, my ole high-school pal Pat Carter would jump right in and ask how I was tackling the dodgy business of writing a novel about real events – a question a lot of people ask, but when Pat asks, you answer. I devised a few simple dos, don'ts, and maybes early on" (T. Bambara 1999: 672). Historians and literary critics would find these lists invaluable for their hermeneutical studies. It must be clear, however, that while Bambara uses real events in her novel, it is not a historical novel. Though some scholars and teachers refer to Sherley Anne Williams's *Desse Rose* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved* as historical novels, they are not. They do not satisfy the technical definition of a historical novel such as Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and Margaret Walker's *Jubilee*.

While we live in a time when students in the academy may have read or heard of Walker's *Jubilee*, Williams's *Desse Rose*, and certainly Morrison's *Beloved*, as well as some of the works of Bambara, more than at any other time, the place of Black Studies in the academy is still comparable to the child of the slave master who is allowed to live in the Big House, but who should experience an ironic twist of fate. It is ironic that while the extremely important report of the Boyer Commission makes strong recommendations for disciplinary changes in undergraduate education, and David Damrosch's *We Scholars: Changing the Culture of the University* (1995) makes significant recommendations regarding the restructuring of graduate education (especially the requirement of the unwieldy dissertation), too many Black Studies scholars fail to see that Black Studies provides the interdisciplinary model that would enliven scholarship and classroom discussions for the master's children in "traditional" disciplines. Because PhD programs must have a commitment to students' concern about job opportunities in the academy once they graduate, I once composed a document in which I outlined how students in a PhD department in African-American Studies could take a specific number of required courses in that department, also take a defined number of carefully chosen courses in a traditional discipline, and have the advantage of two collaborating advisors (one from each discipline), thinking that such an arrangement would prepare PhD students in African-American Studies for positions in other departments, given the limited number of African-American Studies programs and departments in the country.

Until leading African-American Studies scholars and administrators affirm the inherent difference in Black Studies rather than apologize for it, Black Studies will miss a tremendous opportunity to contribute to the dialogue regarding change in the curriculum manifested in the report of the Boyer Commission and suggested by Damrosch. Institutionalized at a time of significant political changes in the US, African-American Studies was conceived as an integration of intellectual, political, and community service components. This marked difference gave African-American Studies the characteristic of what Edward Said refers to as the "*metaphorical* condition" of the exile, who is socially and politically dislocated.

"Exile for the intellectual in this metaphysical sense is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others" (E. Said 1994: 53).

A remarkable and complex novel, *Those Bones Are Not My Child* unsettles its readers, making connections between various manifestations of corruption that stifle the quality of life for all of us. In order to demonstrate the global scope of our problems, Bambara wittingly or unwittingly utilizes every discipline in the academy that prepares students for the workforce, whether the work place be a highly professional career or community service. The novel makes no attempt to answer all our questions about what happened in Atlanta. In fact, Bambara closes the novel in a way that is puzzlingly ambiguous and open-ended. While it is clear that what Baldwin refers to as the Republic or capitalist conglomerate has conspired against the Black community, the most insidious enemy is the black landlord, a representative of the Black community. Thus Bambara's conclusion debunks the myth of Black superiority. She fictionalizes an important observation made by Black philosopher Lewis Gordon, who writes, "While the struggle for new social relations continues, the project of humanistic study is such that the possibilities offered by a *richer understanding of human diversity* may help set afoot, as well, the world for which Du Bois so faithfully struggled" (L. Gordon 2000b: 94–5; emphasis added).

Bambara's ending emphasizes the need for those of us in Black Studies to examine the nature of the intellectual enemy within who seeks conformity and acceptance, as well as the political, social, and economic enemy within who acquiesces to what is hegemonic in exchange for prestige and financial comfort. In the song "Don't Worry, If There's A Hell Below, We're All Going To Go," Curtis Mayfield sums up what may be the end of the struggle for intellectual parity, intellectual diversity, economic and social justice, and the need for a balance between humility and challenge in Black Studies. He calls to sisters, niggers, whites, Jews, crackers, blacks and their backers, police and their lackers. He says everybody's laying (in the cut), "talking 'bout don't worry. Yet, for peace no one is willing. Everybody smokes, uses the pill and the dope. Uneducated fools from uneducated schools. But they don't know; if there's a hell below, we're all going to go" (Mayfield 1992).

Notes

1 From *Those Bones Are Not My Child* by Toni Cade Bambara, copyright © 1999 by the Estate of Toni Cade Bambara. Used by permission of Pantheon Books, a division of Random House, Inc. The quotation is from p. 219. The author and editors thank both Cade Bambara's estate and Random House for permission for the various quotations from this text.
2 See also chapter 27, this volume, written by Charles Finch – Eds.
3 See Geraldine Sealey, "Moratorium on Executions in Illinois," www.abcnews.go.com/sections/us/Daily News/illinoisdeathrow000131.html.
4 See www.genomicart.org/genome-chap2.htm.

CHAPTER **FIFTEEN**

Jazz Consciousness

Paul Austerlitz

> On stage, the multi-instrumentalist Rahsaan Roland Kirk once shouted out, "They say that Dvorak was a black man, but the white people say he was a white man!"
> A voice from the audience asked, "What do *you* say?"
> The answer was, "I say I don't give a damn!" (R. Kirk 1993)

Proclaiming that the Bohemian composer Anton Dvorak could be black articulated an Africanist revision of history by appropriating a European "great man" into the black world. But by adding that he really didn't care about the matter, Kirk left himself open to a vision of inclusivity. The fluidity of his perspective evinces a high comfort-level with the contradictions that are basic to the human condition. As a music that is both generically black and generally American, jazz embodies what W. E. B. Du Bois called "double consciousness," the simultaneous affiliation with an in-group black culture and a larger mainstream (W. Du Bois 1961: 16). Written from the perspective of one European-American scholar-musician,[1] this essay looks at *jazz consciousness* as a form of creolized musical discourse that explores the reality of black culture in a white-dominated society. It pays special attention to the multi-instrumentalist Eric Dolphy.[2]

But what is this thing called jazz?[3] Duke Ellington spurned the "jazz" term and suggested that we call his art "Negro music" (G. Lock 1999: 125–6). He added: "Jazz is only a word and really has no meaning. We stopped using it in 1943. To keep the whole thing clear, once and for all, I don't believe in categories of any kind" (D. Ellington 1976: 452). Terms for musical genres carry ideological baggage: the conceptual frames around them produce what we can think of as "horizons of expectation" (H. Jauss 1982). W. C. Handy's most famous composition, for example, uses elements of both the blues and tango, but his decision to call it "St. Louis Blues" inexorably frames our experience of the piece (W. Handy 1941).[4]

Scott De Veaux (1991) shows that the notion of a reified "jazz tradition" developed as a social construct through time as musicians and critics sought cultural capital for the music. During this process, the boundaries of the genre

were hotly debated. While the etymology of the word "jazz" is not conclusive, informed speculation points to a Ki-Kongo (Central African) source: it seems that the word comes from "jizz," an American term for semen which likely derives from the Ki-Kongo *dinza*, to ejaculate (Merriam and Garner 1968, in A. Clark 2001: 27). Indeed, this music was closely associated with sexuality in its early period, and it is possible that the usage of the word "jazz" derived from the music's association with bordello culture. Many musicians, such as Earl Hines, Bud Freeman, and Eddie Condon, resultantly avoided the term, as evidenced in the title to Condon's memoirs, *We Called it Music*. Sidney Bechet once said that jazz is "a name that white people gave the music" (S. Bechet 1960: 3; E. Condon 1947; B. Peretti 1992: 133–4).

Critics in the 1930s and 1940s argued that New Orleans "hot jazz" could not evolve and that swing was thus not a form of jazz. Similar views surfaced with respect to bebop: the French critic Hughes Panassie believed that while bebop was an important musical form it was not jazz because it had a different rhythmic structure than swing. Charlie Parker also noted this fact, saying that it might indicate that bebop was a genre in its own right (S. De Veaux 1991). Beginning in the 1940s, the idea of an organic tradition, a "tradition with internal innovations," arose. Dizzy Gillespie fought to have bop accepted as jazz, believing that it would be beneficial to boppers for their music to be housed under this concept-umbrella. The idea of an organic, changing jazz tradition prevailed and the "jazz" epithet now refers to styles ranging from those innovated by Buddy Bolden to Ornette Coleman; free improvisers and neoclassicists alike invoke "the tradition" (S. De Veaux 1991; J. Gennari 1991).

Even so, challenges to a reified jazz continued to surface, as with Thelonious Monk's provocative statement that "maybe jazz is going to hell" (S. De Veaux 1991) and Miles Davis's 1968 statement that "jazz is dead" (J. Chambers 1983: 85). Interestingly, Davis's proclamation was consonant with the views of his critics, who excommunicated him from the jazz canon for his interest in R&B and forays into fusion. Many African-American musicians in the 1960s and 1970s embraced the term "black music" precisely for its links with cognate genres such as gospel and blues. They pointed out that these styles are all part of a larger African-American tradition. Drummer Beaver Harris, for example, said: "I prefer calling it Black Music because that way you have all your history to draw from" (V. Wilmer 1992: 23).

Feminists have brought the issue of marked and unmarked categories to the fore to the extent that the terms "man" and "he" no longer stand for humans in general (at least in academic writing). Black leaders similarly challenged the use of marked categories as referents for people of color; Malcolm X, for example, talked about the "so-called Negro." Trumpeter Bill Dixon notes that university music departments are usually devoted to European art music, a marked category which turns all other styles into hyphenated "others." He founded a Black Music Division at Bennington College, pointing out that while it was called the Music Division, the college's other music department was in fact devoted to "white

music." Similarly, saxophonist Archie Shepp equated the word "jazz" with a racial slur, saying: "If we continue to call our music jazz, we must continue to be called niggers" (V. Wilmer 1992: 23).

Ethnomusicology's challenge to Eurocentrism in the academy has had parallel repercussions. For example, Brown University's Music 001 course, "Introduction to Music," was renamed "Introduction to Western Music" as awareness of non-Western styles grew.

Many members of Chicago's Association for the Advancement of Creative Music (AACM) advocated the term Great Black Music, while Anthony Braxton, also of the AACM, preferred the deracialized term Creative Music in keeping with his personal perspective, which combines black pride with avowed influences from European composers and white jazz players. The notion that jazz is "America's classical music" emerged in the 1980s and was advocated by pianist-educator Billy Taylor (B. Taylor 1986). Its distance from racial politics and appropriation of the cachet associated with the "classics" made this concept attractive to mainstream critics in the 1990s. This epithet thus played a significant role in gaining legitimacy for the music, increasing the style's cultural capital, and aiding black musicians' struggle for self-determination. Today, the notion that jazz is America's classical music has commonsense appeal: most people agree that jazz shares much with "classical" music, such as the European concert repertoire – both stress virtuosity, are performed by skilled professionals, and are meant primarily for listening. But calling jazz America's classical music confuses as many issues as it clarifies. For one thing, it divorces the music from its African-American source. Moreover, for much of its history, jazz was dance music, not concert music. As Robert Walser shows, the idea of "classical music" is ill-defined even with respect to the European concert repertoire. Many traits commonly ascribed to eighteenth and nineteenth-century European classical music, such as the reliance on music notation and institutional training, actually developed in the twentieth century and do not apply to many so-called classical masters: neither Bach nor Mozart studied in formal academies, and both were improvisers as well as composers (R. Walser 1999: 327).

The road to today's notion that jazz is a classical music was paved by critics such as Andre Hodier and Leonard Feather in the 1950s, who asked "where is jazz headed?," answering that it was moving toward the "classics." They delineated stylistic periods in the history of the music which resembled those of European classical music (S. De Veaux 1991). While this periodic scheme, which outlines a trajectory moving from New Orleans jazz to swing, bebop, and free jazz, is rarely challenged, it is strangely skewed to the first half of the twentieth century. In fact, it barely represents the last third of jazz history, from the 1970s to today.[5]

In current speech it is almost impossible to avoid the "*j* word." Adopting a Confucian middle ground which both accepts this common term and affirms the African-American basis of the music, some musicians who previously rejected it returned to using the term in the 1990s, while acknowledging its problems.

Rashied Ali stated that to him, "the name, it really doesn't matter to me. As far as I'm concerned [the term] 'jazz' is cool . . . but we do know without a doubt that it is a Black art form that was discovered in this country" (V. Wilmer 1992: 23). Many musicians simply call what they play "the music," appropriating the unmarked category as their own. In this chapter, I use the terms *jazz* and *the music* interchangeably.

Buscando América

While we customarily use it to refer to sovereign states, the term "nation" originally referred to groups of people with shared histories, to what we call ethnic groups today.[6] The idea that nations (or ethnicities) are linked to geographic entities and states became prevalent only in the nineteenth century. Ethnicity was secondary to political sovereignty to most nineteenth-century patriots: a prominent Polish patriot, for example, once said: "It is the state which makes the nation and not the nation the state," and after the unification of Italy, a leader proclaimed: "We have made Italy, now we must make Italians" (Colonel Pilsudski and Massimo d'Azelio, quoted in E. Hobsbawm 1990: 44–5). A nation-state's population is "ethnicized," it is represented as a natural community, and national myths, usually based on race or language, are reconstructed daily moving from present to past in propagation of a "fictive ethnicity" (E. Balibar 1991: 96). Nation-states are thus "imagined communities" (B. Anderson 1983).[7]

One day, after lecturing on the social construction of nationalism, I realized that my deepest motivation for discussing this subject was a search for my own identity as an American. I also realized that jazz is an important arena for this quest. Recent work in Latino/a Studies shows that *América* is a contested and troubled borderland; we are continually redefining what it means to be Native, Anglo, Latin, white, or black American. As salsa composer Rubén Blades puts it, we are perpetually "*buscando América*," we are always searching for, discovering, and inventing America (J. Flores 1993: 199–224). The formation of national sentiment is an emergent, ongoing process: not only are nation-states socially constructed when they are founded, they are also reinvented day in and day out, and we all play parts in the process. It is easy to deconstruct these processes and debunk nationalism. It is more challenging to examine these processes within ourselves.

African Americanness has always been equivocal in the US. On one hand, blacks have been in this country longer than most other immigrant groups, and as Duke Ellington affirmed, their labor and culture were fundamental to "building America."[8] On the other hand, African Americans have been marginalized and denied full rights; the legacy of the Dred Scott Decision of 1857, which ruled that even free blacks were not full citizens, remained after emancipation. Dizzy Gillespie wrote that he was classified 4F, avoiding the draft in World War II, after saying this:

> Well look, at this time, at this stage in my life here in the United States whose foot has been in my ass? The white man's foot has been in my ass hole buried up to his knee in my ass hole! Now, you're speaking of the enemy, you're telling me that the German is the enemy. At this point, I can never remember having met a German. So, if you put me out there with a gun in my hand and tell me to shoot at the enemy, I'm liable to create a case of "mistaken identity," of who I might shoot. (Gillespie and Fraser 1979: 120)

During World War II, many African Americans only agreed to support the war effort after the articulation of a "double-V" philosophy, which called for victory on two fronts: the global fight against the Axis powers and the domestic fight against racism (see E. Lott 1988).

Conventional notions of US national identity stress European-derived culture; many elementary school teachers, for example, teach students to identify with the Pilgrims and (white) cowboys. A *National Geographic* map named "The Territorial Growth of the United States" could just as well be named "The Territorial Shrinking of Spanish North America," or, better, "Euro-American Usurpation of Native American Land." In my university classes I often ask students who their forebears are. Inevitably, only a small minority are descendants of the English. As citizens of the US, our fictive identity is determined by the dominant culture, not by the majority.

English-speaking white culture is dominant in the US not because persons of English descent have been the most numerous group, but because Anglo-Americans are the dominant group. While most European arrivals to North America assimilated into the white Anglo mainstream, there have been notable exceptions ever since the earliest English settlements. The Puritan leader Cotton Mather, for example, was concerned about miscegenation and instituted measures to curtail the assimilation of Englishmen into Native American societies. But creolization occurs despite these efforts.

Ralph Ellison once boldly asked, "What would America be like without Blacks?" He also noted that even posing such an absurd question points to a "national pathology," a disunited state of America (R. Ellison 1998: 162).[9] Although the US could not exist without blacks, from the Constitution, which deemed blacks as only three-fifths human, to African repatriation schemes ranging from the American Colonization Society of 1821 to Garveyism, the idea that this could be a black-free country has coexisted with the idea that it could be a country with freedom for blacks. Without African Americans, of course, the US would be unimaginable. There would have been no slave economy, no Civil War, no American language, music, or dance: "Without the presence of Negro American style, our jokes, our tall tales, even our sports would be lacking in the turns, the sudden shocks, the swift changes of pace (all jazz-shaped) that make life swing" (R. Ellison 1998: 165). Albert Murray picked up Ellison's call, riffing that "American culture is incontestably mulatto" (A. Murray 1983: 22):

> This is a nation of multicolored people. There are white Americans and there are black Americans but any fool can see that the white people are not really white and that the black people are not really black. They are all interrelated in one way or another. (Ibid: 3)

Discussion surrounding the history of Thomas Jefferson's concubine, the mixed-race slave Sally Hemings, and their progeny brought into focus the fact that the country's founding parents include African Americans as well as whites and that all Americans are related. The US mainstream is not white; instead, it is the dialogue between the various groups in this country.

Creolization and Power

In his essay "On Being 'White' and Other Lies," James Baldwin notes that while whiteness is basic to mainstream identity in the United States, Americans' European forebears did not consider themselves "white." It was only when they came to the US that they developed a sense of whiteness. This was the "price of the ticket" to American identity for European immigrants (Roediger 1993: 178). Similarly, Malcolm X jokingly said that "nigger" is the first word that European immigrants learn when they come to the US, showing that anti-black racism is intrinsic to national identity in the US (M. X 1965a: 399, discussed in Roediger 1993: 19).

After I had lectured about Du Bois's notion of double consciousness one day, a white student commented that if African Americans have double consciousness, she thinks that most European Americans must have "half-consciousness," because even if they are unaware of it, they are highly influenced by black culture. Her implication was not that whites are somehow cultureless but simply that whites are hampered, blinded, by racial privilege. Du Bois himself once addressed the "Souls of White Folk," noting that many whites identify with their skin color to a point of dehumanizing themselves (W. Du Bois 1975: 29–56). He also argued that while African-American doubleness is tantamount to an internal "war," it offers a larger perspective than that available to those who wear color-coded blinders; it offers "second sight" (W. Du Bois 1961: 16).

Amiri Baraka calls the continuing white appropriation and stereotyping of black music "the great music robbery." He also notes that African Americans have repeatedly responded to this trend by reappropriating their art, creating new in-group styles that are (initially) out of reach to whites. These, however, are soon appropriated, so a "cultural lag," in which white popular culture follows a generation or so behind black popular culture, ensues (A. Baraka 1963: 220; Baraka and Baraka 1987: 328–32).[10] This, of course, does not mean that the history of black music is merely a series of responses to white appropriation: in-group needs and creative impulses have also determined musical change. Still, *appropriation and reappropriation* of black music is central to musical change in the US. Minstrelsy,

the predominant form of popular entertainment in the nineteenth century, dehumanized African Americans. But black musicians walked through the door that opened as a result of this vogue, themselves gaining fame as minstrel performers. Stereotyped neo-minstrel reworkings of slave songs were still popular among whites at the turn of the twentieth century, when black musicians created the blues and jazz. When white swing bands commercially eclipsed the black ones, African Americans responded with bebop, and when whites took over the blues in the guise of rock 'n roll, blacks created soul, then funk, then rap.

A fundamental difference between whites and blacks in American music is that while whites have played what they wish, segregation long kept black musicians behind fences: African Americans did not have the choice of joining symphony orchestras or Broadway pit bands for most of this country's history. American creolization is thus played out on an unequal playing field. No matter how sincere whites' attraction to black culture, our forays into it always occur in a context of unequal power relations, whether or not we are aware of it; as Eric Lott (1993) astutely puts it, "love and theft" go hand in hand in even the most well-meaning white use of black culture. Norman Mailer celebrated beat-generation bohemians as "white Negroes," lauding their rejection of the "slow death by conformity" that bourgeois America sentences. He exoticized African Americans, writing of a "menage a trois" between the bohemian, the juvenile delinquent, and the black man that had marijuana as the wedding ring and African-American music as a cultural dowry. Mailer believed that blacks were free of the "sophisticated inhibitions of civilization," living instead in the moment, "for jazz is orgasm." He contended that blacks are consequently hyper-aware of American realities and thus that if they were to attain equality to whites under the law they would be superior and advocated miscegenation as a solution to race consciousness. He was so wrapped up in himself that he lost sight of his own stereotyping and neo-minstrelsy (N. Mailer 1957, in R. Walser 1999).

Edward Said's *Orientalism* was criticized for neglecting praise for the achievements of Western academic study of Asian cultures; one reviewer, for example, contended that Said attacked disinterested scholarship. Said responded that he did not contend that orientalism is evil, merely that it is complicit with imperialism (E. Said 1994: 341, 350–1). Aesthetic currents do not exist outside social realities. Still, there is a fine line between whites' exoticization of black culture and participation in it. The Greek-American musician Johnny Otis, for example, became so deeply involved in African-American culture that he considers himself "black by persuasion," is accepted as such by the African-American community, and he is heralded as an important contributor to black music (J. Otis 1993). Many European immigrant musicians have been drawn to African-American music and culture as a way of testing the cultural waters of a new land, as a way to Americanize themselves. Lipsitz shows that whites' adopting of African-American culture often issues from a sincere quest to become free of suffering, that black music has provided whites with a powerful and legitimate critique of middle-class white America (G. Lipsitz 1994: 54–5).

Jazz Consciousness

The Third Stream movement, initiated in the 1950s by the composer Gunthur Schuller, was an effort to wed jazz with the European classical music tradition. This attempt was laudable, but as John Coltrane once said, the results often seemed forced (F. Kofsky 1970). As we have seen, the blending of various "streams" is the *norm* in African-American culture. bell hooks notes that black poets speak "in many voices . . . the Dunbar of a poem written in dialect was no more or less authentic than the Dunbar writing a sonnet." For hooks,

> It was listening to Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, and later, John Coltrane, that impressed upon our consciousness a sense of versatility – they played all kinds of music, had multiple voices. (b. hooks 1989: 11)

John Coltrane expressed interest in African cultures as well as all world cultures in an interview with the (white) black nationalist ideologue Frank Kofsky:

> *Kofsky:* Do the musicians who play in these newer styles look to Africa and Asia for some of their musical inspiration?
> *Coltrane:* I think so; I think they look all over. And inside . . .
> *Kofsky:* Do you think that the musicians are more interested in Africa and Asia than in Europe, as far as the music goes?
> *Coltrane:* Well, the musicians have been exposed to Europe, you see. So it's the other parts that they haven't been exposed to. Speaking for myself, at least, I'm trying to have a rounded education. (F. Kofsky 1970: 230)

Martinican poet Aimé Césaire's perspective recalls Coltrane's: "I'm in favor of nègritude seen as a literary phenomenon, and as a personal ethic, but I'm against building up an ideology on nègritude" (J. Clifford 1988: 177).

Black music in the US shares many musical characteristics with other African-influenced musics. These include a kinesthetically based aurality, call-and-response patterning, and particular modes of vocal inflection. Jazz musicians have improvised upon this African base. African-based cultures have often been unabashedly inclusive. The classic example of this is in religion. Syncretism took place not only in the Americas, with the incorporation of European elements into sub-Saharan religions, but also within Africa itself, where the proximity of various ethnicities made it common to incorporate elements from neighboring groups into one's own culture. This was true even (and perhaps, especially) when they were at war, since the victor's gods were victorious and needed to be placated. This attitude contrasts sharply with Christian doctrine (although not always with Christian practice), which has generally espoused a non-inclusiveness. As we have seen, jazz consciousness manifests participation in European classical forms. This is a continuation of the process of syncretism that had long been central to

African-American culture. Fusions of hymns and African-derived elements created the spirituals, the schottische, and other European dance forms were African-Americanized into ragtime.

Many African Americans espoused bourgeois values already in the postbellum period, looking to markers of class status in ways that were similar to the Western peoples. Owning a piano was such a marker, and the fact that Booker T. Washington criticized black families for buying pianos expressed his philosophy of encouraging African Americans to pursue working-class rather than middle-class ideals (S. De Veaux 1997: 45–6; E. Southern 1983: 308–9). Jazz musicians have reinterpreted European classical music traditions within a black aesthetic. James P. Johnson was a formidable composer in the Western classical idiom, but his works were systematically excluded from performance opportunities. This, however, did not stop him from calling upon his expertise in classical piano repertoire in forging his unique jazz style. Louis Armstrong and Charlie Parker, for example, were both known for their skillful quoting of themes from the classical repertoire in their solos (B. Kernfeld 1988: 288).

The conductor Ernst Alexander Ansermet wrote that African-American composer-conductor Will Marion Cook "is a master in every respect, and there is no orchestra leader I delight as much in seeing conduct" (E. Ansermet 1919, in R. Gottlieb 1996: 741). Ellington wrote that Cook turned away from the classical field in spite of having studied at Oberlin Conservatory and at the University of Berlin because he resented being pigeon-holed as a black musician; he wanted to be judged on his musical merits alone. Confronting a white critic, Cook said:

> "Thank you very much for the favorable review" . . . "You wrote that I was the world's greatest Negro violinist." "Yes, Mr. Cook," the man said, "and I meant it. You are definitely the world's greatest Negro violinist." With that, Dad Cook took out his violin and smashed it across the reviewer's desk. "I am not the world's greatest Negro violinist," he exclaimed. "I am the greatest violinist in the world!" He turned and walked away from his splintered instrument, and it has been said that he never picked up a violin again in his life. (D. Ellington 1976: 97; K. Brucher 1999: 8)

The involvement of some African-American families in classical music was so deep that some musicians lost links to black vernacular traditions. While some bourgeois blacks were happy in this Europhilic world, pianist/arranger Mary Lou Williams stated that her mother "wouldn't consent to my having music lessons, for she feared I might end up as she had done – unable to play except from paper" (R. Gottlieb 1996: 87). As a creolized musical discourse, jazz consciousness calls upon *all* of the resources available in American music.

Since age 15, Willie Ruff had studied French horn, receiving an MA from Yale in 1954. Because US orchestras generally did not hire people of color, he auditioned with conductor Erich Leinsdorf for a position on the Tel Aviv Philharmonic. Leinsdorf wanted to help Ruff and said that Ruff would be able to play in Israel, but that he wanted to go further and help break down barriers

of discrimination in the US, and offered Ruff a position in the Buffalo Symphony Orchestra, saying,

> I am certainly aware that positions in the professional orchestras in this country are not available to Negro artists. I'm the director and conductor of the Buffalo Symphony Orchestra. I can definitely offer you a position in the horn section. It might be a more direct route to your later entry into another, larger American orchestra. The Tel Aviv position would also be good for you, and you certainly will be appreciated there regardless of race. There are no laws that would separate you from anyone else. I suggest you consider both these options. (W. Ruff 1991: 227)

These were his choices, then – whether to leave his homeland for Israel or to accept the Buffalo position, hoping that it would lead to a better job down the line. A third possibility was to play jazz. The advantage of this choice was that he would be able to pursue improvisation and composition as well as interpretation. Ruff had begun to develop a fruitful jazz duo with pianist Ivory Mitchell. Mitchell was working with Lionel Hampton's band and convinced Ruff to join Hampton and develop the duo repertoire in their spare time (ibid: 227–31). Ruff's decision to play jazz points to the benefits of the holistic, inclusive nature of the essence of jazz consciousness, bearing the fruits of American creolization.

Dolphy's Consciousness

The wide-reaching musicality of saxophonist, flutist, and clarinetist Eric Dolphy exemplifies jazz consciousness. Dolphy was born in Los Angeles, California in 1928. Growing up in an African-American community, he was exposed to blues and gospel, of course, and even tried a little blues singing at one time. Although this blues base underlies even Dolphy's most modernist playing, his main influences as a child were in Western classical music. His biographers write that, according to people who grew up with him, "as a small child Eric showed great joy at the anticipation of attending . . . rehearsals and hearing the (church) choir's performances, which were not of the gospel variety, but included, for example, Handel's *Messiah*" (Simosko and Tepperman 1996: 27). As a boy, Dolphy studied at Lloyd Reese's conservatory in Los Angeles; Charles Mingus was also a student of Reese, who had an important impact in the community. Dolphy started playing the clarinet at age six, the oboe at age eight, and the alto saxophone at age 15. It was also during this period that he began playing the bass clarinet. Dolphy's early grounding in the Western classical field is underlined by the fact that still a student in junior high school he won a two-year scholarship to the University of California School of Music (ibid: 27–30). This, however, did not sever his ties to the black vernacular, since he also sang the blues as a boy.

Dolphy's first jazz influences were Duke Ellington and Coleman Hawkins, but he became a devotee of Charlie Parker in high school: "Bird was it . . . I couldn't believe that anyone could be *faster* than Hawkins" (M. Williams 1964: 282). After

graduating from high school, Dolphy performed with bands around Los Angeles (including his own). He also continued in the classical field, working with the Tacoma Symphony Orchestra and continuing his studies at Los Angeles City College and the US Naval School of Music.

Dolphy became aware of, and felt a rapport with, Ornette Coleman's work already during this early period:

> Ornette was playing that way in 1954. I heard about him, and when I heard him play, he asked me if I liked his pieces and I said that I thought they sounded good. When he said that if someone played a chord, he heard another chord on that one, I knew what he was talking about, because I had been thinking of the same things. (Ibid: 283)

Dolphy also exchanged musical ideas and became friends with John Coltrane around this time. Years later, Coltrane remembered:

> Eric and I have been talking music for quite a few years, since about 1954. We watched music. We always talked about it, discussed what was being done, down through the years, because we love music. What we're doing now was started a few years ago. (Simosko and Tepperman 1996: 34)

Dolphy also became involved in the Third Stream movement. In 1958 he began touring with Chico Hamilton, as well as recording with the Latin Jazz Quintet. Thus, even before he left Los Angeles, his main influences were intact; Dolphy had acquired a background in European classical music, rooting in the style of Charlie Parker, and an interest in new music.

In 1959 Dolphy settled in New York City, working first at Minton's Playhouse and then with Charles Mingus. During this period Ornette Coleman was creating a sensation with his debut engagement at the Five Spot. According to Ted Curson, who was in Mingus's band with Dolphy at the time, Mingus took Dolphy and Curson into the car between sets at the Five Spot and said: "'Do you think you can play like that?' Of course we could . . . Eric said OK. We rehearsed a bit, and soon we were playing that style" (B. Priestley 1982: 110). Of course, as Mingus explained, he was not advocating wholesale imitation of Coleman. He saw, however, that the new trends created a space that required a move away from the established bebop language: "I'm not saying everyone's going to have to start playing like Coleman, but they're going to have to stop playing Bird" (ibid). Dolphy left the Mingus band in 1960 (he rejoined it in 1964).

Rather than following a linear progression of stylistic changes, musicians like Dolphy, Mingus, and Miles Davis used all resources available; as mentioned above, the linear periodic scheme of jazz historiography is only one way to view the development of the music. The fact that Dolphy was working on ideas with Coleman and Coltrane already in the mid-1950s belies whiggish trajectories regarding the "free jazz" of the 1960s. Lennie Tristano and Charles Mingus were working outside the structures of the popular song already in the 1950s. Dolphy's

musical vision is notable for his not necessarily distinguishing between bebop and these other styles. Instead of ossifying various types of musical thinking into mutually exclusive camps, he saw a holistic aesthetic universe that traversed bop, new music, classical music, and other influences.

Dolphy performed and recorded with Ornette Coleman, George Russell, his own groups (including one co-led by Booker Little), John Coltrane, and others in the period that followed. In fact, according to Simosko and Tepperman (1996: 22), Dolphy "seems to have played with nearly every jazz musician in sight." Dolphy was also active in the fields of Third Stream and experimental concert music. In addition to working with Gunther Schuller on several occasions, he performed Varèse's difficult solo flute piece *Density 21.5* at a 1962 new music festival which featured composers and performers such as John Cage, Luciano Berio, and Cathy Berberian (ibid: 68). Schuller notes Dolphy's catholic taste in music:

> Eric was one of those rare musicians who loved and wanted to understand all music. His musical appetite was voracious, yet discriminating. It extended from jazz to the "classical" avant-garde and included, as well, an appreciation of his older jazz colleagues and predecessors. He was as interested in the complex surfaces of Xenakis, the quaint chaos of Ives, or the serial intricacies of Babbitt as in the soulful expressiveness of a Coleman Hawkins, the forceful "messages" of Charles Mingus, of the experiments of the "new thing." (Anonymous 1964a)

Dolphy's interest in the bass clarinet may well have issued from its legacy as an index of modernism: a large part of Dolphy's musical thinking had to do with instrumental colors and he innovated the use of the flute and bass clarinet in jazz. The bass clarinet appeared in the European repertoire as a result of the growing orchestra and interest in new tone-colors that emerged with Wagner's influence. Mahler and Strauss used it to advantage, but it did not come to the fore until Schoenberg used it in "Pierrot Lunaire," the avant-garde work *par excellence*.

Dolphy was also interested in African and East Indian musics, mentioning "the singing of pygmies" and Ravi Shankar as influences:

> I've talked with Ravi Shankar and I see how we can incorporate their ideas . . . they call it Raga or scale and they'll play on one for twenty minutes . . . it's a challenge to play a long time on just one or two chords. (Quoted in Simosko and Tepperman 1996: 12–13)

The sounds of nature were yet another influence on Dolphy:

> At home [in California] I used to play, and the birds always used to whistle with me. I would stop what I was working on and play with the birds . . . Birds have notes in between our notes – you try to imitate something they do and like, maybe it's between F and F#, and you'll have to go up or come down on the pitch. It's really something! And so, when you get playing, this comes. You try to do some things on it. (D. De Micheal 1962: 21)

Dolphy connected his various influences, saying: "Indian music has something of the same quality – different scales and quarter tones. I don't know how you label it, but it's pretty" (ibid).

Dolphy's musical background, then, included schooling in Western classical music, a strong influence of Charlie Parker, involvement in so-called "free jazz" activity in experimental concert music, and a fascination with non-Western traditions. As Dolphy put it, "Everything affects you. Every musician I've ever heard has influenced me" (Simosko and Tepperman 1996: 12).

Conclusion

Close-mindedness manifests itself not only in the bifurcation of black versus white, but also in jazz versus "classical," and bebop versus freely improvised music. In spite of Wynton Marsalis's attacks on bold musical ideas such as those forged by Miles Davis and the AACM, jazz consciousness has consistently surpassed stylistic and racial pigeon-holing. Saxophonist Greg Osby and trumpeter Lester Bowie took Wynton Marsalis to task for his attempts to police the music in a *Downbeat* interview. They point out that there is nothing new about jazz musicians playing European classical music, but that black musicians have traditionally approached classical music from a holistic perspective, combining it with African-American vernacular traditions. They suggest that, if Marsalis were to meld his classical and jazz selves, if he brought his expertise as an improviser to bear on his mastery of the Baroque repertoire, he would be innovating in the tradition of Ellington and Mingus (K. Whitehead 1993). Reed player and composer Anthony Braxton believes that, as survivors of slavery, African Americans have a special place in the world. He argues that black music can liberate all people from the shackles of close-mindedness, that "trans-African creativity" is a way to humanize the world (A. Braxton 1985; G. Lock 1988, 1999; R. Radano 1993: 329–53, 231). Du Bois agreed that African Americans have "a contribution to make to civilization and humanity, which no other race can make" (W. Du Bois 2000c). Jazz consciousness is central to this contribution.

Notes

1 I was born in Finland but raised in the US, and supplement my academic career with jazz composing and performing (on bass clarinet).
2 I developed the notion of jazz consciousness through many conversations with Katherine Brucher and Scott Currie, who deserve much of the credit for any insights that might be offered here (see K. Brucher 1999).
3 I borrowed this turn of phrase, which riffs on the jazz standard entitled "What is this Thing Called Love?" from the title of Eric Porter's insightful study of jazz musicians as critics (E. Porter 2002).
4 Reception is the final arbiter of composers' strategic invocation of musical categories: audiences either accept or reject new genres when they are proposed by music-makers. I have

previously shown that Dominican bandleaders have repeatedly attempted to sell their stylistic innovations as new genres but were unsuccessful: the time-tested category of *merengue* had a momentum whose cultural usefulness as a national symbol overshadowed bandleaders' claims to innovating new genres (P. Austerlitz 1997).

5 Similarly, Donald Grout's standard European music history text, *A History of Western Music* (1996), treats popular and dance forms in diminishing perspective as the book moves forward in time: while these are included in the sections on medieval and Renaissance music, they are minimized or absent in the coverage of later periods.

6 Eric Hobsbawm (1990: 14–18) points out that the "proper and original" meaning of the word did not allude to bounded territories or sovereignty.

7 This discussion of nationalism calls upon my previous work on this subject (P. Austerlitz 1997, 2000).

8 This is from an oration that Duke Ellington made as part of his composition *My People*: "My people! Working, building America into the most powerful nation in the world. The foundation of the United States rests on the sweat of my people" (quoted in G. Lock 1999: 115).

9 My perspectives here owe much to insights gleaned from an illuminating anthology of black views of whiteness edited by David Roediger (1993).

10 Charles Keil (1985) has done important work in elucidating this paradigm, applying it to social class as well as race. Esther Jackson (2000: 72) points out that Keil's thinking on this matter was strongly influenced by Amiri Baraka.

B What Does It Mean to Be a Problem?

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Afro-American Studies and the Rise of African-American Philosophy

Paget Henry

The academic discipline of Black or Afro-American Studies emerged in the 1960s out of the stormy protests and the taking over of buildings on predominantly White campuses across America that marked the Civil Rights era. However, this is not to suggest that the subsequent academic recognition marked the beginning of Black intellectual life. On the contrary, it was the prior existence of an Afro-American intellectual tradition with roots in predominantly Black colleges and universities that made possible this new discipline on predominantly White campuses. I remember well the rise of this new discipline. At the time, I was a student at City College, newly arrived from the Caribbean island of Antigua. Since the heady days of those beginnings, the discipline has gone through many changes in its internal structure and its mode of institutionalization in the White academy. It has experienced major paradigm shifts, and on many campuses former programs have been transformed into departments conferring bachelors, masters, and in a small number of cases doctoral degrees.

These institutional changes underscore the anomalous and in-between nature of the social conditions under which Afro-Americans are being educated. These conditions require a straddling of that profound racial dualism that still marks all the institutions of American society. Afro-Americans are being educated with one foot firmly planted in the Black colleges of the formerly segregated South and with a toehold – Afro-American Studies – in White academia. The present inability to normalize this academic situation is a major indicator of ways in which race continues to shape the structure of American society.

Hanging by this toehold, Afro-American Studies experienced some major theoretical developments and paradigm shifts in the decades following its establishment. As an interdisciplinary field, work in Afro-American Studies was strongly influenced by trends in the humanities and the social sciences. Thus, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the field was strongly influenced by the works of sociologists such as Joyce Ladner, Robert Blauner, Nathan Hare, and Robert Staples, as well as by a number of prominent historians such as August Meier, C. L. R. James, John Bracey, and Lerone Bennett. Consequently, there were definite convergences between developments in these three fields. The decade of the 1980s saw a major paradigm shift in the field. The spectacular growth of Afro-American fiction and its criticism pushed many Afro-American Studies programs and departments in the direction of the humanities. The works of Houston Baker, Henry Louis Gates, Toni Morrison, and Wahneema Lubiano all make clear this linguistic turn in Afro-American Studies.

The decade of the 1990s witnessed yet another important disciplinary shift in the field of Afro-American Studies, which by this time was now being called African-American Studies. This shift was the rise of African-American philosophy. It has not displaced literature, history, or sociology, but it has certainly established a presence for itself in the field that was not there before. The figures of Cornel West, Lewis Gordon, Anthony Appiah, Lucius Outlaw, Howard McGary, Charles Mills, and others are indicative of this new philosophical presence. My primary concern in this chapter is to examine some of the academic noise that has accompanied this late arrival of African-American philosophy to African-American Studies and to White departments of philosophy.

The Disappearance and Reappearance of African-American Philosophy

As in the case of the larger Black intellectual tradition, recent White academic recognition of African-American philosophy should not be seen as the event that marks the beginning of this philosophical tradition. Indeed, it was the prior existence of such a tradition that has made current developments possible. Consequently, any adequate understanding of this comparatively late arrival of African-American philosophy must take into account the politico-discursive strategies by which it was first made to disappear from White academia.

The disappearance of the African-American intellectual tradition – including its philosophy – occurred in the course of its incorporation into the Euro-American imperial epistemic order that was an integral part of the larger hegemonic cultural system that legitimated colonization and African slavery. This epistemic order was racist in that it rested on principles of White supremacy. Thus, irrespective of the intrinsic merit of texts, the epistemic value and recognition given to them had to be racially determined. Consequently, White discourses and authors – whether religious, literary, sociological, or philosophical – neces-

sarily accumulated recognition, truth value, authority, and canonicity at much faster rates than Black discourses and authors. Particularly in the earlier phases of this racist epistemic order, epistemic accumulation by White discourses and authors had to simultaneously produce epistemic disaccumulation for Black discourses and authors. In other words, it was a knowledge-producing regime with inverse patterns of epistemic accumulation that pitted Black religion against White religion, Black literature against White literature, and Black philosophy against White philosophy. It was beneath the wheels of this racialized system of epistemic accumulation and disaccumulation that the epistemic capital of the Black intellectual tradition – along with its philosophy – reached the zero point and disappeared.[1] Reappearance would have to await the emergence of racial patterns of epistemic accumulation that were less inverse.

These adjustments in the inverse relations between Black and White patterns of accumulation are indicators of changes in the epistemic compromises that were hammered out over time. The history of these compromises can be divided into four basic phases. However, the nature of these compromises cannot be separated from corresponding class/race compromises that were being institutionalized through the state, the law, and the economy.

The first of these I call the European superiority/African slave inferiority compromise. Here the discursive inequality between Blacks and Whites was the greatest. So also was the discursive invisibility produced by a highly inverse pattern of epistemic accumulation, leading to the disappearance of the Black intellectual tradition from White academia. Outside of the walls of this academic community, it was only the musical and performative talents of Africans, though considered inferior to those of Whites, that were often acknowledged. The mythic, religious, genealogical, and other discourses that Africans brought to America were seen as having zero epistemic value. In the case of African philosophy, the divide was even more extreme. The argument was not that it had zero value but that African philosophy did not exist. This was the unique point of maximum invisibility from which African-American philosophy would have to recover its identity.

The second epistemic compromise is the Euro-American superiority/Afro-Christian inferiority regime. This new epistemic order was the result of the Christianization of African thought and identity. This shift brought a slight increase in epistemic recognition but none in the areas of originality, truth value, authority, or canonicity for Black Christians. At the same time, it solidified the emerging phenomenon of "double consciousness," as well as the "superiority" of European religion. The terms of this compromise were such that Black Christianity remained outside of White academia, and the denial of an African philosophical heritage would remain unchanged.

The third is the Euro-American superiority/Black historicist/poeticist compromise which emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century. It was a response to the rise of Black secular discourses coming out of predominantly Black colleges and universities of the post-slavery period. The differential

patterns of Black and White epistemic accumulation associated with this regime can be clearly seen in the life and works of that towering intellectual, W. E. B. Du Bois. One example will suffice. Clearly a founding father of sociology with the 1898 publication of his *The Philadelphia Negro*, Du Bois has still not been recognized as such. The Marx–Weber–Durkheim triumvirate remains, when Durkheim is clearly no match for Du Bois. Like the previous compromises, this one also maintained the prohibition on African-American philosophy, while recognizing African-American literature, music, history, sociology, and religion, but not to the point of admittance into White academia.

The fourth and current epistemic compromise is the Euro-American universalism/Afro-American Studies particularism regime. It emerged in the 1960s as a result of the Civil Rights struggles and student protests mentioned earlier. It has been within the terms and spaces of this compromise that the Black intellectual tradition finally gained access to White academia. However, not all the disciplines of this tradition gained ready acceptance. Those such as history, sociology, and literature that were recognized but not admitted under the third compromise were the first to gain entrance. Not being recognized under the third compromise, African-American philosophy would have to spend some more time fighting its way through the clouds of invisibility produced by its extreme situation of epistemic exclusion in order to finally gain admittance.

African-American Philosophy and the Fourth Epistemic Compromise

The implementing of this fourth compromise can be usefully compared to the implementing of much of American immigration policy. When a new national or cultural group has been granted admittance to the US, it must go through what I've called a race/ethnic ritual of entry. The purpose of the ritual is to denationalize the group and to transform it into a race or an ethnicity with a particular place within the White supremacist race/ethnic order of the US. This rite of passage begins with the social death of the group. As the socially dead, it is stereotypically dehumanized, racialized, and ethnicized and its labor exploited. Before it can experience a social rebirth, it must accept a package of Americanizing cultural surgery that the dominant Anglo-American culture has deemed necessary. The further the entering group is from the Anglo-American norm, the greater the cultural surgery required. With its identity appropriately modified and Anglicized, admittance is granted (P. Henry 2004b).

A very similar process marked the entry of Afro-American Studies into White academia. The immigrants were the various disciplines of the Black intellectual tradition. They had all been through long periods of social death and had fought back to this point of gaining recognition. However, this phase of approaching recognition and rebirth was also the time for the cultural surgery that rids disciplines of their old national loyalties, and remodels them into racial or ethnic

discourses with an American identity. This cultural remolding as an ethnic particular of Euro-American universality was the equivalent of new immigrant groups accepting the results of their American ethnogenesis and their place in the Anglo supremacist ethnic hierarchy of America.

As these Black disciplinary immigrants made their way through the Ellis Island of White academia, it is clear that not all made it through this particular round. Many were stopped and sent back, as their qualifications for entry were rejected. Afro-American philosophy was one of those rejected. Its primary problem was its invisibility to the guardians of the White academy. As hard as they looked, they could not see the immigrant group before them. Leaders of the group announced that they were philosophers, but that only made their visibility problems worse. They further suggested that they were related to the Afro-American historians, literary critics, sociologists, and political scientists that had been admitted ahead of them. That helped a little, but the guardians remained as puzzled as ever, with a look which said: Who are you? We have never heard of you. We have no record of you. You are not in our libraries or our computers. At least we can see the disciplinary evidence for the existence of your relatives. But in your case there is no disciplinary body that we can see for our cultural surgeons with their ethnogenically sharpened knives to remold and Americanize. Until we can do this, we cannot grant you entry.

This particular inability to see Afro-American philosophy I can only explain by the role of rationality, both philosophical and scientific, in the self-conception of European and Euro-American intellectuals. Since the period of the European Enlightenment, rationality has become a prime signifier of Western presentations of self. Rationality, in spite of being the key to the universal, acquired an exclusive color: White. By the logic of racism, reason, and hence the ability to philosophize, had to be a faculty that Blacks lacked. Because of this denial of recognition and entry, Afro-American philosophers spent the 1960s and 1970s working on the visibility of their disciplinary body. They know well Ralph Ellison's "invisible man." Finally visible to the White guardians, they emerged in the 1990s as a very potent force in African-American Studies departments and a number of White philosophy departments.

African-American Philosophy at Brown University

The first time that I took serious note of the absence of African-American philosophy, I was an undergraduate at the City College of City University of New York. Although my primary interests were in sociology, I did pursue a strong interest I had in philosophy ever since my high school days in Antigua. I was in a course that covered Asian philosophy when the absence of African-American and Afro-Caribbean philosophy really came home to me. I can still remember thinking at the time that if they had been available, philosophy would have been a good major for me. The thought passed very quickly, as the struggle before me

was for open admissions at City College, the strengthening of Black Studies, and my interests in sociology.

It would be decades later before I was again confronted with the problem of the absence of African-American philosophy from the White academy. This time it was not as a student but as the director of Afro-American Studies at Brown. With some very helpful coaching from my colleague Rhett Jones, I assumed that position in 1992 and held it until 1999. My plan had been to expand the program within the framework of its existing strengths in history and the arts, while deepening the Pan-African orientation of the program established by the previous chair, Anani Dzidzienyo. But that was not to be. Without being fully aware at the time, it had fallen on me to add a new dimension to Afro-American Studies at Brown: African-American philosophy.

It all began with the students. These were students (both Black and White) who had spent their year or semester abroad in Africa (Ghana or Senegal) and had taken courses in African philosophy at universities in these countries. They returned to Brown excited, profoundly transformed, and eager to pursue further studies in this new discourse they had discovered. In particular, many were interested in finding out how African philosophy related to Afro-American Studies and Western philosophy. Hence, they were in search of courses that would satisfy these interests. I encountered about twenty of these students after they had visited the philosophy department and found their interests falling upon deaf ears. Afro-American Studies was now their last hope. I was struck by the clarity and specificity of their requests. One in particular, Kula T. Jones, made his request with such eloquence and precision, that it became the moment in which I committed myself to this push for an Africana presence in philosophy at Brown. Jones's request was simple and direct. He said, "I want to make a connection with Africa, but it's not happening for me through literature and history. But I can feel it happening through philosophy." I could feel the self-formative impact of this African philosophical awakening. I could see it in his eyes and the new understanding of self toward which he was gesturing. This was the kind of excitement and curiosity that I love to see in students. Kula didn't have to say any more. I was on board even though at that moment I had not a clue as to how I was going to do this.

As these events were gathering momentum, the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America (CSREA) was established in 1988, primarily under the impetus of philosopher John Ladd, historian Rhett Jones, and sociologist Martin Martel. Soon after its formation, the center did two things that would be of great importance for the building of African-American philosophy at Brown. First, under the leadership of John Ladd, the center organized the first major conference of African-American philosophers at Brown.[2] This gathering included Lucius Outlaw, Bernard Boxill, Howard McGary, and Laurence Thomas. Second, the center's colloquium committee invited Lewis Gordon to speak in our colloquium series in 1992 while he was still a graduate student at Yale. I was very impressed with Gordon's talk, in which he presented his interpretation of Sartre's

notions of bad faith and embodied consciousness, after which we had a long conversation on Fanon. These events helped to crystallize for me the rising momentum of African-American philosophy and thus reinforced the legitimacy of my decision to bring that area of research to Brown.

The year before I assumed the chairmanship, we (Afro-American Studies) along with the department of American civilization, had hired Michael Eric Dyson to fill a position in twentieth-century African-American cultural history that had been left vacant with the departure of Wilson Moses. Given the allocation of lines in Afro-American Studies, that clearly would have been the easiest to convert into a philosophy line. Further complicating matters, we had two other lines in history that had to be filled. Clearly, these would have to be taken care of before undertaking this expansion into the new terrain of African-American philosophy. I briefed the students on this administrative side of things, and I also let them know that I was as committed as they were to African and African-American philosophy. As many of these students were juniors and seniors, this meant that they would graduate before seeing these changes. For two of them, Kula Jones and Sheryl Sinclair, I did the best I could at the time: I supervised their senior theses, both of which focused centrally on African philosophical thought.

As expeditiously as I could, I filled the first history position, which brought us Nancy Jacobs, an environmental historian of Southern Africa. I then set in motion the plans for the second hire, which would bring James Campbell, a specialist in twentieth-century African-American history and Southern African history, to the program. Soon thereafter, I approached the dean of faculty (Brian Shepp) and president (Vartan Gregorian) with my philosophy proposal. It did not get a positive response. Gregorian had his sights set on David Levering Lewis, the Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, and the attempt to recruit him eclipsed all other suggestions. In the midst of this effort to get Lewis, Michael Dyson received a series of outside offers the best of which Brown was not able to match. I was sorry to see Michael go, for he had brought a lot of dynamism to the program, and he had been a strong supporter of the push for Afro-American philosophy. Michael's departure, however, opened up the line in which I could hire a specialist in African-American philosophy. Of course, I was not able to secure permission to fill this line while the drive to recruit Lewis was on. It ended, of course, when he decided to stay at Rutgers. My moment had arrived.

I already had the perfect candidate in mind and had circulated his *vita*, which generated lots of excitement in Afro-American Studies. He was, of course, Lewis Gordon, who, as I have already mentioned, had presented a paper at the CSREA a few years earlier while a graduate student at Yale. He was a faculty member in the philosophy department and African-American Studies program at Purdue University who had achieved tenure and promotion within two and a half years of receiving his doctorate in philosophy from Yale University. Although he was happy at Purdue University, his family did not like living in Indiana and he seemed moveable. So, I approached both Shepp and Gregorian, who were now immediately on board. Both were very impressed with the achievements of the

youthful Lewis Gordon. At this time Gordon was just three years out of graduate school and had already written two published books, *Bad Faith and Antiblack Racism* and *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man*. With these texts in hand, Gordon's *vita*, several of his essays, and half a line for them, I approached the philosophy department confident that I had an offer which would really excite them. This was my biggest miscalculation in this entire effort to establish African-American philosophy at Brown.

Without the benefit of any additional discussions or consultations, the offer to join Afro-American Studies in hiring Lewis Gordon was rejected with absolute finality. The Ellis Island guardians and cultural surgeons of White academia at Brown were still having trouble seeing the philosophical contributions of African Americans. The chair of the philosophy department, James Van Cleve, who at the time had no single-authored book of his own, simply tore off the end of an envelope and wrote without explanation that Gordon's work was unacceptable and that existentialism was not one of the department's areas of interest. With this rejection of an unrecognizable alien, an iron curtain had come down between the philosophy department and Afro-American Studies. I had worked on joint searches with sociology, literature, and American civilization departments and have never encountered such a slamming of the White academic door by its guardians and cultural surgeons. I was immediately thrown back to my undergraduate days and our struggle for open admissions. The shock and anger of those heady times returned with an intensity I had not felt in years. I was particularly struck by the philosophy department's (or at least the chair's) lack of interest in what we were doing or in the concerns of the students. Difficult as things had been in White sociology departments, this was worse. The caste-like intensity of the rejection and the finality of the closure signaled a level of hostility and epistemic resistance that I had not encountered in any of the sociology departments with which I had extensive contact. It was then I realized that the various departmental toeholds through which African Americans have pushed their way into White academia varied significantly in terms of the epistemic and institutional spaces they provided. Something was particularly rotten in the kingdom of White academic philosophy, and I had encountered it that day, as I felt someone had definitely stepped on my toe which I had placed in what I thought was the philosophical toehold.

Angry and more determined, I approached both the dean and the president, who were both surprised at the response of the philosophy department. Because we were then still a program, we could only make tenure-track offers in conjunction with an established department. Consequently, we had a problem on our hands. Aware of the strong interest that the religious studies department had in existentialism, I suggested that we approach them. There was instant agreement on that. Dean Shepp made the initial contact and I followed through with Gordon's *vita* and publications. The response was so different from that of the philosophy department. I not only met with the chair and other members of the department, but there was also real excitement around Gordon's work. The

religious studies department suggested that we also look at other candidates that they were interested in who could also teach African-American philosophy. We agreed on two additional candidates. All three came to Brown, gave colloquia, and were thoroughly interviewed. At the end of it all, Gordon was hired with great feelings of satisfaction. I can still remember the responses of Shepp and Gregorian when I informed them that Gordon was on board. It marked a big change in my relationship as chair with the administration.

With Gordon on our faculty, we immediately began setting up the philosophical dimensions of the program that the students wanted. Gordon opened with two courses, one on poststructuralism and liberation thought and the other on contemporary African philosophy. He then added a course on Black existentialism and a course on African-American religious thought, and eventually a course on African-American philosophy. Finding that many Brown students in philosophy were not receiving training in the European and American canon that was receiving critique in Africana philosophy, Gordon also taught a volunteer course for students wishing to gain that background. Those courses focused on the thought of G. W. F. Hegel, Karl Marx, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Edmund Husserl. Later, I would add a course on Afro-Caribbean philosophy, giving students the option of exploring the full range of the Black experience through philosophy, in addition to literature, history, and theatre. With the later hiring of Anthony Bogues (specializing in Africana political thought) and Joy James (in Black feminist thought), this philosophical grouping was incorporated into a larger theory component that focused on Africana thought. As a result, the department now has a tripartite structure: history, theory, and the arts.

Working with Gordon, I soon got to know a lot more about the racialized spaces that White philosophy departments have been offering African Americans. These toeholds are not open academic spaces for the cultivating of African-American reason. On the contrary, they are racially marked spaces in which the life of reason cannot be separated from the constant negotiating or redeeming of racialized epistemic claims. From Gordon I learned of the large number of Africans and African Americans with PhDs in philosophy who were in departments of religion. These numbers took on special significance once I realized that I had unknowingly contributed to them. Thus, when I read Charles Mill's description of philosophy as being both demographically and conceptually "one of the 'whitest' of the humanities" (C. Mills 1997: 2), there was a definite echo. This was a difficult realization for me as I've always loved philosophy, practiced the life of reason, and identified very strongly with its liberatory potential. But here was that racist logic that Frantz Fanon recognized by which reason had to exit the room as soon as a Black walked in.

As it turned out, Brown philosophy department's chairperson was not truthful about an absence of interest in existentialism. The Brown department hired Bernard Reginster, a White philosopher who received his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Pennsylvania a year earlier than Gordon had received his degree, to teach existentialism. Suffice it to say that Reginster does not have the

international renown that Gordon has in existentialism. After joining Brown in 1996, Gordon by 1997 produced a volume of additional work that included twenty essays, two anthologies (*Fanon: A Critical Reader* and *Existence in Black*), an award-winning book (*Her Majesty's Other Children*), and edited the existentialism section of *The Edinburgh Encyclopedia of Continental Philosophy*. He also organized numerous conferences and symposia. His work, as well, has been widely used in Africana Studies, philosophy, religion, sociology, and literature courses internationally, and symposia and conferences in philosophy and African-American Studies, as well as journal articles, websites, and masters theses, began to emerge on his work. The result was his being put up for tenure and promotion by Religious Studies and Afro-American Studies with statements from his courtesy appointment in Modern Culture and Media. We left the rank open when we solicited referees, who consisted of 17 of the most influential scholars in philosophy, Black Studies, religious thought, literary theory, and political thought from institutions that included Harvard, Stanford, Yale, the University of Chicago, the University of the West Indies, the University of California at Santa Cruz, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Columbia University, Boston University, and Vanderbilt University. Gordon's publications and referee reports were so massive that we had to use wheelbarrows to take them into University Hall to be reviewed by Brown's tenure and promotions committee. The referee reports had unanimous recommendations for Gordon's promotion to full professor, and such was his achievement at Brown University in April 1998. I mention all this to illustrate the gravity of the contrast. The more acceptable candidate for the philosophy department has since produced a few articles on Nietzsche and gained a Harvard University Press contract for his dissertation, which had not come to print by the time of the composition of this chapter. Still, with that record, his performance was endorsed by the philosophy department and he was tenured at Brown in 2002. The matter of his reputation as a scholar in philosophy, especially in the area of existentialism, remains without distinction.

Returning to 1996, I had to do something. It was imperative. The 1990s were not the time for the confrontational politics of the 1960s. Instead, I disengaged from sociology for about four years and joined this group of African-American philosophers who were so boldly speaking Black reason to White philosophy, and to other Black scholars in Afro-American Studies. For me, it has been an absolutely wonderful experience – reinvigorating and very stimulating. It was certainly a major part of the experience out of which *Caliban's Reason* came. This work in Afro-Caribbean philosophy was written in solidarity with African-American philosophers, and represented the strongest contribution that I could make to their efforts to move beyond the toeholds conceded by White academia and to transform them into secure beachheads. I cannot say in great detail exactly what the rites of passage for African-American philosophy have been at other institutions, but I am sure that comparisons will disclose very revealing parallels.

African-American Philosophy in White Academia

The last two decades have been a very important period of self-examination and self-projection for African-American philosophers, at both predominantly White and predominantly Black colleges and universities. This growth is a direct result of the less offensive terms of the Euro-American Universalism/African-American Particularism epistemic compromise ushered in by the Civil Rights struggles. This new epistemic regime brought African-American philosophy greater visibility and space inside both Black and White academies. Consequently, this long-excluded discourse now had academic options it did not have before. It had finally acquired a body that was just barely visible to White academia. This expanded access to academic space provided African-American philosophers with both new opportunities and new challenges. It increased African-American time for philosophical reflection and also the opportunities for making careers out of this practice. With regard to the challenges, there have been several discourse-specific issues, such as the politics of doing African-American philosophy, sorting out the identity of the field, and specifying its thematic concerns, its distinct epistemic practices, and textual strategies. It's the creative responses of African-American philosophers to this set of opportunities and challenges that have been responsible for the impressive growth of this field over the past two decades. Let us take a closer look at each of these challenges.

The Politics of Doing African-American Philosophy

Given the racial nature of the rites of passage that marked its entry and its peculiar stretching between the legacies of segregation and liberal academic racism, doing African-American philosophy has of necessity to include a political practice. Like other African-American discourses that have been admitted, African-American philosophy embodies in its every fiber the politico-racial history of America. To reflect on its history of invisibility is to reflect on this history of racial domination. To assert itself is to challenge its institutional location and racial confinement. How is the African-American philosopher to negotiate his/her way through these spaces? Does one ignore or make explicit the racial markings on the face of academic reason?

It should come as no surprise that the explicit thematizing of these racial markings has been an integral part of the works of African-American philosophers. Cornel West poses the question very directly: "What does it mean to be a philosopher of African descent in the American empire?" (C. West 2001: 356). For West, this imperial context frames a doctrine of White supremacy. The direct challenging of this doctrine is as much a frame of West's philosophy as taking it for granted has been for many Euro-American philosophers.

Equally significant is Lewis Gordon's concern with "White normativity" that presents itself as objectivity and neutrality in philosophy departments. His

response has been to call for and to practice a "teleological suspension of philosophy" (i.e., Western philosophy) in order to be able to see and do African-American philosophy on its own terms (L. Gordon 2003b: 118). Only with such a suspending of White hegemonic conceptions of philosophy will it be possible to introduce a new conception in which the African-American and Euro-American traditions come together on equitable terms.

George Yancy is even more explicit. For him, White academia is an "intellectual war zone" (G. Yancy 2001: 4). He describes his book *Cornel West: A Critical Reader* as "a political act" (ibid: 5). It "is a book engaged in textual and existential combat" (ibid: 4). He warns African-American philosophers against being "co-opted by White strategies of inertial compartmentalization" and suggests that they "utilize White spaces within the academy without becoming a prisoner to these spaces" (ibid: 5). Thus, like West and Gordon, there are very definite epistemic politics to Yancy's philosophy.

In the work of Charles Mills, which I've already mentioned, textual production is inseparable from explicitly engaging the White supremacist norms and practices of academic philosophy. Thus, in *The Racial Contract* (1997), Mills is not only examining the White supremacist norms and practices that have shaped the political systems of the West. He is also exposing and challenging the racist assumptions of the social contract tradition of political theorizing.

In short, whether it is framed in the language of American empire, the teleological suspension of philosophy, intellectual combat, or the Whiteness of philosophy, there has been a very explicit political subtext to the practice of African-American philosophy. This subtext is the self-reflection of African-American philosophy on the racial production of its long period of invisibility and exclusion.

The Identity of African-American Philosophy

By its very nature, African-American philosophy is a hybrid or creole discourse in which elements from the African, European, and American philosophical traditions have come together to form something new and distinct. However, given the historic conflicts between these national identities, bringing them together in the case of African-American philosophy has been quite difficult. In particular, the invisibility problems of the African heritage have made it almost impossible to keep its contributions in the picture. Indeed, the same binary opposition between Black and American (the latter conceived as White) that Du Bois saw as the source of African-American double consciousness is reproduced here as a conflict over the American or the Africana identity of African-American philosophy. The semiotic markings of these two identities have made this an either/or conflict. The American reading of African-American philosophy grounds this identity in historical connections and thematic convergences with the American pragmatist tradition. The works of Cornel West,

Johnny Washington, Eddie Glaude, George Yancy, and Harvey Cormier are good examples of this American approach. Although not himself a pragmatist, Leonard Harris's work on Alain Locke is also important for this pragmatist response to the identity issue. The Africana reading of the identity of African-American philosophy is similarly grounded in historical connections and thematic convergences with the African and African diasporic traditions of thought. The works of Lucius Outlaw, Molefi Asante, Maulana Karenga, and Lewis Gordon are good examples of this response to the identity issue.

Cornel West is by far the leading proponent of a pragmatic turn for African-American philosophy. He reconstructs pragmatism and Afro-American Christianity by bringing them into critical engagements with each other and with a Gramscian Marxism. The result is West's position of prophetic pragmatism, which he has presented as one of the contemporary culminating points of this well-known American philosophy (C. West 1982). In addition to giving African-American philosophy an American identity, West sees prophetic pragmatism as an ethically and religiously grounded discourse that understands philosophy as cultural criticism in the interest of individual and democratic development. Like its predecessors, prophetic pragmatism is anti-realist in its ontology, anti-foundationalist in its epistemology, and anti-transcendental in its theory of the subject. Because of its ethical foundations and its commitments to individual and democratic development, prophetic pragmatism is also a philosophy with a definite praxis.

The major problem with this American approach to the identity of African-American philosophy is that its semiotics reproduces much of the earlier invisibility and exclusion of the African heritage. Particularly under-represented is the secular Black intellectual tradition. It functions as an absent signifier that cannot be made fully present. Consequently, there is not a systematic place for it, only references to specific individuals. Thus its existence as a whole and its more theoretical contributions do not figure prominently in West's account of the public identity of African-American philosophy. Indeed, he is quite explicit in his rejection of an African model for African-American philosophy: "While it might be possible to articulate a competing Afro-American philosophy based on African norms and notions , it is likely that the results will be theoretically thin" (ibid: 24). Hence the strong American identity of West's version of African-American philosophy.

The under-representation of Africa and the larger Black intellectual tradition has been the basis for the objections of those pushing for an Africana reading of African-American philosophy. In a very skillfully argued essay, Lewis Gordon points to the absence of what he calls "the unacknowledged fourth tradition" (L. Gordon 2001b: 38). At one point in his essay, Gordon expresses the concern that in West's view, "African-American thinkers seem not to have contributed to African-American thought" (ibid: 47). A similar subtext informs Lucius Outlaw's (2001) critical response to West's reading of Du Bois. Whereas Gordon is concerned about the position of the Black intellectual tradition, Outlaw is concerned

with the position of Du Bois in West's thought in comparison to European thinkers such as Anton Chekhov and Fyodor Dostoyevsky. Even before Outlaw, another African-American philosopher, Robert Gooding-Williams, had already raised strong objections to West's pragmatist reading of Du Bois (R. Gooding-Williams 1991–2).

Gordon and Outlaw, unlike West, clearly do not think that an African-American philosophy based on African norms and notions would be theoretically thin. Indeed, it is a theoretically rich, African-inflected account of African-American philosophy that they have attempted to establish through their Africana readings. In these readings, it is the Black intellectual tradition as a whole, and not just Afro-American Christianity, that becomes the foundation for the new identity of African-American philosophy within the framework of the current epistemic compromise. In other (Gordon's) words, the Africana approach rests on the acknowledging and centering of the unacknowledged fourth tradition. Centered in this way, the academic space recently conceded will be filled with the theoretical insights of this tradition; the political, ontological, epistemological, ethical, existential, and other positions that it had to assume in order to generate the epistemic legacy it has bequeathed this generation of African-American philosophers. In the Africana reading, figures like Anna Julia Cooper, Du Bois, Frederick Douglass, Alain Locke, C. L. R. James, Frantz Fanon, Sylvia Wynter, and others assume much greater prominence. It is their theoretical insights and implicit and explicit philosophical positions that have become the central focus of academic thematization.

It should come as no surprise that in Outlaw, Gordon, Asante, Robert Birt, and others who take the Africana approach, the pragmatist engagements of West are replaced by engagements with traditional African philosophy and African diasporic thought. It is from the central positions and key figures of this tradition that engagements with other traditions are made. In other words, they are the central points and primary channels through which philosophical ideas flow outward as well as inward. For Gordon, "Africana philosophy, especially in its African-American variety, has continued Du Bois's, Locke's, Fanon's, and James's legacy through works that are beginning to have an impact outside of Africana philosophy" (L. Gordon 2000b: 5).

It is important to note, however, that there are significant differences between these philosophers regarding the specific nature of the Africana identity in which African-American philosophy is rooted. In the case of Asante, the Africana identity is an Egypt-centered one which rests on the still-controversial hypothesis of the Egyptian origins of African culture and philosophy. This position is strongly associated with the work of the African scholar Cheikh Anta Diop. Particularly important for this conception of Africana philosophy is his influential essay, "Does an African Philosophy Exist?" (C. Diop 1991). Also important in this regard is Theophile Obenga's essay, "The African Origins of Philosophy" (T. Obenga 1992: 51–101). In contrast to this, the Africana identity that we find in Gordon and Outlaw is constructed around philosophical, anthropological, and

historical accounts of the cultures of West and Central Africa, the regions from which most African Americans came.[3] These accounts tend to view these as original and distinct cultures even though there is evidence for a lot of mutual influencing. In spite of this difference over the centrality of Egyptian civilization, both groups share the central positioning of this African and African diasporic tradition of thought for the identity of African-American philosophy.

In short, the new opportunities to reflect on the identity of African-American philosophy have so far made more explicit African-American philosophy's own form of double consciousness. This particular philosophical "twoness" manifested here between the "two warring ideals" of a pragmatist and an Africana identity raises an old but still relevant question: Can a philosopher be both Black and American "without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the door of opportunity closed roughly in his face?" (W. Du Bois 1969: 17). Until the intellectual combat and the teleological suspension of Euro-American philosophy leads the latter to an acceptance of its creole future, this double consciousness of African-American philosophy is unlikely to dissolve into a more wholesome unity.

Thematic Concerns: The Visible Body of African-American Philosophy

As noted earlier, the substantial concerns of African-American philosophy cannot be separated from the politics of the field or the identity issues just considered. However, as important as these have been, they do not exhaust the thematic concerns of African-American philosophy. In this central domain of the field, we find a set of more distinctly philosophical issues that are nonetheless connected to the above political and identity issues. At the core of any tradition of philosophy, we often find an ever changing set of schools of thought that contribute to the articulating and legitimating of competing visions of existence. These schools make these contributions by carefully thematizing and critiquing the existential, ethical, ontological, epistemological, and other dimensions of these visions of existence. As such, philosophical discourses help to fashion and analyze particular conceptions of existence, and thus to make explicit the possibilities and constraints in a particular mode of being. Philosophy seldom creates such visions of existence on its own. More often than not these have been produced in conjunction with myth, religion, ideology, and science.

With regard to its core, African-American philosophy is no different. There we find schools of Afro-Christian thought, Afro-Islamic thought, existentialism, pragmatism, logicism, historicism, poeticism, feminism, and other traditions. Within these schools, aspects of competing visions of African-American existence are thematized, and their distinct philosophical dimensions elaborated in detail. We've already seen that the school of African-American pragmatism is currently centered around the work of Cornel West. Similarly, the school of

Africana existentialism is centered around the work of Lewis Gordon. Drawing on the earlier work of W. E. B. Du Bois, Anna Julia Cooper, Frantz Fanon, Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, and William R. Jones, Gordon has developed this discursive space into one of the more clearly defined areas of African-American philosophy. Its influence can be seen on the work of Robert Birt, Clevis Headley, Anthony Bogues, Joy James, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, Patricia Huntington, Marilyn Nissim-Sabat, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Stephen Haymes, B. Anthony Bogues, and Sylvia Wynter, and on my own work.

African-American historicism is one of the older schools of this philosophical tradition that predates the growth stimulated by the current phase of academic recognition. As with African and Afro-Caribbean philosophy, African-American historicism has taken four basic forms: providential, racial, liberal, and Marxist. Providential historicism extends back to Edward Blyden and Alexander Crummell. In the present period, its influence continues in the work of Josiah Young (1992). Racial historicism goes back to Martin Delaney, Frederick Douglass, and Marcus Garvey. In the contemporary period, its echoes can be heard in the works of Lucius Outlaw, Joy James, Rod Bush, and Peniel Joseph. The Marxist stream of African-American historicism has its roots in A. Philip Randolf, Chancellor Owen, Hubert Harrison, Du Bois, C. L. R. James, Angela Y. Davis, James Boggs, and Cedric Robinson. In the contemporary period, the Marxist influence continues in Manning Marable, West, and Gordon.

Pioneering a new field in African-American philosophy has been the work of Bernard Boxill, Howard McGary, Adrian Piper, Bill Lawson, Michele Moody-Adams, and Charles Mills. Together, they have forged a new philosophical space that I have called political logicism. It is a unique blending of the propositional logic of the Anglo-American analytic tradition with more reflective approaches to political philosophy that draw on both Africana and Euro-American traditions of political theory.

Boxill's *Blacks and Social Justice* (1992) is the work that really established this subfield. With the ideal of justice in one hand and the rigor of logic in the other, Boxill boldly entered into the arena of philosophical debates on social justice – in particular, the problems of racial justice that arose with the conservative shift from affirmative action to "color-blind" policies. Boxill produced some carefully crafted criticisms of key conservative positions, rejected the Marxist alternatives, and worked out a very finely honed liberal space between these two positions. Boxill is at his logical best in his engagements with the influential Black conservatives Thomas Sowell, Glenn Loury, Shelby Steele, and Walter Williams on issues such as the market, entrepreneurial values, state intervention, and racial discrimination. Through all his major battles, Boxill consistently asks two questions: Does it offend the moral sense and does it subvert our logic (B. Boxill 1992: 10)? In short, this is a work that holds political institutions to high standards of logical and moral accountability.

The distinctness of this logicist school can be further seen from a comparison with its African counterpart. On the African continent, the Anglo-American

analytic tradition has been linked primarily to the problem of the philosophical status of traditional African thought. This can easily be seen from the works of philosophers like Kwasi Wiredu, Kwame Gyekye, Segun Gbadegesin, and Godwin Sagolo. What is striking about this body of work from the African-American analytical perspective is the virtual absence of the use of the logical scalpel to cut through issues of race. The major exception here would be K. Anthony Appiah, who has been a major bridge figure between these two Africana analytical traditions.

The last school I will mention here is that of African-American poeticism. Like African-American historicism, this is one of the older schools that also predates the rise of the current epistemic compromise. Its roots extend all the way back to Jupiter Hammond, Phillis Wheatley, and Paul Lawrence Dunbar, and continue through Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson, Claude McKay, Zora Neale Hurston, and Du Bois, right down to Toni Morrison. Among contemporary African-American philosophers, this poeticist tradition has its strongest echoes in the works of West and Gordon. In Du Bois, we have a highly original synthesis of the Afro-Christian, poeticist, and historicist schools of the tradition.

Given this complex mosaic of divergent schools of thought, we should not be surprised to discover that there have been some crucial lines along which there are extended histories of debate. Nor should we be surprised that new ones are emerging that are likely to shape the debates of the future. These lines of cleavage are important as they are vital keys to current trends in the field, to areas of growth as well as decline.

In spite of the differences between the various schools of African-American philosophy, one issue they all address thematically, and not just politically, is race. Whether it is prophetic pragmatism, political logicism, Africana existentialism, or providential or racial historicism, they all take up thematically the issue of race. As the nature of scientific knowledge runs through all schools of positivism, and the nature of spirit through schools of idealism, so the nature of racist practices and discourses runs through all the schools of African-American philosophy. This is one of the distinctive marks of this tradition of philosophy.

Surprisingly, this thematic centrality of race is there even among the political logicists. Here, the usual analytic concerns with the logical structure of arguments and conditions for producing true statements have been pursued in a theoretical context that is inextricably linked to the critique of the racial dimensions of the modern state and its legitimating discourses. Thus, Howard McGary's *Race and Social Justice* is a sustained critique of the racism of the liberal American state through engagements around such issues as affirmative action, racial integration, racial separation, and proposals for reparations. Like Boxill's critique of the American conservative state, the philosophical weapon of choice is the logical scalpel, while McGary's major goal is to contribute to the larger effort for better political leadership and more just structures of governance.

The classic text of this tradition is now, however, Charles Mills's *The Racial Contract*. Elegantly argued and clearly written, Mills uses his logical scalpel with

pinpoint accuracy on the racist underpinnings of Western social contract theory. The combination of the analytic and political traditions in philosophy around the issue of race is a novel formation and constitutes the trademark of this school. It also hints at a possible methodological debate with the Africana existentialists over the epistemic status of both logical and phenomenological approaches to race. In short, across the schools of African-American philosophy, we find thematic treatments of race. We also find similar treatments of class, gender, and sexual orientation, but certainly not with the consistency that marks the case of race.

In addition to the theme of race, the growth of African-American philosophy has also been driven by disagreements over issues such as the relationship between race and class or race and gender. Indeed, current and future growth are likely to stem from disagreements along some of the new lines of exchange that have been introduced by the more recent schools of thought, particularly those of Africana existentialism, political logicism, and prophetic pragmatism. For example, between prophetic pragmatism on the one hand, and political logicism and Africana existentialism on the other, I see a very productive tension arising around the goal of doing philosophy. Is it the production of knowledge, the production of self, or both? In other words, how do we approach the relationship between being and thought?

For West, the goal of philosophy is clearly the production of selfhood. Thus he comes down very clearly on the side of being. West writes: “My fundamental aim as an intellectual is to create a distinctive presence as voice and body in order to be seen, heard and felt in the cacophony of past and present voices in the grand dialogue of humankind” (C. West 2001: 347). In other words, West links philosophical activity to the production of existential agency and political insurgency. However, he formulates this emphasis on existential and political agency in ways that bring him into sharp conflict with the interest in knowledge production of philosophers like Mills, McGary, and Gordon.

The key difference here is just how important is the making of valid arguments in support of existential and political positions? West tends to downplay the importance of truth oriented arguments, seeing their production as academic rather than intellectual work. This opens the way for his improvisational style that supplements and sometimes takes the place of arguments. The great intellectuals and philosophers for West are those who have wrestled with the problem of existence and have come away with what Foucault has called “technologies of self-production” (M. Foucault 1997: 223) that enhance agency and comfort the soul, rather than systems of truth that comfort the mind and enhance the agency of reason.

The tensions this position creates for the political logicists are very evident in Mills’s confrontation with West’s improvisational style. West is always making moves that shock Mills’s logical sensibilities and expectations. For example, Mills observes with surprise that “West refers to race all the time, but rarely analyzes it in depth” (C. Mills 2001: 215). Mills also finds West’s insistence that there should be no such thing as a prophetic pragmatic movement in spite of prophetic

pragmatism's activist orientation a "puzzling" injunction (ibid: 194). But most puzzling of all to Mills is the internal unity (or lack thereof) between Marxism, Christianity, and pragmatism in West's synthesis. For Mills's finely honed logical sensibilities, the attempt at synthesis immediately raises issues of "intertheoretical inconsistencies" (ibid: 206). The central thrust of his critique is to show that these inconsistencies were not sufficiently ironed out by West to meet criteria of logical argumentation. West's existential/improvisational logic that is oriented toward self-production collides head on with Mills's propositional logic that is oriented toward the production of formally true statements. Mills compares West's synthesis to Marx's synthesis of British political economy, French socialism, and German idealism to emphasize the posited rather than the systematically worked out nature of the former. This is precisely the academic aspect that West often downplays in the interest of an ethically motivated production of presence, agency, and selfhood. As a result, the deeper unity of West's thought, if it exists, remains hidden and unthematized. If he has found a post-Marxian, post-dialectical mode of constructing syntheses, he is not revealing the secret, very much to the chagrin of Mills.

This opposition between being and thought plays itself out quite differently in relation to Africana existentialism. Unlike Mills, Gordon and West share a strong existential orientation, even though in the case of West it is not always an explicit part of his synthesis. Consequently, the concerns over presence, agency, and selfhood are shared ones. However, Gordon does not set his existential orientation in the same binary oppositional relation to academic knowledge production as West. Gordon's existentialism is formulated with academic rigor and theoretical sophistication. However, unlike Mills, this theoretical rigor comes not from logic alone, but from phenomenology. The latter functions for Gordon as a formal theory of the process of radical self-reflection through which existential knowledge and agency are produced on the one hand, and a critique of methodologies, including the formalism of logic itself, is produced on the other. This phenomenological aspect of Gordon's work points to an important difference in his conception of the subject from West's. In contrast to West's detranscendentalized subject, Gordon's subject has a definite transcendental dimension to it. Consequently, he resists West's (2001) call for "the elimination of mind itself as a sphere of inquiry" and includes under the rubric of phenomenology self-reflection on the production of both knowledge and existential agency. Being and thought are thus brought into a more supplementary relationship. Thus, when Gordon points to "the more *de jure* than *de facto*" nature of West's synthesis, this critical comment is coming from his phenomenological rather than his logical sensibilities. Elsewhere, I've described Gordon as one of the most consistent phenomenologists around (P. Henry 2000a, 2000–2001; cf. Nissim-Sabat 1997). It is this consistency that sets his standards for the rigorous production of philosophical knowledge.

This transcendental/phenomenological dimension of Gordon's work has created productive lines of exchange not only with West and other pragmatists,

but also with the political logicists. Like West, the political logicists operate with a detranscendentalized subject. However, in their case, that has not resulted in a turn to cultural criticism, but to the propositional logic. This logic gives access to an object-oriented universalism, while phenomenology gives access to a subject-oriented universalism. Thus, when these two universalisms have engaged each other, it has also been a rather intensive clash. This is clearly evident in Charles Mills's American Philosophical Association author-meets-critics review of Gordon's *Existentia Africana*, and Bernard Boxill's review of my *Caliban's Reason*. Mills organizes his review of Gordon's book around the issue of the "specific features" or the identity of African-American philosophy. As noted earlier, the Africana identity that Gordon gives to African-American philosophy is existentially and not logically derived. It is based on the constitutive role played by concepts, themes, and concerns that derive from traditional and diasporic African cultures in the identity and thought of African-American philosophers. With even more minute precision, Mills subjects Gordon's existential/phenomenological concept of an Africana identity to formal logical critique that dissects its subject-oriented foundations. Mills misses, however, Gordon's analysis of the role of formal logic in the study of human subjects and problems of existence, that valid arguments do not necessarily have any bearing on reality, which means it continues to be, as it has often been in the past, possible to have a formally valid defense of a wrong position and of conclusions that are simply false. For Gordon, reason is broader than formal validity precisely because it must also be advanced as a way of evaluating even notions of logical consistency (L. Gordon 2000b: 31). Consequently, unlike the case with West, in this engagement Mills goes past Gordon rather than arriving at the core of his work. This going past Gordon is reminiscent of similar passings in Appiah's exchanges with Du Bois and the ethnophilosophers and Boxill's review of *Caliban's Reason* (A. Appiah 1992). Thus, another important line of exchange for future development could easily arise here.

Further, it is important to note that in spite of the phenomenological canopy encompassing the whole of Gordon's works, it is also a synthesis and for Mills could have some of the "intertheoretical inconsistencies" he observed in West's work. As I've shown elsewhere, there is an unthematized Marxian dimension to Gordon's work (P. Henry 2000a: 146–54; 2001). It remains unthematized because the Marxian organizational approach to institutions clashes with Gordon's phenomenological (Schutzian) reading of institutions. Consequently, it operates as an absent presence in Gordon's explicit synthesis of critical race theory, existentialism, and phenomenology. Like West, he too may have found a post-Marxian or post-dialectical mode of synthesis, the secret of which he is not revealing.

Thus the issue of post-Marxian syntheses and the problems they are encountering must be put on the agenda. It is time to focus more explicitly on the gaps and absences in these new syntheses, to explore why their resistance to being bridged is greater than in the case of political economy. Is there something unique and unrepeatable about this particular case of syntheses? If so, we need

to know it and its implications for current attempts such as those of Gordon and West, and also for the earlier synthesis of Du Bois that overshadows these two. This issue of post-Marxian syntheses is indeed one of the important theoretical issues emerging from the exchanges between African-American philosophers.

Textual/Discursive Strategies

The textual/discursive strategies of a particular field are closely related to the major issues and problems that its scholars must address. They cover the basic strategies employed in the production of knowledge or agency, and the intertextual or interdiscursive alliances made in the course of these productions. In the case of African-American philosophy the central issues and problems have been those thematized by the various schools that dominate the field. Given the variety of these schools, the identity problems of the field, and its unique politics, it should come as no surprise that the major discursive strategies of African-American philosophy are also quite varied.

Many of the strategies were evident in the above discussion of thematic concerns. In addition to the older moral (Afro-Christian), Pan-African, poeticist, and historicist strategies of African-American philosophy, new ones have emerged in the context of the current epistemic compromise. From the school of prophetic pragmatism has come a distinct strategy of cultural criticism; from Africana existentialism has come a racially inflected Africana phenomenology; and from the political logicists, we've got a distinct style of logico-racial critique.

What is really interesting about these new discursive strategies are the patterns of intertextual alliances that they have produced. In the case of West, his approach to philosophy as cultural criticism and his interest in the generating of agency has produced very close alliances with the arts, music, and poetics in particular. Thus West hints that although his synthesis may appear on the surface as "an undisciplined eclecticism" (C. West 2001: 346), it has a hidden order that is in a large part inspired by African-American music. Hence Mills's difficulty in reaching it with the non-melodic inspiration of the propositional logic. West further declares that in "the perennial quarrel between poetry and philosophy I embrace both, but tip my hat towards the poets; especially the musical poets" (ibid: 347). West groups himself with "life wrestling artists" like Pascal, Kierkegaard, Emerson, and Du Bois, as against "academic philosophers" such as Kant, Carnap, and Husserl (ibid). Thus his discursive strategy of cultured criticism rests on a close alliance with the arts rather than more rationally and scientifically oriented discourses.

Interestingly, the discursive alliances that Gordon has forged in opening up the field of Africana existentialism are quite similar to those of West. Much of Gordon's work is also inspired by African-American music and poetics. The centrality of these sources is most evident in *Her Majesty's Other Children* (1997b). Here the musical metaphors and engagements are explicit, making clear

their role in the composition of Gordon's texts. But in spite of this interesting similarity in discursive alliances, they are located in very different textual economies with very different effects. In Gordon's discursive economy, musical metaphors must harmonize with phenomenological tones.[4] The result is a discursive strategy that is very different from West's cultural criticism. It is a strategy that produces intellectual syntheses whose overall unities are more explicit and more systematically worked out in spite of being allied with the musical poets.

The discursive alliances of the political logicists are of course quite different from those of Gordon and West. Indeed, what is striking about them are the intertextual alliances that they have broken. In the Western analytic tradition, there have always been strong intertextual alliances with the natural sciences. These are strikingly absent in the case of the political logicists. Indeed, theirs has been largely a solo or unidiscursive strategy rather than any type of synthesis. Logic and logic alone has been the enabling epistemic instrument.[5] This is clear in McGary's work, as well as in Mills's. Thus, like the tensions between the schools of the field, these differences between textual/discursive strategies have the potential to push the field forward into new areas of growth.

Conclusion: African-American Studies and Philosophy

The impact of the rise of departments, programs, and centers of African-American Studies in universities across America and throughout the African diaspora has been nothing short of explosive. It has profoundly affected work on issues of race and ethnicity in all of the social sciences and humanities. Although a late arrival on the team, the contributions of African-American philosophy have given African-American Studies a whole new wave of explosive power. However, just as African-American philosophy has got itself established in its academic toehold, the future of African-American Studies has become the object of serious reconsideration on many White campuses.

At the same time that African-American Studies has profoundly changed White academia, the latter has never stopped trying to contain and mold the discipline so that it fits within its ethnic rites of passage. One example of an impact of African-American Studies that academic administrators are struggling to control is the ever-growing demand by other race/ethnic groups for similar programs and departments. Indeed, so great has been this demand for race/ethnic knowledge that in the context of the neoliberal and anti-affirmative action turns of the early 1980s, there has been a concerted effort to change the terms of the fourth epistemic compromise.

Some individuals would like to declare the academy and its epistemic order color-blind. Some would limit the growth of African-American Studies departments because they will soon have no future with the full recognition of black epistemic interests in the regular departments of predominantly White universities. Others would like to incorporate African-American Studies into ethnic

studies departments. And finally, there are those who would racialize and ethnicize the whole field of the humanities and social sciences. This would result in departments of White studies, Latino studies, Asian studies, etc., thus radically decentering established disciplines such as English, sociology, and history. Indeed, at places like Stanford University, we have seen the incorporation of African-American Studies into Ethnic Studies, but not the main body of Euro-American Studies. In cases like this, there is a shifting of the fourth epistemic compromise to a new regime: Euro-American universalism/Ethnic Studies particularism. This can only result in the extension of double consciousness to other ethnic groups. This shift in the terms of the compromise does not bode well for either African-American Studies or Ethnic Studies. The color-blind epistemic order would be even more retrogressive. The hope that mainstream White departments will soon see the light is unrealistic at best. This leaves us with the position of strengthening African-American Studies departments while supporting the insurgent movements of other ethnic groups, including the demand for White studies.

Whatever the outcome of these shifting tendencies, philosophy must remain a vital part of African-American Studies. It must be a part of the struggle for strong departments of African-American Studies and for the kind of creolized academic space in which its visibility will continue to grow. Given the historical record, strong African-American Studies departments with vibrant philosophical components have been good for Black philosophers everywhere. So in concluding, I want to say to the African-American philosophers I've known: no matter what Caribbean island I may be on, as long as I can write, I've got your back. Better yet, let me give you that in Antiguan creole: *me got fu you back!*

Notes

1 For a fuller treatment of these dynamics, see my *Caliban's Reason* (P. Henry 2000a: 3–7).

2 John Ladd is well known for his work in philosophy of law, medical ethics, Immanuel Kant's ethics, computer ethics, Native American ethics, and philosophical issues relating to race and ethnicity. For a sample of his work in philosophy, ethnic studies, and ethics, see *The Structure of a Moral Code: A Philosophical Analysis of Ethical Discourse Applied to the Ethics of the Navaho Indians* (1957).

3 Although the *Africana* dimension of Gordon's work extends to the whole of Africa, and his philosophical anthropology incorporates hypotheses and theories on semiotic features of the dawn of humankind (see L. Gordon 2000b: ch. 4; 2004a).

4 Gordon is also a professional musician who plays the multipercussive instrument (drums) and piano.

5 By contrast, engagements with natural science and the life sciences can be found in Gordon's work (e.g., L. Gordon 2000b: ch. 4; 2002c).

CHAPTER **SEVENTEEN**

Sociology and the African Diaspora Experience

Tukufu Zuberi

In the nineteenth century, scholars in Europe and the European diaspora professionalized the study of society. This professionalization was characterized by the formalization of a body of knowledge and the creation of institutions designed to produce such knowledge and to train others to produce knowledge within these defined disciplinary boundaries. Following the natural sciences, these efforts led to the formation of universities and colleges.

By the beginning of the twentieth century there was a general convergence around a few specific names for the disciplines: history, economics, sociology, political science, and anthropology. Beginning with history, these disciplines divided along the lines of studying rational societies of European origin and "others." Historical research was considered most valid when performed on people in one's own backyard – Europe and the satellites of Europe. Sociology, political science, and economics followed suit and left anthropology to the study of pre-historical peoples living outside of the context of Europe and the European satellites in the Americas and Asia. The field of sociology matured and came into its own at the same time that African enslavement ended and colonialism matured in Africa, Asia, and the Americas.

The social sciences (sociology, economics, and political science) differentiated themselves from the more humanistic historical disciplines by focusing on arriving at generalities that were presumed to govern human behavior, and analyzing the segmentation of human reality by strict adherence to scientific methods of empirical analysis. The new social sciences emphasized the centrality of the objective real world that was knowable by the neutral scholar armed with empirical evidence. Like the physicist and biologist in the natural sciences, the social scientist found his empirical evidence in objective, external data that were assembled, controlled, and manipulated. Social scientists were, with few exceptions, white men of great prestige. Women and people of color might be the objects of study, but were rarely, if ever (until recently), part of the mainstream of the social sciences. This racist and sexist delay may partly explain the critical perspective of many female social scientists and scholars of color.

Auguste de Comte coined the term "sociology" and outlined the new field of study in 1864 in *Cours de philosophie positive* (*The Positive Philosophy*) – his first major sociological work. In *Cours*, Comte declared an end to philosophy in the face of the achievements of science. In *A Discourse on the Positive Spirit*, Comte defined positivist research as "confined to the study of real facts without seeking to know their first causes or final purpose" (A. Comte 1995/1903: 21). Empirical techniques for collecting and analyzing data on individual social phenomena had emerged from the eugenics movement of the nineteenth century. I have covered this area in *Thicker Than Blood* (Zuberi 2001) and will not elaborate on it in this essay. These methods of sociology complemented the positivist philosophy that characterized the Eurocentric study of society in the twentieth century.

Sociology is the study of both the relationship between individuals and the agglomeration of individuals. It is a discipline that focuses on society and social facts. It thus differs as such from other scientific disciplines in that it does not confer knowledge that leads to the control of society. A careful reading of sociology therefore tends toward two contradictory tendencies. A tendency to harmonize the incongruity of social life stands opposed to the tendency to explain the constitutive contradictions of social dynamics.

My focus in this chapter is on the process of formation that led to the emergence of Blacks, or African Americans – as well as the African diaspora – and those that labeled them with their distinctive characters in the study of sociology. I am at the same time interested in the critical perspective of society suggested by this process, and how the study of the African diaspora experience has already helped move researchers toward the study of a more universal concept of human society. First, I will examine briefly social essays against enslavement written in the Americas. Second, I shall point out the distinctive weaknesses of adopting a conservative assimilationist perspective. Third, I shall point out the distinctive strengths of adopting an African-centered perspective. Fourth, I shall argue that a more adequate conception of the African diaspora experience must be built on a creative critical tradition, that draws on the sociological tradition that criticizes existing structures of power and imagines a different future and a new perspective that analyzes the critiques of the hegemonic structural-functional objective sociology and the poststructuralist perspectives of the latter half of the twentieth century. I will conclude by sketching out this creative critical perspective.

The African Diaspora

Several historical and contemporary social streams define the African. The historical African diaspora has resulted from a combination of evolutionary and social processes. Scientific evidence overwhelmingly supports the monogenetic origin of humanity in Africa.[1] Human beings (*homo sapien sapien*) originated in Africa. The African progenitors of humanity colonized much of the African continent's savannas and woodlands about 100,000 years ago. Apparently, Cro-

Magnon migrated to the Eurasian continent from Africa about 40,000 years ago. This legacy of social dispersal was followed by the expansion of African trade to Europe, the Middle East, and Asia prior to the Arab and European slave trade in Africans. The modern African diaspora was generated by the involuntary relocation of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, and the more recent voluntary movement from Africa to Europe and the Americas. The processes of globalization continue to fuel what Colin Palmer refers to as the modern African diaspora (C. Palmer 2000). Typically, sociological discussions on this issue focus on the modern African diaspora.

Individual and group identity determines membership in the African diaspora. Identity, as the prevailing scholarship demonstrates, is socially constructed and means different things in different social contexts. Thus, the "black race" differs, for example, in the United States, Britain, Jamaica, Colombia, and Brazil. The only thing connecting the "black race" across these societies is socially significant "black skin" and the cultural impact and memory of Africa among members of the diaspora. Cultural differences are a reflection of social heterogeneity, and such social heterogeneity does not necessarily imply social inequality. For example, rap, *candence compas*, and the blues are not "black"; although all are clearly products of the African experience in the Americas, they represent cultural differences, not racial ones.[2] Racial differences, on the other hand, are linked to problems of inequality, freedom, and social justice.

The Study of Society During African Enslavement

A useful starting point for understanding the study of society and the African diaspora can be found in the liberation narratives of the enslaved and the "Appeals" from "free" individuals of African descent in the Americas. The African diaspora in the Americas results primarily from the enslavement of Africans by Europeans. The arrival of Africans in the Americas in the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries became a central thread in the racialization of the Americas – the challenge to the idea of human society. Africans and members of the African diaspora within Western civilization were, to a large extent, below the field of sociology. They were not considered civilized human beings.

Africans and their descendants struggled to humanize the Americas by transforming the New World into a space where they were viewed as human beings. Resistance to the racialized self by these descendants of Africa represents the dynamic process of a people attempting to humanize a world that was denying its humanity with the institution of enslavement. The scholars arising from this experience established an analytical foundation for a creative critical counter-response to social oppression.[3] This tradition was born among men and women who spoke and wrote against African enslavement and white supremacy. The tradition began before the end of African enslavement in the nineteenth century,

and can be traced back to Quobna Ottobah Cugoano, David Walker, Maria W. Stewart, Martin R. Delany, Edward Blyden, Alexander Crummell, Henry M. Turner, and Frederick Douglass. (We should, however, bear in mind that not all of the appeals to end enslavement were written by African-origin scholars. For example, Lydia Maria Child's book *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans* (1996) provided the interracial anti-slavery movement in the United States with an analysis of African enslavement in the United States, racial prejudice, and racist ideology.)

In the autumn of 1829, David Walker privately published an *Appeal . . . to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America*. Walker's *Appeal* presented a militant indictment of racism and enslavement with a call to arms.[4] Walker's *Appeal* was followed 14 months later by Nat Turner's insurrection in Southampton County, Virginia. A less well known appeal was written in the same year by Robert Alexander Young and titled *The Ethiopian Manifesto, Issued in Defense of the Black Man's Rights in the Scale of Universal Freedom*.

Free women expressed the freedom message as well. The publication of Walker's *Appeal* was echoed in Maria Stewart's speeches and writing. In 1831, two years after the publication of Walker's *Appeal*, Stewart wrote:

> Many will suffer for pleading the cause of oppressed Africa, and I shall glory in being one of her martyrs: for I am firmly persuaded, that the God in whom I trust is able to protect me from them that will rise up against me; and if there is no other way for me to escape, he is able to take me to himself, as he did most noble, fearless, and undaunted David Walker. (M. Stewart 1997: 203)

Stewart challenged women and men to reject the racialized images of inferiority prominent in nineteenth-century America. Walker, Young, and Stewart were free men and women who were conversant in current debates about politics, history, and geography.

The less educated and less sophisticated enslaved population did not produce any Appeals as such; however, for them, the story of their lives were appeals for social justice. The slave autobiographies provided a personal account of what freedom meant, how to achieve it, and a personal appeal to end the cruelties known as slavery.[5] From the publication of *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789), *Narrative of Moses Roper's Adventures and Escape from American Slavery* (1837), *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (1845), *The Narrative of William Wells Brown* (1847), *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, an American Slave* (1849), to *The Narrative of Solomon Northup* (1853) and Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), the autobiography was one of the most important literary genres in the response to racist narratives of the African place and role in modern society.

By far the most impressive and important of the ex-bondsmen's autobiographies was that of Frederick Douglass. Douglass's *Narrative*, written during the

American Literary Renaissance, was as important as Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851) and Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) in the literature of nineteenth-century America. In the context of the United States, Douglass's *Narrative* helped broaden the discourse about liberty and equality. In one of the passages in the *Narrative* Douglass writes:

> In coming to a fixed determination to run away, we did more than Patrick Henry, when he resolved upon liberty or death. With us it was a doubtful liberty at most, and almost certain death if we failed. For my part, I should prefer death to hopeless bondage. (F. Douglass 1982: 124)

As with Walker's *Appeal*, Douglass saw the battle against enslavement as a battle for life. The idea of freedom was "doubtful"; however, enslavement left the African no option. Douglass's bondage was itself evidence of the hypocrisy of liberty in the United States. His *Narrative* became a classic of the international abolitionist movement, and Douglass himself became one of the principal spokesmen for the movement. Douglass's *Narrative* compared the social reality of enslavement, the social facts, with the notions of freedom and democracy (to which the United States purported to be committed). As early as 1892, Anna Julia Cooper's *A Voice From the South* argued:

> The cause of freedom is not the cause of a race or a sect, a party or a class, – it is the cause of human kind, the very birthright of humanity. Now unless we are greatly mistaken the Reform of our day, known as the Woman's Movement, is essentially such an embodiment, if its pioneers could only realize it, of the universal good. (A. Cooper 1998: 106)

It is against the background of these arguments against enslavement and a new vision of human freedom, justice, and equality that the African diaspora experience critically engages the study of society. While these materials suggest a creative and critical engagement with the theory of society and humanity, they continue to be ignored by sociologists. In part, this tendency is a result of the invisibility of the African diaspora in sociology.

Sociology and Race

Africa and the African diaspora, with the exception of African Americans, have historically been ignored in the social sciences. Sociologists have tended to examine African Americans through the lens of the functions of racial conflict. From this Eurocentric perspective African Americans appear as racialized "others" who by their nature are in conflict with rational society; in fact, African Americans historically have been important for this reason only. African diaspora scholars (which includes the African Americas) represented a significant element of confrontation to Eurocentric interpretations of society and civilization. These

confrontations derived from the intellectual foundations of the social movements for decolonization and deracialization, such as Pan-Africanism, Negritude, Civil Rights, Black Power, and National Liberation movements. These radical social movements are manifestations of the counter-discourse to the racialized assumptions of sociology.

Sociology is a racialized field of inquiry. Thus, Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic* and Emile Durkheim's *The Division of Labor in Society* are considered classics in sociological analysis while Du Bois's *The Philadelphia Negro* and Frazier's *Black Bourgeoisie* are considered classics in "African American sociology" and race relations. Both *The Protestant Ethic* and *The Division of Labor in Society* focus on Europe and the European development of rational life with its universal implications. The assumption that Weber and Durkheim's European-based studies are *universal* while Du Bois's community study and Frazier's case study of middle-class black folk are *particular* reflects the racialized discourse in sociology. In fact, both may be particular reflections on universal social processes.

Eurocentrism has monopolized the discourse around race in social science; it has been assumed that Europe and European peoples are the proper point of departure for understanding social behavior. The Eurocentric perspective views Europe as the exclusive birthplace of "high civilization" and judges the remainder of humanity by the degree of its closeness to the European model.[6] We find this ethnocentric perspective suggested by Max Weber, a father of modern sociology, in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1920): "When we find again and again that, even in departments of life apparently mutually independent, certain types of rationalization have developed in the Occident, and only there, it would be natural to suspect that the most important reason lay in differences of heredity."[7] It is important to note that for Weber and most social scientists, to be rational is to be civilized. It is through the dual lens of white supremacy and ethnocentrism that social scientists have studied non-European-origin populations. The theory underlying Eurocentrism can be summarized succinctly: European civilization, or Western civilization, has exclusively developed cultural phenomena that have a universal significance and value (M. Weber 1958: 13–31), while the races of Africa, Asia, and the Americas have not.

The exceptionalism of Weber's European civilization is in part an elaboration of the idea that Europe is socially different from the rest of the world. From Weber's perspective, Europe is both universal and particular. That is, the product of the European experience is universal while it remains an exclusive product of Europe. This, in turn, is part of an elaboration of the idea of the "other": here the "others" are the rest of the world. Weber's investigation focused on the social and historical factors that "caused" these differences in levels of cultural development. Weber's concerns reflect not only how Europeans viewed themselves but also how they constructed the definition of "others" in a context of white supremacy. These European constructs have resulted in the belief in a racial hierarchy that dominates much of social thought today. This belief has a

profound impact on how we conceptualize the development of race relations as a social and biological phenomenon.

The Protestant Ethic is thought to have universal *human* implications. *The Philadelphia Negro* is thought by many sociologists to reflect the particular, as opposed to the human, experiences of the Negro. Furthermore, both *The Philadelphia Negro* and *The Protestant Ethic* take a Eurocentric perspective of society and reflect the racial crisis inherent in much that underlies our efforts to understand society.[8] The assumption of the universality of that which is Western or white is part of the racial crisis of sociology.

This error by sociologists is not only a matter of the history of ideas. Today many, maybe most, social scientists continue to focus on Europe and European rationality as the principal force in modern society. Indeed, this tendency allows Europe to take credit for all the world's ills and advances. This error is more than wrong; it is distorting our ability to understand modern society.

This racial crisis is part of the pervasive and profane crisis of Western civilization. This effort to maintain the illusion of European rationality is distracting from our understanding of other important social issues. It is important to stress that we can more fully understand society only in light of more general issues of poverty and inequality, governmental oppression and surveillance, ecological degradation and the abuse of other species of animals, and continued racism and patriarchy. By focusing on the place of the African or black in the study of society we are able to question the foundations of Western rationality raised by a creatively critical assessment of the response by the oppressed.

Assimilation Into the Status Quo

The assimilationist perspective presents the major social problem as a problem of social integration of deviant segments of society. From this perspective, the African diaspora represents a problem of social assimilation. From this perspective, many sociologists pursue social science research without any reservations as to the influence of race and the market economy. Often, these studies simply produce statistics of oppression, and often these statistics are used as a justification for continued racial stratification and the denial of freedom and social justice. Trends within the assimilationist perspective range from the moralizing of various writers through research on segregation, and social and economic stratification. However, all these trends are part of the same Eurocentric tradition.

These scholars fall into the traditional Eurocentric perspective of assimilation in the study of other societies. They represent what I refer to as assimilationist, and are exemplified in Du Bois's *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), Robert Park's *Race and Culture* (1950), Charles S. Johnson's *Shadow of the Plantation* (1934), and E. Franklin Frazier's *On Race Relations* (1968). This perspective begins with *The Philadelphia Negro*, but was systematized by various members of what would become the Chicago school without reference to Du Bois's earlier work.

Du Bois set a tone for the African response to Eurocentric sociology. Beginning in the fall of 1894, Du Bois sought to center the ideologically driven practice of sociology with "knowledge based on scientific investigation." He attempted to introduce "science into sociology through a study of the condition and problems of my own group" (W. Du Bois 1968: 197, 206). Indeed he tried. His efforts are found in between *The Philadelphia Negro* and *Black Reconstruction in America*.

However, the Du Bois of *The Philadelphia Negro* analyzed the structural and behavioral aspects of African-American oppression from a Eurocentric perspective, arguing for an end to white racism within a cultural context where African Americans would become more "white" and "civilized." He held that white racism denied the "Negro" access to resources, power, and acculturation. *The Philadelphia Negro* does not provide a critique of the moral assumptions or ideals of American society as such. Rather, the author challenged the white racism that prevented full African-American participation within the context of the existing social relationships. In the final analysis, Du Bois's *The Philadelphia Negro* sought no more than to remove the barriers to acculturation while maintaining the socioeconomic status quo.

Du Bois did not offer a critical analysis or propose critical solutions to the problems of the Philadelphia "Negro." *The Philadelphia Negro* provides a critique of racism; however, Du Bois does not adequately connect racism to the class and gender relations in American society. Upon self-reflection Du Bois himself noted that at this point in his intellectual development his research agenda "was weak on its economic side." He argued: "The program ought to have been . . . The Economic Development of the American Negro Slave; on this central thread all other subjects would have been strung" (W. Du Bois 1968: 217).

The Philadelphia Negro sought a balance between exploring the problems of a racially stratified society and unproductive behavior of the Negro. It shrouded Du Bois's discussion of African-American oppression with admonitions and moralizing about their deviant behavior. This orientation characterizes the assimilationist view regarding race. It is true that the field of sociology did not appreciate or publicly recognize Du Bois's model of investigation, particularly those University of Chicago scholars who, as the "Chicago School," came to dominate urban sociology. However, between 1898 and 1914 the Du Bois-led Conference on Negro Affairs conducted annual studies on current problems in the African-American community and published a series of empirical reports, and so his view and empirical research extended beyond *The Philadelphia Negro*.[9]

Sociologists traditionally view Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess as the fathers of classical assimilation. Their assimilation school is Eurocentric and based on a process of assimilation into a single unit of several different races (R. Park 1950; E. Frazier 1957b). According to Park, racial solidarity is considered a natural state of affairs that leads to a state of racial domination. For Park, this domination is thought to have reduced the colonized and enslaved populations to a state of social and cultural dependence.[10] Although Park eventually called his assimilationist model into question, the impact of the model continues.

In the 1940s, W. Lloyd Warner's *The Yankee City* series described how ethnic groups had climbed up the class ladder and out of their ethnic marginalization. The social stigma of belonging to the ethnic group disappeared as individuals advanced. When this research was extended to race it became apparent that racial stratification did not disappear with economic improvement. In *The Deep South* Allison Davis, Burleigh B. Gardner, and Mary R. Gardner argued that assimilation was prevented because the social system supported racial stratification. St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton's *Black Metropolis* and Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* also focused on the problem of assimilating the African American into the American status quo.

In the 1930s and 1940s a number of African diaspora scholars in the United States published a series of significant studies on race relations from the assimilationist perspective. These important efforts included E. Franklin Frazier's *The Negro Family in Chicago* (1932) and Hortense Powdermaker's *After Freedom* (1939).

Sociology as a discipline generally ignored the African diaspora outside the United States; however, there were some notable exceptions. Gilberto Freyre's *The Masters and the Slaves* (1946) and Florestan Fernandes' *The Negro in Brazilian Society* (1969) reflected the assimilation tradition in Brazilian sociology. Freyre's work introduced the concept of "racial democracy" and suggested the assimilation of Afro-Brazilian culture. Fernandes viewed racism as an anachronistic idea that was being overshadowed by the rise of class society; however, he did see the need for specific social policies to change racial attitudes. This international attention to Brazil's racial system was motivated by concerns with the racial stratification in the United States.

Several sociologists at the University of Chicago, in the 1960s, returned to the previously ignored Du Boisian legacy and extended it beyond the case-study approach that Du Bois had used. This effort, which grew out of the Chicago urban studies, began with Stanley Lieberson's book, *Ethnic Patterns in American Cities* (1963), Karl and Alma Taeuber's *Negroes in Cities: Residential Segregation and Neighborhood Change* (1965), and Stanley Lieberson's *A Piece of the Pie: Blacks and White Immigrants since 1880* (1980), and continued with John Yinger's *Closed Doors, Opportunities Lost: The Continuing Costs of Housing Discrimination* (1995). The basic message of this research is that racial segregation prevents racial assimilation.

The political scientist Charles Murray's *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950–1980* (1984) and the economist Thomas Sowell's *Ethnic America* (1981) and *The Economics and Politics of Race* also advance an assimilationist argument. However, unlike the segregation-oriented research, these conservative scholars point to the importance of culture. The basic message of this research is that the cultural backwardness of the African-American population is the reason for their lack of assimilation into American society.

The assimilation tradition tends to maintain that race and racism are a set of ideas or beliefs.[11] These ideas and beliefs are thought to result in negative atti-

tudes toward a particular racial group. Assimilation does not suggest systemic change; on the contrary, its solutions focus on attitudinal changes. At the systemic level the assimilationist solution suggests support for behavior modification to facilitate social and economic integration.

The most popular book using the assimilationist perspective in the twentieth century is William Julius Wilson's *The Declining Significance of Race*. Wilson attempts to transform the systemic implications of the assimilationist perspective by returning to Du Bois's concern for social assimilation and moral evaluation. For Wilson, the major factor preventing assimilation of the African-American underclass is national social forces. He provides a structural analysis that portrays the government as the most influential institution in the quality of life for the poor.

African-Centered Challenge of the Status Quo

Despite his assimilationist beginnings, Du Bois would advance a creative critical perspective that became African centered. For example, he published *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935); *Black Folk: Then And Now* (1939)*; An Essay in the History and Sociology of the Negro Race* (1939); and *The World and Africa: An Inquiry into the Part Which Africa Played in World History* (1946). In this body of work Du Bois focused on historical case studies that presented the complexity of racial stratification and African and African diaspora populations. In this work we find a perspective that is heavily influenced by the work of Karl Marx, but which also adds the importance of African and other colored and oppressed persons. The mature Du Bois expressed in his work a long tradition of intellectual reinsertion of the African place in society as an actor. The older Du Bois's sociological work presents a counter-narrative to the assimilationist perspective, especially regarding the role that African people played in the formation of modern society.

For Du Bois, to understand modern society it is essential to understand the African. The flaw of Eurocentrism is that it provides a corrupt picture of the human experience. By ignoring the contributions of Africa – and we might add Asia and America – Eurocentrism made Europe the model for the world without fully understanding the world.

The rise of African-centered perspectives coincides with the rise of Pan-Africanism (see V. Thompson 1969: 36–9). As Drake notes, scholars from the African-centered perspective "see their struggles as not only involving black people everywhere but also as being organically related to Third World struggles generally and to the worldwide struggle of proletariat and peasantry regardless of race" (S. Drake 1987: 344). Some of these scholars focus on Africa and the African diaspora as related to other struggles against injustice and domination. Others focus on African people's struggle as subsumed under these other struggles – the perspective that would develop into the critical perspective. However,

both perspectives have their roots in the African-centered perspective because both conclude that as long as "race" makes a difference it is necessary to have racial consciousness.

In the decades between 1930 and 1960, Marxist ideas and the understanding of traditional African culture profoundly influenced the African-centered perspective. This consolidation saw several classic texts, which include Du Bois's *The World and Africa: An Inquiry into the Part that Africa Has Played in World History* (1942), Jean-Paul Sartre's essay *Black Orpheus* (1948), Richard Wright's *Black Power: A Record of Reactions in a Land of Pathos* (1954), Aimé Césaire's *Discourse On Colonialism* (1955), George Padmore's *Pan-Africanism or Communism?: The Coming Struggle for Africa* (1956), Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1957), and Richard Wright's *White Man Listen!* (1957), plus the foundation of journals such as *Présence Africaine*, *La Revue du Monde Noir*, and *African Revolution*.

Toward the end of the twentieth century the rejection of Eurocentric scholarship increased (see, for example, J. Forbes 1993; G. Okihiro 1994; M. Bernal 1987). The most extreme form of this recent rejection of Eurocentrism has come in the form of an Afrocentric perspective. Afrocentric discourse is firmly embedded in the African-American and Diaspora Studies movement. The Afrocentric critique of Eurocentric scholarship rejects the limitations of the academy.

The Afrocentric movement can be seen as a continuation within the United States of the Négritude movement in France and the French-speaking regions of Africa and the Caribbean. Both movements look to Africa as a unifying cultural point of departure. Molefi Kete Asante advances the need for African people to experience a "cultural rebirth," and from his perspective "the rejection of European particularism as universal is the first stage" (M. Asante 1988: 104). Some African-centered scholars take a cultural relativist perspective, while others insist on the universality of the African experience. Some, like Asante, argue that the position of Africans necessitates that they view reality from a perspective different from that of European-origin populations. Asante writes:

> Centrism, the groundedness of observation and behavior in one's own historical experiences, shapes the concepts, paradigms , theories, and methods of Africology. In this way Africology secures its place alongside other centric pluralisms without hierarchy and without seeking hegemony. As a discipline, Africology is sustained by a commitment to centering the study of African phenomena and events in the particular cultural voice of the composite African people. Furthermore, it opens the door for interpretations of reality based in evidence and data secured by reference to the African world voice. (M. Asante 1990: 12)

Others suggest that viewing the world from the Afrocentric perspective is a necessary corrective to the Eurocentric distortions of history and social reality. For example, Diop observes:

> Insofar as Egypt is the distant mother of Western cultures and sciences, as it will emerge from the reading of this book, most of the ideas that we call foreign are oftentimes nothing but mixed up, reversed, modified, elaborated images of the creations of our African ancestors, such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, dialectics, the theory of being, the exact sciences, arithmetic, geometry, mechanical engineering, astronomy, medicine, literature (novel, poetry, drama), architecture, the arts, etc. (C. Diop 1991: 3).

According to Diop, it is necessary that African-origin scholars understand the importance of Africa in world history so that they may contribute scientifically to world civilization. Diop's view is important because he is one of the most significant scholars from the African-centered perspective.

The African-centered perspective transforms the fundamental questions underlying Eurocentric thought from questions about European universality to the relevance of Africa to human society.[12] Both Diop and Asante suggest a need for African peoples to ground themselves in Africa in order to make a significant intellectual contribution to humanity.[13]

Like the abolitionists before them, scholars advocating the African-centered perspective facilitated a response to the injustices of colonialism and the marginalization of Africa and its descendants. It is within the context of this perspective that the ideas of Garvey, Négritude, the New Negro, and Black Nationalism developed. Black Power reflected the sentiments of those involved in the international struggles for human rights for African people; the contemporary Afrocentric movements, like Négritude, seek the elevation of traditional African culture to the stature of a classical civilization with its own ethos and ontology. However, none of these perspectives provides an adequate critique of the hegemonic structural-functional objective sociology that predominates in the assimilationist perspective.

Toward a Creative Critical Perspective

A more adequate conception of the African diaspora experience must draw upon earlier innovations while incorporating newer insights into the nature of discourse and praxis. Much of the critical perspective outlined thus far presents a fusion of "left" philosophy and "right" social analysis. In this way it does not suggest a different future, and its critical vision has proven to be more ideological and less transformative. I am interested in a critical perspective that creatively embraces what can be. This new conception will also examine critiques of the hegemonic structural-functional objective sociology (as suggested by Alvin Gouldner's *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* and Jürgen Habermas's *The Theory of Communicative Action*, 1984) and the poststructuralist and anti-colonialist perspectives of Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Michel Foucault, and Edward Said.

The African-centered perspective continues to have the potential and tendency to replicate the assimilationist perspective in blackface. The social history of the African-centered perspective, and its methods of analysis, audience, and praxis have become major objects of deliberation. This reflexivity has led to a more creative critical perspective, as reflected in the early work of diverse scholars such as Oliver C. Cox's, *Caste, Class and Race: A Study in Social Dynamics* (1948); Fanon's, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952); and Joyce Ladner's edited volume, *The Death of White Sociology* (1973). Scholars within this perspective seek to interrogate social ideals and facts as self-reflective researchers.

More recently, scholars have begun to undermine the scientific claims of the social sciences generally by extending the critical perspective to methods of social scientific analysis. This effort is reflected in Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (2001) and the present author's *Thicker Than Blood: How Racial Statistics Lie* (2001). This critique is also reflected in the theoretical work represented by Patricia Hill Collins's *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (1990) and Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993). These perspectives share a view that modern society must be understood in a broader context than that established by the acceptance of traditional sociological explanations. They call for more reflection and consideration of how the whole of humanity has contributed to modern society. They reject the notion that European, or Western, civilization has exclusively developed cultural phenomena with a universal significance and value. This creative critical perspective suggests that human science, or the possibility of a human science, necessarily investigates population experience within the broader context of society. Within the African-American experience, such claims date back to the nineteenth century and Anna Julia Cooper and others. Du Bois expressed this idea with his specific reference to the study of human society. He notes:

> If we could have a scientific study of mankind in Africa without economic axes to grind, without the necessity of proving race superiority, without religious conversion or compulsions of any kind or exaggerated consciousness of color; if we could have the known facts of history set down without bias and the unknown studied without propaganda, we might come to know much better not only Africa but Europe and America and human nature in general. (W. Du Bois 1975: 92)

Scholars from the African-centered perspective see Africa as an essential point of departure for understanding and solving all problems of African people in Africa and in the diaspora. Many of the scholars in the critical perspective have been Marxist scholars, and all have seen the dangers of racial stratification. These Marxist scholars have varied in the degree of their own Eurocentrism, but they have maintained a critical perspective toward their discipline and capitalist society in general and racial capitalism in particular.[14] However, Marxists have also tended to view struggles of race narrowly, in the context of class struggles.

Nevertheless, the Marxist perspective provides a framework in its critical stance toward the assumed legitimacy of the social system – the state, the law, and the economic system – and it continues to be an approach that challenges the status quo rather than justifying the current social order.

It is from this Marxist aspect of the African-centered perspective that the new, creative, critical perspective argues that class and race are not reducible but are, rather, dialectical. Stuart Hall suggests a "non-reductive approach to questions concerning the interrelationship between class and race" (S. Hall 1986). By not reducing the problem to a single determining articulation of oppression – class or race – we avoid making circular and dogmatic arguments. To view the problem purely from a class perspective limits our ability to understand the dynamics of race. Likewise, by viewing the problem from a perspective that privileges race over class we enter into what Cornel West calls the pitfalls of racial reasoning (C. West 1993b: ch. 2). The solution to the problem of oversimplification may reside in a perspective that considers what Patricia Hill Collins refers to as "intersectionality within the matrix of domination" (P. Collins 2000: 18, 274–6). She suggests that examining how racism, sexism, classism, nationalism, and imperialism are organized within the matrix of dominating the African diaspora may help us maintain a non-reductive approach.

Creative critical thinkers such as Fanon and Césaire, aware of the limits of racial reasoning, led the rejection of the ontological and fixed existence of racial identity (F. Fanon 1963, 1967a; A. Césaire 2000). By this reasoning, both whiteness and blackness are social problems produced by the European partitioning of humanity. As Lewis Gordon (1995b) notes, "persons of color," unlike the Jews, have no existence before their pejorative conceptualization by post-Columbus Europeans. Racialization then becomes a social problem.

Another important response to the inherent conservatism of sociological research was captured by a group of critical (and some not so critical) sociologists who contributed to *The Death of White Sociology* volume mentioned above. Most of the articles in it called for a new critical sociology that confronted the community pathology theories of the assimilationist perspective.

Prior to the African-American Studies movement African-American intellectuals found "success" only by capitulating "often uncritically, to the prevailing paradigms and research programs of the white bourgeois academy" (C. West 1993b: 72). The Civil Rights and Black Power movements, and the national liberation movements in Africa, Asia, and South America, had a tremendous impact on the study of the African diaspora. The Black Nationalist and the African National Liberation movements both proposed a radical nationalism, while the Civil Rights Movement proposed assimilation as a solution to the problem of race.

Not until this period of great social transformation did Eurocentric social theorists consider the implications of the politics of race and gender at both national and international levels. African and African diaspora scholars had long held that only by understanding decolonization and deracialization could one understand the development of capitalism and modern society (W. Du Bois 1939;

O. Cox 1948: part 3). However, the dominance of the assimilationist perspective prevented Eurocentric social theorists from anticipating the possibility of the national liberation and Civil Rights movements (J. McKee 1993). Likewise, the assimilationist perspective precluded and continues to preclude any consideration of the social effects of the Black Power Movement within the United States, Caribbean, and Latin America, or the anti-colonial movements in Africa (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1999). By prioritizing class over race, some critical theorists have been blind to creative modes and forms of social change. For example, many critical sociologists like Cox suggested that the possibility of nationalist movement was slim in a racially stratified society like the United States, but were optimistic about nationalism in Africa. Cox noted: "Negro Americans will probably never become nationalistic; the numerical balance of the races will not allow the development of nationalistic antagonism on the part of the colored people . . . Yet it is fairly certain that African Negroes in every continental colony will in time develop nationalism" (O. Cox 1948: 403). However, as we know, the Civil Rights and Black Power movements resulted in the Civil Rights bill in 1957, and forced the passage of the Civil Rights acts in 1960, 1964, 1965, and 1968. The national liberation movement ended the classical form of European colonialism in most of Africa. At the same time, it is important to recall that the success of the Civil Rights Movement and the passage of various Civil Rights bills were not necessarily in line with the aspirations of the Black Power Movement. The contradicting evaluations of success of the Black Power Movement and the Civil Rights Movement can help us understand the limits of the assimilationist project in a white supremacist society.

Scholars like Du Bois, Padmore, and Fanon participated in the efforts to create and support national liberation movements in Africa, and in the cause of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. Efforts such as theirs produced a critique of how Africa and the African diaspora were studied by the major disciplines.[15]

The rise of nationalist movements internationally and within the United States itself changed the way many scholars viewed social science. In the classic *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*, Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton argue:

> Black people must redefine themselves, and only they can do that. Throughout this country, vast segments of the black communities are beginning to recognize the need to assert their own definitions, to reclaim their history, their culture; to create their own sense of community and togetherness. There is a growing resentment of the word "Negro," for example, because this term is the invention of our oppressor; it is his image of us that he describes. Many blacks are now calling themselves African-Americans, Afro-Americans or black people because that is our image of ourselves. (Ture and Hamilton 1994: 37)

Many African diaspora scholars likewise created a new image of themselves and their place in society. The assimilationist perspective operates under certain

limiting assumptions about African culture and its impact on African diaspora behavior, the key assumption being that the African diaspora is a problem whose solution lies in becoming more European.[16] Since this perspective limited Eurocentric scholars' ability to understand human society, they were unable to anticipate the rejection of the Eurocentric definitions of African people by African Americans and others within the African diaspora. This rejection of Eurocentrism resulted in an effort to combat the racist representation of African people historically and culturally.[17]

Collins's *Black Feminist Thought* and Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* highlight the different aspects of African-centered perspectives outlined by Drake. Collins and Gilroy provide different critiques from the counter-narrative tradition, with Collins providing a more US-centered, though creatively critical, perspective, and Gilroy, the British-centered postmodernist perspective. While Gilroy continues the critical tradition in the African-centered view, he challenges some of the limitations of this perspective.

Most sociology tends to analyze a given reality in terms of certain social facts and then make predictions on the possible outcomes. This approach does not allow for radical social change from spontaneous social activities or from progressive interventions. The conservative tendency does not recognize the possibility of something different or new, but instead focuses on social survival or the continuation of societies and their practices. In its most extreme form, social survival is equated with human survival, which is connected to the survival of a certain type of society – a view that is often connected to the concept of democracy, for example, especially in the United States. I am, however, suggesting an approach to society that is creatively critical in that it examines the social facts and ideals of society. A creatively critical perspective compares the social facts with what society purports to be in order to understand contradictions and potentials for the reconstitution of society.[18]

Our creative critical sociology must be conscious of society; it must engage public debate about human survival, freedom, equality and justice, environmental degradation, the future of humanity, and the role of culture. The African diaspora needs a sociology that brings its academic expertise to bear on important questions of the day in a language that can be understood by the non-academic public. This expertise must seek to persuade, not coerce or hide behind the language and esoteric issues of a discipline that spends most of its time in conversation with itself. We must value theory and research as much for their practicality as for rhetoric and allegiance to the discipline. We must expose the difference between what is and what could be. We must help humanity understand how the world could be different.

Like the Caribbean revolutionary psychiatrist and social theorist Frantz Fanon (1963, 1967a), I reject the ontological and fixed existence of racial identity. The historical racial identity of the person of color embodies the nature and basis of European racism. This racism socially erases and articulates the person of color's culture and interpretation of life when they are in conflict with the existence of

the racism that sustains European colonization and enslavement. The reality of humanity is universal, and the partitioning of humanity is a form of social suicide. This social suicide has become Western civilization and represents the crisis of identity in modern societies divided by race.

From this perspective, then, race is a sickness produced by the social suicide of the European partitioning of humanity. We must embody a conception of identity that does not racialize or essentialize what it means to be human (Gordon 1995b: 14–35). Without the standard of whiteness, all other racial colors are meaningless. "Black freedom," "Asian freedom," "Native American freedom," "Latino freedom" are not freedom. Colored freedoms are dependent on racial oppression and white domination, and this relationship has dominated how we view freedom and social justice.

Civil Rights, Black Power, and national liberation are all forms of deracialization. However, the idea and project of these movements were flawed and limited. They did not bring about Black Power or national liberation. Unlike Fanon, whose classic book *The Wretched of the Earth* focuses on the moment or "onset" of decolonization, we must focus on the process of the rise of these new social relations, the social, demographic, and political trends that follow, and the possibilities that are implied. The process of deracialization is fundamentally important if we are to turn back the tide and bring the human back into the picture.

To conclude, deracialization sets out to change the social world. Deracialization requires that we disarrange the current social order. The social and economic realities of race must be changed by our actions. Mutual understanding or developing friendships across racial groups cannot change racial realities; the erasure of humanity that race has brought to bear cannot be clearly understood except in the exact measure that we engage in social activity to transform its social basis. Deracialization is the process by which two forces – by definition opposed to each other – culminate in the rearticulation of what it means to be human. The first aspect of this process concerns how and why people are raced at birth and death. The European settlers, the "original race," bring the natives (all other racial groups) into existence as racialized individuals in a racially stratified society. As Fanon observes, "The settler owes the fact of his very existence, that is to say, his property, to the colonial system" (Fanon 1963: 36).

Deracialization is a social event and requires that the individual participate in the modification of social reality. It privileges the human over the racialized individual. Deracialization is created by a new self-conscious action and it introduces both a new language and social reality. The racialized and the racializer are both rehumanized by the process.

Notes

1 For discussions of the paleontological evidence, see C. Diop (1991) and Stringer and McKie (1997). For a discussion of the genetic evidence, see Cavalli-Sforza, Menozzi, and Piazza (1994: ch. 2).

2 For an excellent discussion of this point, see P. Gilroy (1993: esp. ch. 3).
3 These efforts created a tradition that St. Clair Drake (1987) refers to as the *vindicationist* tradition.
4 In the tradition of vindication he wrote: "The sources from which our miseries are derived, and on which I shall comment, I shall not combine in one, but shall put them under distinct heads and expose them in their turn; in doing which, keeping truth on my side, and not departing from the strictest rules of morality, I shall endeavour to penetrate, search out, and lay them open for your inspection. If you cannot or will not profit by them, I shall have done my duty to you, my country and my God" (D. Walker 1965: 2–3).
5 The autobiographical tradition among the formerly enslaved began as an oral tradition, and evolved into the written form as a strategy for meeting a wider audience and having a more lasting effect on them. "Fugitives" made most of these accounts from enslavement. Those who had purchased their freedom or had been manumitted produced another type of reminiscences of enslavement. Names such as Henry Watson, Lunsford Lane, Isaac Jefferson, Peter Randolph, Austin Steward, and Richard Allen – the founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church – are but a few in this less well-known tradition. For more on the autobiographical tradition among the formerly enslaved, see J. Blassingame (1977) and H. Baker's (1982) introduction to Frederick Douglass's autobiography. On the continuation of this tradition among African-American scholars, see V. P. Franklin (1995).
6 The arrogance of studying social difference from an ethnocentric perspective is captured by David Hume's essay "Of National Characters" (1748): "I am apt to suspect the Negroes, and in general all the other species of men, to be naturally inferior to whites. There never was any civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures among them, no arts, no sciences" (D. Hume 1985: 252). Hume's perspective is ethnocentric, and his "suspicion" of inferiority expresses the xenophobia that has historically accompanied white supremacy.
7 Max Weber (1958: 30–1); however, Weber's perspective varied during his life. In some of his earlier writings he argued that race was not a primordial differentiation. See M. Weber (1978: 385–7; 1946: 379, 391).
8 For a more detailed discussion of Du Bois's Eurocentric perspective in this important classical work, see Antonio McDaniel (1998).
9 For a listing of these studies, see Ernest Kaiser (1970: 313–14).
10 Robert Park argued: "For four hundred years and more Europe, and particularly Western Europe, has been preeminently the seat and center of greatest intellectual and political activity. During this period European commerce and European culture have penetrated to the most remote corners of the habitable world. As a result of this expansion, most of the world outside Europe has been reduced to a position of political and cultural subordination and dependency" (R. Park 1950: 118).
11 For a critique of this tendency, see Eduardo Benilla-Silva (1997).
12 Diop notes: "Today each group of people, armed with its rediscovered or reinforced cultural identity, has arrived at the threshold of the postindustrial era. An atavistic, but vigilant, African optimism inclines us to wish that all nations would join hands in order to build a planetary civilization instead of sinking down to barbarism" (C. Diop 1991: 7).
13 For both Diop and Asante, this means that Africans need to recenter their thinking from Africa outwards. Diop writes: "At this point we must underscore the abyss that separates us from those Africans who believe that it can be enough to flirt with Egyptian culture. For us, the return to Egypt in all domains is the necessary condition for reconciling African civilizations with history, in order to be able to construct a body of modern human sciences, in order to renovate African culture. Far from being a reveling in the past, a look toward the Egypt of antiquity is the best way to conceive and build our cultural future. In reconceived and renewed African culture, Egypt will play the same role that Greco-Latin antiquity plays in Western culture" (C. Diop 1991: 3). Asante is quoted above (M. Asante 1990: 12).

14 For example, compare Cox's *Caste, Class and Race* (1948) with Cedric J. Robinson's *Black Marxism* (2000). Robinson takes a decidedly more African-centered perspective.
15 St. Clair Drake advised that "rather than in the major African studies programs that Diaspora studies have their best chance of flourishing as a cooperative activity between Afro-American, African and West Indian scholars and those nonblack scholars who wish to be associated with them" (S. Drake 1987: 80).
16 For a review and some critical comments on this assimilationist assumption, see S. Drake (1987: vol. 1, chs 1, 2) and M. Hanchard (1994) for a critique of this literature in Brazil.
17 The Black Studies movement in the United States represents an intellectual response to the assimilationist tradition in Eurocentric scholarship. The Black Studies movement is part of the Black Power movement. As Maulana Karenga observes in his popular *Introduction to Black Studies*: "Black Studies is rooted in the social visions and struggles of the 60s which aimed at Black Power, liberation and a higher level of human life. If Black Power is defined as the collective capacity of Black people to define, defend and develop their interests, Black Studies and the students it develops obviously have a role in the definition, defense and development of those interests" (M. Karenga 1992: 17). Black Studies sought to critically challenge the Eurocentric domination of scholarship and to forge a new intellectual discourse regarding human life.
18 See the basic work in the development of critical theory by T. Adorno (2000) and J. Habermas (1984); for developments of a critical perspective regarding racial oppression, see Omi and Winant (1994) and H. Winant (2001); for extensions of this perspective from within racialized populations, see E. Bonilla-Silva (1997; 2001), L. Smith (2001), and T. Zuberi (2001); and for how it pertains to African-American women in particular, see P. Collins (1998).

CHAPTER **EIGHTEEN**

Suicide in Black and White: Theories and Statistics

Alvin Poussaint and
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The enigma of suicide has fascinated and frustrated humankind for centuries. No one in the long history of Western culture has solved its riddle, though generations of philosophers, theologians, and psychoanalysts have tried. As a subject and psychological study, it has inspired volumes of literature – theories, statistical studies, and professional journal articles. But in American society at large, it is safe to say, suicide is rarely a welcome topic of public discourse: for survivors in particular, any discussion of why people kill themselves is sad and frightening, a slippery road that is invariably marked by the twists and turns of shame, guilt, and seemingly unanswerable questions. The less said about suicide publicly, the better, has long been the attitude of most citizens, especially African Americans. Suicide, in the perception of many, is anathema to the American doctrine of being strong in the face of adversity, of forging ahead and seizing the day.

. . . [Among] black Americans the reticence to confront suicide and self-destructive behavior has been shaped by key historic and cultural elements, including slavery, racism, poverty, and discrimination. Distinct from the experience of most white Americans, these cultural elements encourage many blacks to will away perceived weaknesses, such as suicidal thoughts, in the name of self-preservation and dignity. In addition, the Christian religious beliefs of many blacks hold that suicide is taboo, a sin that will prevent one's soul from gaining entrance to heaven.

Historically, several differences in the dynamics of suicide among blacks and whites have been noted by public health officials: blacks have been less disposed to suicide than whites; white men have had higher suicide rates than black men, and both these groups have had higher suicide rates than black women; elderly white men are more likely to kill themselves than elderly black men or women. These and other historical and clinical facts about suicide are largely unknown to the layperson, however, and until recently there has been little public incentive to do other than look away from what is admittedly an unsettling subject. In the late 1990s, though, signs emerged that Americans would ultimately have to come to terms with suicide as a public health issue for all, and especially for African Americans.

In 1999, the Surgeon General of the United States, Dr. David Satcher, announced that suicide had become the ninth leading cause of death for all Americans, and the third leading cause of death for those between the ages of 15 and 24. And while the rate of serious crime in the country had dropped, an average of 85 suicides were taking place each day. As a cause of death in the United States, as a public health problem, the total number of suicides had, by the late 1990s, topped that of homicides, at about 31,000 deaths per year compared with about 21,000 homicides.

While it is important to note that during the twenty-year period between the 1970s and 1999 the total suicide rate in America declined from 12.1 deaths per 100,000 in 1976 to 10.8 in 1996, the suicide rate among teenagers and young adults nearly tripled during that same period (US Public Health Service 1999). Meanwhile, according to the United States Center for Disease Control (CDC 1998), the rate of suicides among black males climbed from 7.9 per 100,000 persons in 1970 to 10.9 per 100,000 in 1997, with the suicide rate for all blacks also increasing, although less rapidly, during the same period, from 5.1 in 1970 to 6.1 in 1997.

Black women, on the other hand, have experienced low rates of suicide in all age groups, when compared with whites or with black men. In 1970, for example, the rate of suicide among white women was 7.1 per 100,000, as compared to 2.6 for black women; by 1995, the rate for white women was 4.4, versus 2.0 for black women; for black men in 1970 the suicide rate was 7.9, and in 1995 it was 12.4, compared to 19.7 for white men (D. Jacobs 1999: 41).

The social dynamics behind these figures are worth examining. The rising rate of suicide among black men, in contrast to black women and especially compared with the comparatively modest increase in the total suicide rate, leads to many questions: What are the different risk factors [affecting] black men and black women? How do black men respond to stress? How do black women respond to stress? What role does the national economy and the availability of employment play in the disparity in suicide rates between black men and women, and between blacks and whites? Did the nation's cultural and political tone during the 20-year window of 1979 to 1999 have any impact on the suicide rates of blacks [and] whites? What about violence in the media? Is the availability of guns a part of the equation? What coping mechanisms, or lack thereof, [affect] suicide rates among the different age, sex, income, and racial groups?

The gap between black suicide rates and white rates has begun to shrink, with black rates climbing to unparalleled and alarming heights. To be sure, there seem to be similarities in the elements driving the increase in black suicides and the increase in suicide in America's total youth population. We know that depression and isolation are two primary psychological risk factors that are likely precursors to suicidal ideation in individuals. (The suicide rate among Native Americans, arguably the most isolated ethnic group in the country, was 1.5 times that of the total US population between 1979 and 1992, according to the CDC; see US Public Health Service 1999.) And by the end of the 1990s, a sense of hopeless-

ness and isolation could be perceived below the surface of American culture at large – a kind of equal-opportunity millennial malaise that crossed ethnic lines despite the healthy economic gains seen by millions of Americans as the century drew to a close. But where a modest decline in the homicide rate in the United States drew much political and media attention during the late 1990s, the increase in suicides among the young, and the factors which distinguish suicide in different ethnic populations, were scarcely acknowledged by the body politic.

Then a series of high profile murder-suicides occurred during an 18-month period between 1997 and 1999 (murder-suicides account for 1.5 to 4 percent of all suicides) [D. Jacobs 1999: 27]. These killings included several instances where white males gunned down family members, friends, co-workers, strangers, or classmates before killing themselves. This brought the uncomfortable subjects of suicide, mental health, racism, violence, and the availability of guns into the nation's living rooms. A kind of free-floating despair was leading white males to commit a form of violence that wasn't supposed to happen in suburban America.

Many African Americans, however, are intimately familiar with the connection between homicide and suicide, with violent behavior that springs outward before turning in on itself. Although they account for only about 13 percent of the total population, blacks, primarily males, account for about half of all deaths by homicide in the United States. Couldn't these killings have been precipitated by individuals suffering from a lack of self-worth and other emotional dynamics that are similar to suicidal behaviors? Few public discussions made such a link. Nonetheless, the surgeon general's announcement in July 1999 that suicide had become a public health issue appeared timely, coming at a moment when America had in its sights vivid images of suicide.

For all the official presence and credibility of his office, Surgeon General David Satcher faced a monumentally difficult triple task. How to simultaneously address the complicated causal factors of suicide and risky behavior in modern America and launch an effective campaign to educate the citizenry about the clinical and scientific facts while strengthening prevention programs for suicide and its cousins, homicide and substance abuse? There were no answers at the ready because there has been so little conclusive research on the subject. At the same time, the historic and religious view of suicide as shameful predominated.

Throughout the history of the civilized world, this was not always the case, even in the West. In some cultures, instances of self-destruction were tolerated by custom or religious philosophy, or accepted as an alternative to shame or death at the hands of others. In ancient Greece, of course, Socrates accepted a cup of hemlock. In Shakespeare's great tragedy *Hamlet* the protagonist utters the famous words "To be or not to be," effectively capturing the ambiguity of suicide; considering his secular and spiritual dilemmas, the Dane asks himself if it would be "nobler" to suffer "life's slings and arrows," or "to take arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing end them."

Viewed in other cultural and historic contexts worldwide, not all instances of self-murder were considered signs of "sickness." In ancient Japan, an aristocrat or a warrior might commit culturally sanctioned ritual suicide – one form of which was *hara-kiri* – rather than face dishonor or capture by enemies. (The connection between the way suicide was perceived earlier in Japanese history and its current status is not entirely clear, although by the late 1990s the suicide rate in Japan – where little shameful stigma is attached – had climbed to 19.3 per 100,0000 individuals, a figure that officials attribute in part to hopelessness and despair among middle-aged Japanese men struggling to keep afloat in a tough economy [S. Strom 1999].) In India, following the ancient Hindu custom of *suttee*, some women sacrificed themselves on their husband's funeral pyres as proof of their love and devotion. (*Suttee* was prohibited by the British in the nineteenth century but persisted for a time in isolated orthodox communities.)

While early Christians often embraced martyrdom as evidence of their faith, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam have regarded suicide as a crime against nature and God: life is sacred and what God gives, only God can take away. Some branches of these religions deny burial in consecrated ground to people who kill themselves, unless the suicide is deemed unintentional. In feudal England, suicide was considered a criminal act because a person who killed himself or herself had broken his or her bond of fealty to the crown; in some American states, attempted suicide was long considered an indictable offense.

Over the centuries, sociologists, psychologists, and psychiatrists in the West have scrutinized suicide to determine its causes and forestall its occurrence. Emile Durkheim, in his groundbreaking work *Suicide*, first published in 1897 (E. Durkheim 1951), applied the word to "all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act of the victim himself, which he knows will produce this result." Durkheim divided suicide into three major types: egoistic, altruistic, and anomic.

Egoistic suicide results from the individual's failure to fit into his society; as Durkheim explained it (following the convention of his day, in which "the individual" was always "he"), the individual with weak community, religious, family, political, and social ties destroys himself because he can find no basis for existing. Altruistic suicide results from the domination of the individual by a group, wherein the group's authority becomes so complete that the individual loses his sense of personal identity and sacrifices his life for the collective body. (The murder-suicides of 914 members of the People's Temple in Guyana in 1978 appear to fit this model, as do the 1997 suicides of more than twenty members of the Heaven's Gate cult in San Diego.) Other examples of altruistic suicide might include a soldier who dies "for his country" or a Buddhist priest who immolates himself to protest a war. Anomic suicide results from anomie – a state of alienation and lack of purpose due to the individual's failure to adjust to social change, including severe economic reverses or other events leading to social dislocation.

And, according to Durkheim, "There is [another] type of suicide that is the opposite of anomic suicide . . . It is the suicide deriving from excessive regulation,

that of persons with futures pitilessly blocked and passions violently choked by oppressive discipline." Durkheim did not consider this fourth type of suicide, which he termed fatalistic suicide, significant. It is this concept, however, that we believe is most important if one is to begin understanding suicide among blacks.

Although Durkheim cited few examples of fatalistic suicide, he believed it might be of historical interest: "Do not the suicides of slaves . . . belong to this type, or all suicides attributable to excessive physical or mortal despotism? [It is the revolt against] the ineluctable and inflexible nature of a rule against which there is no appeal."

David Lester, author of numerous books and papers on suicide, including *Suicide in African-Americans* (1998), found that "suicide was very common among . . . slaves when they were captured, while they were being transported to America, and immediately upon arrival." Writing in the spring 1997 issue of *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, the journal of the American Association of Suicidology, Lester found evidence that, while fragmented, indicated that these suicides among Africans bound for colonial America occurred in part because of rumors widespread in Africa that "Whites cooked and ate the captured Africans," and because "slaves watching Whites drink red wine often thought they were drinking blood" (D. Lester 1997: 52). Lester and a handful of other suicidologists have produced spare but meaningful historic evidence indicating that since at least the seventeenth century some blacks chose to end their own lives rather than endure slavery.

Over the years, the formation of theories on blacks and suicide by (mostly white) clinical professionals has been spotty and unreliable, and any citations of exact numbers of black suicides before the early twentieth century are based on shoddy record-keeping and/or speculative projections. Furthermore, the world community of psychotherapists formed its general ideas about suicide without much consideration of the experiences of blacks and other enslaved or oppressed groups. Nevertheless, a review of the literature by pioneer theorists and researchers provides key insights for our consideration of suicide and self-destructive behavior among US blacks today.

Sigmund Freud, Durkheim's contemporary, proposed in "Mourning and Melancholia" (1949), a 1917 paper, that suicide is aggression against others turned upon oneself. He theorized that self-hatred as manifested in depression is a result of repressed rage toward a love object or an oppressor (a hated object) and turned back on the self. We believe that this theoretical formulation is very relevant in thinking about the dynamics of black suicide. Freud also suggested that, unconsciously, many people who decide to commit suicide believe they will not really die – a phenomenon most common among teenagers and young adults – and that they will somehow be able to reverse the action if they so choose. In 1938, a study by researcher Gregory Zilboorg demonstrated the significance of repressed fantasies of immortality, particularly in suicidal patients.

Alfred Adler (1958), for a time a colleague of Freud, suggested that by an act of self-destruction the individual hopes to evoke sympathy for himself/herself

and cast reproach upon those responsible for his/her lack of self-esteem. Sandor Rado (1956) stressed the importance of dependency and atonement in depression; like Freud, he believed that suicide is an expression of "retroflexed anger," but he saw its goal as being self-punishment in an attempt to retrieve the affection or attention of a lost love interest. This concept is also important when considering black suicides, particularly among young black males, for whom notoriety and the notion of "being somebody" might lead to either suicidal or homicidal behavior.

In 1957, researchers Edwin Schneidman and Norman Farberow divided suicidal persons into four general classes: those who view suicide as an honorable act, as a transition to a better life, or as a means of avoiding social disgrace; those who are bereaved or in ill-health and physical pain and view suicide as an escape from deep anguish; those who are suffering from psychosis and kill themselves in response to hallucinations or delusions; and, finally, those who commit suicide out of spite and anger in the hope that the people whom they are trying to punish will suffer. According to Schneidman and Farberow (1957), serious losses (or threats of loss) – of friends, family, money, status, pride, independence, or social power – have the greatest causal significance. Researchers Moses Laufer and M. Egle Laufer (1984) theorized that every suicide attempt should be seen as a psychotic episode. In 1998, however, psychiatrist John T. Maltsberger posited that a key dynamic in suicidal patients was the projection of their own self-hatred onto the outside world, a projection that, in turn, makes the world seem to the depressed patient unfriendly and hostile, resulting in intolerable mental anguish. (This dynamic can be applicable in homicidal behavior, as well.)

Finally, in addition to these important psychological explanations, in recent years researchers have been searching for neurological correlates of suicide. Thus far, none have arrived at definitive conclusions, but the research into the physiological and psychological elements of suicide continues.

Psychodynamic theories provide valuable insights into the causes of suicide, and, taken together, they imply that psychosocial and cultural factors may matter a great deal, particularly when considering black suicide. What can statistics tell us about these factors?

During much of American history, it has been difficult to determine the exact rate of suicide in society and in the black community. However, for most of the twentieth century, suicide was listed by the government as one of the ten leading causes of death in the United States. In 1933, during the Great Depression, the rate of suicidal deaths per 100,000 population, an annual figure which applies to all ages, races, and both sexes, reached an all-time high of 17.4. Although this rate declined during the 1940s and 1950s, suicide still remained among the top ten causes of death for all ages. Suicide rates began to climb again in the late 1960s, and by the late 1990s suicide became the third leading cause of death for those aged 15 to 24 years old (black/white suicide rates estimated by David Lester 1998: 60–70).

The demographics and specifics behind the rise and fall of overall suicide rates are intriguing, and, popular beliefs aside, the available data [do] support some common threads. There are approximately ten unsuccessful suicide attempts for every fatal one. Suicide is most common among men, though women generally attempt it three times as often as men do. Self-destruction occurs least among children under 15 and most among males over age 65. In general, suicide rates are high among the lonely, the widowed, and the divorced. In the past, rates were highest in the cities and lowest in rural regions. More recent statistics, however, show that urban and rural suicide rates are equalizing.

Men have more often killed themselves by shooting or hanging, whereas women have tended to use passive methods such as the ingestion of poison or sleeping medication; although the cutting of wrists was also more likely to be chosen by women. Since the 1950s, though, firearms have increasingly become the chosen tool for committing suicide: the government reported that in 1997, the most recent year for which figures were available, guns were used in the majority of US suicides: 17,566 compared with 13,522 gun-related homicides in that year (National Center for Health Statistics 1999).

The economy of a given era, as we've seen with the high suicide rate during the Great Depression, also plays a role. But interestingly, during periods of stability, doctors, dentists, and lawyers commit suicide three times more often than non-professional white collar workers do. And it is important to emphasize that persons of any age, race, socioeconomic group, religion, or sex can be at risk for suicidal death when stressful conditions arise which the individual sees as being beyond their capability to manage.

Social scientists have been baffled by the fact that traditionally the rate of suicide among blacks – who were cast throughout history as America's hard-luck group – has been much lower than that of whites. Of course, the reporting of suicides both for the general population and for blacks has been unsophisticated for much of [the last] century; even today, the nation's official keeper of suicide statistics, the CDC, must rely on annual figures collected by coroners and medical examiners in local jurisdictions. A lack of uniformity in reporting, and in the collection of control-group information like the income and education level of those who committed suicide, hobbles the government's ability to attain suicide figures that are reliably comprehensive . . .

A dearth of encompassing research that takes into account possible regional influences on the suicide rates makes it difficult to assess the meanings of any differences between suicide rates in different parts of the country. Data from a 1998 CDC report, however, indicate that black suicide rates have historically been higher in the North and West than in the South, although that had changed by the end of the 1990s, when the suicide rate among black men in their twenties in the Deep South increased by more than 200 percent by 1997. In that same [1998] report, the CDC revealed that the overall rate of suicide in black communities in the Deep South appeared to be approaching that of blacks in the North and in the Midwest. And, as we've noticed, at least one nationwide trend

has appeared: since the late 1970s, the rate of increase in suicides among black men in their twenties has been alarmingly steady. This development raises a salient question: Since the social conditions for blacks and other minorities in the United States often serve as a bellwether to the condition of the white populace, is the increase in black male suicide an early warning sign of what lies ahead for the nation?

Most contemporary investigators agree that the disruption of social relations is a major cause of suicide. Undeniably, black men in America have experienced a greater degree of several forms of social dislocation than most other groups.

Psychiatrists E. Stanley and T. Barters, and child therapist F. V. Wenz, found during the 1970s that adolescents lacking one parent were more likely to attempt suicide than those living with two parents (Stanley and Barters 1970). This factor may well be of special significance in the black community, where by 1995 almost 60 percent of all black children lived in female-headed households and 45 percent of black female-headed households had incomes at or below the poverty level (O. Patterson 1997: 29). In terms of what they indicate about the social conditions which might lead to suicidal and self-destructive behavior, these statistics relate to other realities of life for many African Americans.

Black mothers in single-parent households, struggling to keep kith and kin together, often meet with racial as well as gender-based discrimination in the job market, a development which obviously negatively [affects] the well-being of their families. Indeed, as noted above, for more than thirty years the majority of female-headed black households in America have shown incomes at or below the poverty level. Many of the women heading these households cannot find affordable childcare or medical care, a situation which is dire enough to begin with and may lead to the abuse or neglect of their children. Although it is true that thousands of children from such households manage to grow into healthy and productive citizens, there are also many thousands who face gloomy futures as a result of their difficult beginnings. We also know from uncounted government and academic studies that children who are abused and neglected are at greater risk for exhibiting violent behavior, which increases the likelihood of homicide and suicide (Holinger et al. 1994).

Many black children from low-income, female-headed households drop out of school or are expelled at high rates; they also tend to lag behind in learning and are more likely than children from two-parent households to be labeled "educable mentally retarded" or "learning disabled." In addition, millions of black children attend schools that remain, despite the official end of segregation in the 1950s, racially and economically segregated, and many black children continue to experience direct forms of racial discrimination while in school. In counterpoint, some investigators have noted that the extraordinary commitment black women have demonstrated toward their children and for their homes helps these children withstand severe depression, and may account in part for the comparatively low suicide rates of black women and youth during most of the twentieth century.

In his 1969 work *Suicide*, Jack P. Gibbs suggested that the suicide rate depends on the general equilibrium of a given society: when there is turmoil and instability in a group, the suicide rate among group members rises; when individuals are planted securely in a community and there is little social change, the suicide rate decreases. This theory has been used to account for the current rise in suicide among blacks. When blacks were uniformly segregated, poor, and firmly held "in their place," the reasoning goes, there was little disruption among them and thus a low suicide rate – but with greater freedom, increased mobility, and the breakdown of formal segregation as blacks moved from rural to urban settings, the incidence of suicide among them increased. (. . . Without supporting research from psychologists or psychiatrists, a March 1998 story in the *New York Times* detailing high suicide rates among young black males seized on a truncated modern version of this argument; the story, while accurately citing CDC figures showing an increase in black male suicides, speculated that young African-American adults were struggling with a "new affluence" and seemed to be choosing suicide as an escape from its unexpected stresses [P. Belluck 1998].) As early as 1938, Charles Prudhomme, a black psychoanalyst, had predicted that the black suicide rate would approach the white rate as blacks assimilated (C. Prudhomme 1938).

The implications of such theories are intriguing, problematic, and almost impossible to gauge. What does it say about black American character if the long overdue, hard-won middle-class status is finally achieved only to result in a stressful combination of self-doubt, racial fatigue, dissatisfaction, and confusion that leads to suicide? Since the CDC has only recently begun collecting income and education-level information about black suicide victims, it is impossible – and inappropriate – to promulgate a theory in which black "middle-class angst" is driving the rise in black suicides.

In the second half of the twentieth century some investigators, perhaps taking a cue from Durkheim, believed that the increase in the black suicide rate took place because of a sense of fatalism – a feeling of oppression and of being trapped by and within a society that does not allow one to realize one's aspirations. For example, the high unemployment rate among blacks during much of the twentieth century, particularly among young black males, is in fact the most critical index of the deleterious effect of economic factors on African-American health. In a 1977 paper, M. Harvey Brenner demonstrated a rise in admissions to mental hospitals during jumps in unemployment, and a decrease in admissions during times of relative economic prosperity. Looking at US Census figures in 1970, Brenner calculated that a 1 percent increase in unemployment, representing nearly 1 million people, sustained for six years, would lead to the following:

- 36,887 total deaths, including 20,420 from heart disease
- 920 suicides
- 640 homicides

- 495 deaths from cirrhosis of the liver, which is often related to chronic alcoholism
- 4,277 state hospital admissions (M. Brenner 1977: 2–4)

Brenner reported that every 1 percent rise in unemployment was accompanied by a 2 percent increase in the mortality rate, about a 2 percent increase in cardiovascular deaths, a 5–6 percent rise in homicides, a 5 percent increase in imprisonment, a 3–4 percent rise in first admissions to mental hospitals, and about a 5 percent increase in infant mortality. Under such conditions, the rate of suicide would also significantly increase.

With unemployment rates near 20 percent for all blacks, and about 45 percent for black youths during the twenty years between 1970 and the early 1990s, the impact on African-American health (particularly that of black males) has been dire. In 1998 the unemployment rate for blacks was 8.9 percent, lower than it had been in many years. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 1998 the unemployment rate for white males over age 20 reached a historic low of 3.2 percent. For black males aged 16 to 24 years, though, the unemployment rate was 20.7 percent in 1998 (US Bureau of Labor Statistics 1999). The high rate of black joblessness – even as millions of blacks entered the middle class during the 1980s and 1990s – pushed high numbers of African Americans into the ranks of the poor. And while one's income is not always a predictor of one's mental or physical health, we know that individuals who cannot afford healthcare are more likely to experience serious illnesses.

Writing in *Minority Mental Health* in 1982, researcher H. F. Myers observed:

> By nature, poverty is an illness-inducing state because of the excessive and continuous pressures the person faces, because of the long-term consequences of the exposure to pathogens and to endemic stressors (i.e., high vulnerability), and because of the chronic scarcity of services, resources and assets.

It is not surprising, therefore, that one possible causal factor of the increased suicide rate among young black males may be the high unemployment rate they experienced between the 1970s and the 1990s. And in terms of education as a stepping stone to future employment, blacks during the second half of the twentieth century experienced limited success in higher education. In the 1980s and 1990s, economic recession, followed by a political assault on affirmative action and open admissions policies, resulted in a shrinking of opportunities for higher education for millions of black youth. In the early 1980s, the United Negro College Fund reported a significant decrease in the number of black college [first-year students], a trend that continued into the 1990s despite a growth in the total number of black high school graduates (A. Levinson 2000). Overall, despite a booming economy during much of the 1990s, many black children were unable to attend college because of financial hardship, while others fell victim to poor preparation at inferior schools.

By the late 1990s, many black youth who made it to young adulthood faced a new set of difficulties – the prospect of building a life without the benefit of a meaningful education and without employment that would allow them to live above the poverty level. The outcome of this equation is the development of a pervasive sense of hopelessness among many young blacks. This hopelessness also fosters rage that at times is expressed in self-destructive behaviors.

Many young blacks surveying the landscape in the late 1990s saw around them desolation – poverty, crime, drugs – and the prospect of dependence on dwindling government assistance or underground economies for income. For many, their only contact with authority figures occurred in direct confrontations with police and other law enforcement or legal officials. For some, an entire set of negative effects that result from having a criminal record was added to their experience, a stacking up of problems which might be expected to increase the sense of despair and entrapment.

The precise connection between incarceration and suicide is difficult to document, but some research has been conducted in this area. According to Warren Breed's (1970) study in New Orleans, nearly 50 percent of the black males who committed suicide had a history of conflict with local authorities, particularly with the police, while only 10 percent of the white suicide victims in that city had had similar experiences. (Indeed, [our brothers] had numerous run-ins with the law in the years before their deaths [from suicidal behavior].) We do know that the possibility of suicide or suicidal behavior increases after individuals come into contact with the criminal justice system.

Not surprisingly, the subject of jail suicides is controversial and politically unpopular; its occurrence is frequently underreported and sometimes the cause of survivor lawsuits. In 1989, researcher Lindsay Hayes of the Massachusetts-based National Center on Institutions and Alternatives (NCIA) estimated that suicide was the leading cause of death in American jails (L. Hayes 1989: 7). A 1986 study of jail suicides by Hayes's group for the US Justice Department's National Institute of Corrections found that the suicide rate in detention facilities was roughly nine times greater than the suicide rate of the general population. African-American men accounted for 16 percent of 401 jail suicides in the NCIA's 1986 study of suicides that were reported in county and local jails nationwide (L. Hayes 1995: 432). This information is particularly significant when one considers that black men represent about half of the nation's prison population. In 1997, according to the Sentencing Project in Washington, DC, blacks comprised 51 percent of the state and federal prison population (M. Mauer 1997: 3). Moreover, blacks are arrested and jailed three to five times more often than whites.

In 1969, researcher R. W. Maris, looking at young blacks in Chicago in conflict with institutional authorities, concluded that the black suicides he studied were the result of retroflexed – anger turned inward – rather than of despair. In his study, he interpreted these suicides as reactions to social crises – imprisonment, arrest, breaking up with a spouse or girlfriend (R. Maris 1969). And as Hayes of

the NCIA noted in a 1989 article in the *Psychiatric Quarterly*, several other elements have emerged as possible motivators or facilitators of jail suicides, including drug abuse or excessive drinking, recent loss of personal stability, guilt or shame, sexual assault or the threat of sexual assault, mental illness, poor health, or the reaching of an emotional breaking point (L. Hayes 1989: 19). Some jail suicides may also reflect the dynamics of fatalistic suicide . . . It is quite possible that black men experience these negative outcomes in disproportionately higher numbers than whites, much as blacks are more likely to be the victims of crimes.

The relationship between black males, crime, incarceration, and suicide cannot be overlooked. Indeed, some investigators feel that the rage felt by black youth can manifest itself in either suicide or homicide. Homicide is the leading cause of death among young black men, accounting for approximately one-fifth of the deaths in late adolescence during most of the 1980s and 1990s. Suicide rates among young black males still lag behind the total homicide rate, but the suicide gap between young white males and young blacks is narrowing.

Some social scientists have speculated that the homicide rate varies inversely with the suicide rate in a given community. In the United States, homicide among non-whites occurs from seven to ten times more frequently than it does among whites. In South Africa, the homicide rate among blacks is four times higher than the rate among whites, but the white suicide rate is four times higher than the black rate. In 80 to 90 percent of the homicides in the United States, the victim and the offender belong to the same ethnic group. In other words, one could speculate that the suicide rate in black communities would increase if the number of homicides decreased. There is no way of conclusively testing this hypothesis. Moreover, during the past sixty years, suicide and homicide rates in this country have varied independently and, in the black community, both rates have increased over time.

Other social scientists have explored the possibility that some black homicides are "victim-precipitated" and therefore represent a form of suicide. This theory is in keeping with the general impression that blacks are more likely than whites to be involved in various types of self-destructive behavior. Some observers conclude that urban riots are a form of community suicide in which the loss of black lives and black-owned businesses is far greater than the damage done to the white power structure. Others have commented that the Black Panthers and similar militant African-American political groups were on a suicidal quest, that they seemed intent on provoking law enforcement authorities to kill them. The problem with such speculations is that they often arise from unconscious – or conscious – attempts to blame the victims for the brutal acts of others.

The proliferation of guns, drugs, and crime, and the further fragmenting of the black family during the second half of the twentieth century, are all pieces of the puzzle presented by the increasing suicide rate of African Americans, particularly males. But again, the beginning of an understanding of the factors behind the current increase doesn't explain why, despite their hardships, the

suicide rate among blacks has been significantly lower than that among whites for decades. We have discussed the argument that blacks are better able than whites to adjust to adversity because the fortitude and endurance necessary for survival have been nurtured by their art, culture, and religious institutions for centuries, as embodied in folklore and in grief-laden gospel, spiritual, and blues songs: "Nobody Knows the Troubles I've Seen," "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child," "The Down-Hearted Blues."

From the cradle to the pulpit to the grave, many blacks are taught that suffering on earth leads to great rewards in the afterlife. There are undoubtedly exceptions, but in the Christian beliefs adopted by most African Americans, expectations of life and death are in many ways different from those of whites. A tragedy that might drive a white man to self-murder might be accepted by a black man as merely one more episode in a life of hard times. That this high degree of resilience may now play a part in black reluctance to seek mental health counseling is worth considering. Where, for example, does a psychologically troubled young black man or woman turn when his or her family and peer group speaks only of "being strong" in the face of problems, especially if the clinical professional community is unfriendly and/or insensitive?

Further, many blacks – particularly those living in isolated low-income communities – have a unique attitude to so-called deviant behavior. Many blacks recognize that antisocial behavior is sometimes necessary for survival; and, while not expressly condoning it, many are likely to tacitly accept such behavior. Thus a black man who is a numbers runner or a street-level drug dealer is not likely to be permanently stigmatized in his neighborhood, while a white businessman convicted of embezzlement may be unprepared for the enduring scorn he is likely to face in his community. This kind of acceptance is understood to have a downside as well: black criminal activity, which often leads to incarceration, has in some parts of the black community become a fact of life.

All this may be true, but what else would account for the disparity?

Some writers and researchers have reported that blacks are less likely to become psychotically depressed and therefore are less suicidal than whites, citing the fact that for most of the twentieth century, in the Deep South the white rate of hospitalization for psychotic depression was four times higher than the black rate. But blacks, particularly in "whites only" environments, had difficulty gaining hospital admissions, especially to private institutions. Several studies have found low incidences of depression among blacks, but this conclusion may be due, at least in part, to bias on the part of white researchers who hold impressions of blacks as "happy-go-lucky." Some reports show that whites with serious mental disorders are likely to be diagnosed as having depressive illnesses, while blacks are more likely to be diagnosed with other psychotic disorders (Bell and Mehta 1980, 1981).

Many clinical professionals assume that depression must be low in blacks simply *because* for so many decades the suicide rate of blacks was less than half that of whites. This raises questions, however, about the influence of history and

cultural myths on investigators' thinking. If physicians generally perceive blacks as "happy" though downtrodden, what is the likelihood that they would identify depression in an African-American [patient] if they saw it? Perhaps what looks like a twenty-year increase in black male suicide is as much a function of late-coming awareness of biases in the medical community and of improved reporting methods as it is of any cultural or psychological factors that might be propelling a true increase.

Whatever part white bias plays, it has been consistently reported that severe depressive illness afflicts fewer black Africans than North American blacks. Some investigators believe that early intensive mothering in African groups, and willingness to satisfy a child's strong early nurturing needs, serves to stave off the development of depressive illnesses. Another theory holds that like some African communities which provide strong, nurturing bonds that decrease individual loneliness and isolation, black Americans share an extended family in which kinship bonds are strong and many relatives are available to love and support an individual in distress (A. Poussaint 1975). Within the past twenty years, this argument continues, a breakdown in traditional black American family life has produced a host of serious problems, including a rise in drug use, teen motherhood, and crime, along with educational setbacks.

Some psychiatrists have suggested that blacks in America suffer from chronic despair as a reaction to racist oppression, and we know that despair – the loss of hope – is a major risk factor for self-destructive behavior, from the overt act of leaping to one's death or shooting oneself to long-term, indirect suicide through unhealthy lifestyles (excessive drinking, drug abuse, and, in the age of AIDS, risky sexual behavior). Therefore, an examination of the impact of America's history of white racism – both on the mental health of blacks and on black skepticism toward the medical community – is essential to the nationwide effort to understand and prevent African-American suicide.

Note

This chapter is an abridged excerpt from Alvin Poussaint and Amy Alexander's *Lay My Burden Down: Unraveling Suicide and the Mental Health Crisis among African-Americans* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000), pp. 45–62. It appears by permission of the authors and Beacon Press.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Some Reflections on Challenges Posed to Social Scientific Method by the Study of Race

Jane Anna Gordon

Straight Ahead
The road keeps winding
Narrow, wet, and dimly lit
Vainly looking for a crossroads
Lead a trusting soul astray.
For some, this road is smooth and easy
Riding high without a care
But when you have to use the backroads
Straight ahead leads nowhere.

Abbey Lincoln

As things are, our opinions upon the Negro are more matters of faith than of knowledge. Every schoolboy is ready to discuss the matter, and there are few men that have not settled convictions. Such a situation is dangerous. Whenever any nation allows impulse, whim or hasty conjecture to usurp the place of conscious, normative, intelligent action, it is in grave danger. The sole aim of any society is to settle its problems in accordance with its highest ideals, and the only rational method of accomplishing this is to study those problems in light of the best scientific research.

W. E. B. Du Bois

Introduction

The hopes with which discussions of method are suffused are at once very grand and extremely humble. In their more ambitious form, the aspiration is that the very use of a method could transform one's vision. It could ensure that students and scholars see a complex world unsullied by wishful thinking, momentary distractions, or a hunger for opportunistic resolution. These aims for method contain within them a reproach of radical subjectivism and a cultivating

sympathy for an ambulatory commitment to the possibility of Truth. In its positivist instantiation, the resulting aim understands good methods as those that require the reduction of the individual scholar and student so that she is subordinated to a collective technical endeavor. She authenticates her work by rendering it transparent to other similarly trained technicians. If done well, she, in her work, does what anyone else might do, and sees what everyone else, when faced with a similar dilemma, *must* see. Validation of her pursuits is the very fact that they could easily be replicated by anyone with sufficient and comparable training. The aim of these zealous cogs is a democratic one of a radically procedural variety. The study of race and the consequences of a culture of racism for science and scientific method confront us with the limitations of what methods so understood can rightfully promise to secure.

Although Richard Dawkins (1989) among others has presented scientific work as dealing the deathblow to religion and religious faith, the commitments that give scientific inquiry life and the values that make it meaningful cannot be explained without reference to faith of some kind. The very preoccupation with discovering "what is real," or the effort to translate what one finds to others, is neither self-evident nor inevitable. Such projects are instead the manifestation of orientations toward the world rooted in fundamental understandings of the significance of human life. The project of positivism is constituted fundamentally by bad faith, a form of self-deception in which agents evade their own agency: rather than making use of positivistic methods as one possibility of many, limited in their promise by the very nature of the pursuit of absolute scientific objectivity, such researchers assign a necessary relationship of *these* procedures to both accuracy and truth; in such a move the use of positivistic method is itself transformed into ideological or dogmatic positivism. The very project that aspirations to falsification embody turns back on itself. By bad faith I do not mean to suggest that such scholars are insincere. They are often deeply sincere.[1] And their desire to eviscerate the touch of human subjectivity from scientific inquiry leads to the reification of inherited conceptual categories (which, in turn, encourages the naturalization of the products of earlier human efforts, projects, and imaginative work) and the valorization of an approach that unreflectively and arbitrarily adopts categories of analysis produced elsewhere. What positivists make transparent is a procedure, not the substantive commitments underpinning it.

In what follows, I will suggest that there is a humanistic social scientific alternative. Its advocates also refute a radical subjectivism, arguing that such a move does have a unique relationship to the project of scientific inquiry, but they do not suggest that attempting to eradicate human subjectivity will improve the quality of scientific work through the avoidance of the individual idiosyncrasies of the researcher.[2] They envision a different role for methods, one that disciplines the human imagination, displaces the familiarity of the social world, and represents the aim of a social science that can offer accuracy and truthfulness to efforts at progressive change. These methodologists embrace a critical good faith that rejects a closed orientation to the new and unfolding and rejects also a nihilistic

account of human beings and their potential. These humanistic social scientists, too, accept the fallibility of individual, highly historical human efforts, but this does not produce an annihilating impulse in them. For them, this implies the need rigorously to articulate and tirelessly defend their efforts to explain the world through the work of constructing concepts, theories, and explanatory devices by illustrating the ways in which the work makes human life more fully understandable. Humanistic social scientists too invoke standards rooted in ideals outside of a model of science, but not because they ultimately view the work of human hands as the overly volatile creative work of a self-obsessed and confined human mind. It is because they seek the liberation of human potential and believe that the role of science is to help bring this into being. These faithful few come face to face more frequently with questions regarding the limits of their methods. Driven by unfolding and changing questions, for them the scientific endeavor must involve also the *way* of discovering what it is they seek to disclose. The very idea that one routinized approach could help to grasp and reveal all questions relevant to an always in-the-making human social life is absurd. Herein lies a major point of contention with the approach of someone like Charles Taylor, whose hermeneutic circle, though emphasizing the necessarily contextual and interpreted nature of meaning, appears, in his claim that most work in the human sciences must be retrospective, ultimately to evade the challenge and perhaps unnerving responsibility of engaging in a forward-looking, non-relativizing social science (C. Taylor 1985).

A look at past and contemporary social and natural scientific work on race often makes one want to dismiss much of it as pseudoscience. Unfortunately, such an argumentative move illuminates little and does nothing to explain the perceptions of either the practitioners who produced the work or the community that offered them and their work recognition and rewards. These scientists may well have followed the dictates of the more procedural variety of scientific method. At issue is the construction of categories, questions, and key variables that were assumed as their starting points and whether the reified procedures continued to be the most appropriate ones available to them.[3] A culture of racism begins with efforts to deny the humanity of groups of people sloppily defined, while attempting to explain who and what they are with reference to a set of fixed forms of explanation. Sustaining such fictional narratives, even as they change over time, requires extensive lies to oneself and to others. These color and constitute the social world studied by the social scientist and the context that produced many of their underevaluated techniques. Much social scientific work, whether explicitly or by default, aims to buttress values that require sustenance in the myths that we have mentioned. Work that challenges such structuring lies may also be scientific, but will be so with the faith in the possibility of a world transformed in humanistic directions.[4] It will begin by ascribing humanity and affirming human agency where it has been denied. These commitments will significantly alter the questions that will determine what may serve as viable methods and procedures and what these can produce as outcomes.

In what follows, I will explore W. E. B. Du Bois as a theorist and exemplar of humanistic social scientific work on race. I will then turn briefly to three Du Boisian inspired challenges to the treatment of race in quantitative social scientific approaches. These writers are fully committed to such work, but they believe that the racism of many of its practitioners has led to extensive mismeasurement, raising questions about its rigor as science. I will then turn to three qualitative social scientific projects that exemplify the ways in which humanistic questions and commitments can improve the use of scientific method, offering fuller accounts of social life precisely because of the vision and commitments that have driven the scientific endeavor. I will conclude with some theoretical arguments about the relationship between social science and hegemonic state projects and the ways in which metaphors and analogies that constitute science change over time. The goal throughout is to argue that the attempt to rid science of explicit human commitments and projects promises to reduce the validity of the work as genuine science, masking, as it seeks to make the procedure transparent, the substance of what is actually being tested and proven.

W. E. B. Du Bois as a Model of Humanistic Science of Race

In 1898, the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* published Du Bois's "The Study of Negro Problems." It was a presentation he made to the academy a year earlier at the conclusion of his monumental thousand-page ethnography, *The Philadelphia Negro*, a work that established the field of urban ethnography. In the article he affirmed the value of systematically studying society, however unguided by principles and circuitous some efforts to grasp its truths had been. Even if a body of knowledge or an indisputably major contribution had not yet emerged, a series of discrete truths had been produced by this work. Du Bois argued further, in what may have alarmed his readers both black and white, that African Americans were uniquely worthy of study, that doing such social scientific work should form the core of the emerging field of sociology. Falling short of the challenges posed by this opportunity to trace the development of a race, an opportunity that Du Bois considered the only one of its kind presented to a modern nation, would not only hurt the name of the American people, but would also forestall the international cause of science, degrading the sanctity of the very project of truth-seeking just as it needed confirming, in order lazily and shortsightedly to indulge the whims of the day. This task would not be easy, however. Du Bois cautioned that when it came to studying black people, traditional standards required of rigorous scientific work were quickly abandoned. Gone were efforts critically to select evidence; to choose the best approach to study; to assess biases of sources; to assess critically degrees of typicality or representativeness; to determine the sources of figures, the method of their collection, and their margin of error; or to question the compe-

tence of informants. He illustrates the ways in which race prejudice colored the possibility of basic insight – that the "crime or carelessness of a few of his race is easily imputed to all, and the reputation of the good, industrious and reliable suffer thereby" (L. Bobo 2000: 191). Another danger ensuring a lack of rigor was in the very framing of the questions to be studied. These questions lacked diversity and range, interrogating only the perceived influence of black people on the lives of whites. With neither training nor a commitment to the sanctity of science and scientific method, the fiercely racist convictions held by many writers on these themes made it impossible to call their work scientific in Du Bois's view, though he admitted, somewhat ironically, that they might be interesting as opinion. Still, using scientific criteria to make distinctions between more and less legitimate accounts of race did not receive much of a hearing.[5]

Du Bois went so far as to argue that some social problems could not be studied in their own time, that public feeling surrounding them was characterized by so resilient an opposition to uncovering their truths that reasoned analysis was unattainable. He contended that it would have been impossible to uncover the necessary facts to give an adequate explanation of black crime and lynching in his day. The response to these limitations, however, was not to collapse into nihilism, but to inaugurate and buttress a robust faith in the merit and consequences of searching for truth, with the mediate goal of social reform aimed at identifying the way in which a society could fulfill its avowed humanistic commitments. The results were to be available to all, but, he reiterated, "the aim of science itself is simple truth" (W. Du Bois 2000a: 23). Such an approach required what Lawrence Bobo later called a holistic method, one that drew on all of the resources available in the social sciences and importantly, for a seemingly positivistic scholar, emphasized the need for an interpretive sociology that could explore "those finer manifestations of social life which history can but mention and which statistics cannot count" (W. Du Bois 2000a: 25). (This is the kind of existential sociology exemplified in the work of Joe Feagin and Hernán Vera, discussed later.) Lewis Gordon argues that this affirmation of black interiority is an explicit challenge to the epistemic closure with which the study of black people had been and continues to be undertaken. It challenged the notion that blacks were only exterior beings and that to see the blackness of an individual was to know all there was to know about all blacks (L. Gordon 2000a: 275). Du Bois emphasized further the need to distinguish between people and their environment, the historical nature of social problems, and the need for a social psychology. Such work would most appropriately be supported by universities which could, through sponsoring research, repay the generosity of their benefactors by offering up to the nation scientific truths to help solve vexing societal problems. Du Bois concluded his classic essay instructively:

> Finally, the necessity must again be emphasized of keeping clearly before students the object of all science, amid the turmoil and intense feeling that clouds the discussion of a burning social question. We live in a day when in spite of the brilliant accomplishments of a remarkable century, there is current much flippant criticism

> of scientific work; when the truth-seeker is too often pictured as devoid of human sympathy, and careless of human ideals. We are still prone in spite of all our culture to sneer at the heroism of the laboratory while we cheer the swagger of the street broil. At such a time true lovers of humanity can only hold higher the pure ideals of science, and continue to insist that if we would solve a problem we must study it, and that there is but one coward on earth, and that is the coward that dare not know. (W. Du Bois 2000a: 27)

Social scientists, in Du Bois's view, needed to wage a loving and courageous fight against societal impulses to collapse into presentist reassurances in the face of complicated political challenges. They needed to affirm that the realization of human projects required the affirming of human dignity through intellectual work that documented, as it sought to understand, the full range of human being. The positivism for which Du Bois has been so frequently attacked embodied a naively formulated version of a commitment that shaped his life's work: to suspend the "natural attitude" through which black people were viewed.

Anthony Monteiro has argued that affirming black people as worthy of social scientific study, as subjects rather than objects of social life, was nothing short of revolutionary. Social scientific questions had emerged out of a European historical experience that in turn provided its central tropes (A. Monteiro 2000: 223). Du Bois challenged these Eurocentric assumptions, arguing that with the post-slavery improvements of which they were capable, black people were not most appropriately studied through biology, but were "entitled to have [their] interests considered according to [their] numbers in all conclusions as to the commonweal" (ibid: 224). Monteiro argues that this required rethinking the language, methods, and civilizational assumptions of the social sciences. Du Bois understood this in scientific terms: he was challenging the poverty in concepts and methods of the social sciences of his day. Lucius Outlaw affirms that Du Bois saw most scientific work as unsystematic, lacking a detailed grasp of the details of black life, a sense for the differences between groups of black people and the divergent histories of these black subgroups (L. Outlaw 2000: 293). According to Monteiro, he sought to "use science against scientific racism in the interest of reform and uplift . . . with scientific accuracy" (A. Monteiro 2000: 225). The incorporation of black people into American life would require and assist in the intellectual and political task of breaking down the edifice of white supremacy. Du Bois wrote: "Either he dies or he wins. Either extermination root and branch, or absolute equality. There can be no compromise. This is the last great battle of the West" (A. Monteiro 2000: 230).

Lucius Outlaw emphasizes the unique person that Du Bois was – that his courage, optimism, and faithful belief that the role of the talented and the relatively advantaged was to acquire truthful knowledge in order to lead progressive change, generated scientific outcomes and insights that few others, if presented with similar circumstances and challenges, would have produced. Lewis Gordon, in contrast, emphasizes Du Bois's unique understanding of human beings as a subject of study, arguing that his work always emphasized that human liberation required rigorous social scientific inquiry, in Gordon's words that "the search

reveals the normative and the normative reveals the search" (L. Gordon 2000a: 268). Du Bois, as a result, stressed the fundamental incompleteness of human beings and the challenge that this posed to attempts at complete social scientific explanation, at closing a social question for good. The necessary consequence of this position for Du Bois, according to Gordon, was also to suggest both concrete and metaphorical meanings of a blackness that would change over time, here foreshadowing what Frantz Fanon would later call the sociogenic theory of blackness (F. Fanon 1967b).[6] The color-line thereby became paradigmatic, argues Gordon – a way of delineating normal and abnormal identities of all kinds. The assertion of the changing nature of delineations between normal and abnormal identities allowed Du Bois to criticize the orientation governing much of the work conducted on black people. Gordon describes this orientation, the spirit of seriousness, as one that collapses the distinction between values and objects of value, so that, for example, black people are not people with problems but problem people. The outcome is work that does not deserve the name "study," for the genuine encounter that "study" suggests never transpires.

Du Bois insisted instead on a world characterized by agency, contingency, and historical problems. Indeed, Du Bois demonstrated this in the "Study" itself: commissioned, in essence, to prove the existence and ubiquitous nature of black pathology, he argued instead that the pathologies were in fact social and political. Through this work and others, Du Bois recentered political questions, staving off nihilism in the face of constant political resistance to black incorporation into social life, providing an example of how, in Gordon's phrasing, one studies "a human population whose humanity is a structurally denied feature of the society in which they are studied" (L. Gordon 2000a: 274). Du Bois suggested that unique insights into this could be found in places that people often sought to avoid.

In sum, Du Bois argues that studying black people as people with inner life and perspectives on the world would make studies of American social life more scientifically rigorous. Such an affirmation of black humanity, aimed at historical recognition and genuine political enfranchisement, would lead to framing more appropriate research questions and designs that did not aim at either relativism or social scientific work as therapy. Although such work would always involve particular issues inspiring the intense feelings that Du Bois feared, an insistence on striving for as full and as grand an understanding of human life as was possible in that moment through making use of the full range of disciplinary resources available promised the ability to fight for progressive change with more than swagger and a fist. To understand the world was in part to constitute it, which was to alter what was to be grasped.

Humanistic Quantitative Studies of Race

Reflecting on the legacy bequeathed by Du Bois to social scientists, geneticist and anthropologist Fatimah Jackson argues that most important were the expectation

and value of honest scholarship, bold vision, and faith. Asserting the humanity of black people had required Du Bois to challenge mismeasurement and hold practitioners of science accountable to a truth that transcended the pressures of the moment. Jackson argues further that the effects of the color-line on scholars continued to undermine rigorous study of human variation as they essayed to cloak political and social agendas. Whether in China or in the US, Jackson argues that social scientists exemplify a modern science saturated by a color obsession that links norms with whiteness and their aberration with things dark. "The 'problem of the color-line' mindset remains a conceptually vexing distraction to good science and meaningful measurement, as it was in an earlier, less technologically robust era" (F. Jackson 2000: 156). She asks: "Will human variation, particularly the range and depth of diversity exhibited among African Americans, continue to be presented, albeit framed in molecular jargon, as 'labels of shame,' deviations from a European human norm, and relics from a premodern past?" (ibid: 157).

Jackson explains that while medicine has traditionally sought a single norm for all people, physical anthropologists have attempted to delineate several, each appropriate first to a particular group and secondarily to the species as a whole. These measurements were to be based on "'pure,' unadmixed groups, known entities, each with their own norm, a collection of true breeders" (ibid: 160). African Americans thus emerged as problematic. Their origins were not clearly known – many social scientists, in fact, framed them as a post-1492 creation (which of course begs the question of the status of white colonists, who, though obsessed with racial purity, were also fundamentally changed by living on another continent under different conditions and by their own forays into racial mixture, however publicly disavowed) – and they manifested high morphometric variability, resulting, in large part, from the definition of black Americans through the "one drop rule." As a seemingly ahistorical people, African Americans were not deemed suitable sources for understanding the relationship between language, genetics, geography, and the environment. "And yet the Negro was available, accessible, unprotected, and phenotypically different enough from the stereotypical European American to be an interesting contrast" (F. Jackson 2000: 160). An ongoing sense of illegitimacy, Jackson argues, has inhibited systematic study of black Americans in their own right and led to the marginalization of such work that does exist. To make this kind of work normative would require actual investigative research that would involve directly encountering people of color and acknowledging structure and purpose in the lives of black individuals and groups where an assumption of chaos has prevailed. Instead, African Americans remain understudied, presented ironically as homogenous and monolithic, uniform in and only through their distinctness from Europeans and European norms for which they could function as a contrasting foil. "Measurements of the African American serve most consistently as the anatomical and physiochemical contrast against which European Americans might find solace, reaffirm their centrality in the human story, reiterate their geographical expansiveness, and restate their dominance and unity" (ibid: 161).

Jackson concludes that although innovations in DNA testing should – in efforts to map genetic histories – center Africa, and the realization demonstrated by the greatest diversity of genes present there that most people, white and non-white, have a recent link to the continent, the very questions posed in the design of the research agenda of mainstream geneticists does not make such conclusions appear as possessing possible explanatory value. Too many current efforts to study human variability tend frequently to reproduce demarcation lines between groups by employing forensic and genetic models that do not adequately capture features of genetic evolution or the effects of migration and mutation mechanisms and models that pool people based on the presence or absence of existing sociocultural criteria treated as biological assessments of membership. Jackson suggests instead a model that draws on technological innovations that can detect genetic susceptibility to particular environmental toxins, the likely degree of success of organ and tissue transplants, and links ancestral biomarkers in African Americans to geographic and environmental zones in Africa and elsewhere. This alternative approach, called ethnogenetic layering, is a highly flexible model designed to study the diverse genetic history of post-conquest North America, which it divides into a series of localized genetic mosaics shaped as the genes and cultures of groups of migrants settled, creating and being shaped by their environments. Early products of the research singled out groups within the larger African-American population in order to trace the ways in which ethnicity, region, genetics, and environmental susceptibility intersect. This work, as social science is intended to do, raises questions about human social life, about the ways in which migration, cultural continuity, and regional identities develop, leaving studiable genetic traces that in turn raise questions about the ways in which biological predispositions and social choices interact. Suggested in a spirit kindred to a theorist like Imre Lakatos (1978) is that sophisticated falsification, defined by a constructive criticism informed by a rival research program that anticipates auxiliary theories and necessary theoretical adjustments, replace a more crude challenge to other genetic work. Like Du Bois, Jackson convincingly argues that studying black people through genetic research will be uniquely valuable to the larger cause of science, due both to the pivotal role of African-American people in mapping ancient genes and migrations, and also precisely because efforts to evade such a genuine encounter have produced a history of limited explanation and understanding. Jackson's humanistic concern – that the bracketing of black people as subjects of serious study has barred them from potential health benefits and a richer human history – has the effect of challenging social science to be more scientific, to develop methods required of fuller accounting inspired by a political commitment and enhanced social vision.

Tukufu Zuberi, similarly, is concerned with efforts to fix (to make unchanging) inadequate categories of analysis used to study race. In the case of social scientific statistical work, he suggests that such work aims at causal explanation without attempting to understand the sets of concerns and measurable criteria that constitute questions regarding people of color.

He further argues that a racial reasoning that has helped to justify racial stratification is the result of practitioners unreflectively using concepts without adequate understanding of their origins (T. Zuberi 2000: 172). Tracing the genealogy of contemporary statistical work through Francis Galton, Francis Ysidro Edgeworth, Karl Pearson, W. F. R. Weldon, and George Udny Yule, Zuberi suggests that the experimental notion of causal inference has served as an implicit aspiration in statistical research design. The result of this use of experimental language entails a commitment to an experimental model of analysis. The difficulty is that social scientific researchers are studying causal effects to make inferences about the effects of manipulation on exposed populations. The problem is that these manipulations can only be altered or controlled in theory. A sense of how fundamentally incomplete these results are is absent in most policy-oriented research that argues for manipulating the real world to affect people in ways based on the inferences of researchers.

Zuberi, like Jackson, is highly critical of the bases for classifying peoples under study. Based on observational characteristics, these are quickly ascribed to "races" rather than to "populations," which are then framed for study as genetic populations. Sounding much like Jackson, Zuberi writes:

> A population of races in this sense is a statistical concept based on a politically constructed measure. Deriving a statistical model of social relationships requires an elaborate theory that states explicitly and in detail the variables in the system, how these variables are causally interrelated, the functional form of their relationships, and the statistical quality and traits of the error terms. Once this theoretical model is achieved, it is possible to estimate a regression model. Rarely, however, does social science research provide the level of theoretical detail necessary to derive a statistical model in this manner. (T. Zuberi 2000: 176)

Perhaps most significantly, statistical models often present race as a causal explanation rather than as possessing a particular kind of relation of association with other variables. Fundamentally absent is a nuanced and compelling theory of the relationship between these different variables that group around black people. Zuberi advocates for statistical work that frames race as an individual attribute interacting with other social processes rather than as something causal that can be manipulated. Description of forms of association cannot prove causation, but can lay the basis to support a causal theory and act as a piece of evidence as other forms are amassed. Zuberi cautions: "When we discuss the 'effect of race,' we are less mindful of the larger world in which the path to success or failure is routinely influenced by other contingencies or circumstances" (ibid: 182).

The embracing of statistical results by policy makers who do not acknowledge the uncertainty inherent in the findings they cite or the ways in which the statistical analysis of race and gender change with understanding of these categories lead to familiar fallacies: races of people are blamed for their unemployment rather than discriminatory practices by employers or the entire range of disadvantages born of systemic inequities in resources that make racial exclusions

appear justified; the effects of environmental racism are blamed on the choices of people without resources rather than tracing the causal factors to discriminatory practices by institutions that determine the location of hazardous waste within cities. Zuberi concludes: "But the racialization of data is an artifact of both the struggles to preserve and to destroy racial stratification. Before the data can be deracialized, we must deracialize the social circumstances that created race. Statistical research can go beyond racial reasoning if we dare to apply the methods to the data appropriately" (ibid: 183). A less statistical science would be one that rather than evading a complex and changing account of the relationship between race and other processes under study attempts to account for it, so that numbers so produced more accurately represent those they have claimed to approximate. A concern for racism raises methodological issues about the rigor of a particular approach to quantification, suggesting that noxious history may well be em-bedded in less reflected upon procedures that make claims to universal applicability. Zuberi insists that quantitative social scientists employing categories of race should admit to the ways in which their projects will be impacted by the presence of racism in the context surrounding their research.

In Gerald Jaynes and Robin Williams's mammoth edited volume on blacks and American society, they describe the scientific challenges they confronted in the task of offering such a comprehensive account. Relations between black and white Americans had come to involve more complicated and nuanced behavior than in the past, making assessments of black status more difficult, they argue. An effort to avoid oversimplification and to do "justice to the realities of American society" culminated in a text that offered no easy answers or conclusions, although attempts were made to analyze causes where possible. An absence of available materials required for basic descriptive work was made more difficult by questions requiring scientific inference that would direct the outcomes of social scientific study at every turn. Although longitudinal studies of the same units over time were helpful (less misleading than correlations based on cross-sectional data), they were not sufficient in these authors' view. They write: "This study involves many important dilemmas with regard to values, ethics, and relationships between scientific analysis and social policy. The facts never speak for themselves in any field. There is no way of avoiding value-laden choices" (Jaynes and Williams 1989: 46).

They soon found that many widely accepted global generalizations were profoundly misleading, and that national data would have to be disaggregated to explore important differences between regions of the country, between individuals and families, and groups divided by age, sex, and education. Many differences in earlier findings appeared, on closer analysis, to have been the result of different model designs and data samples. Indeed, the majority of their work was devoted to reinterpreting this data rather than collecting more. As Zuberi also suggested, the implication is that the data and findings could not be analyzed without knowledge of a broader sociopolitical setting and reflective decisions about the constitutive role of choices, values, and possibilities in determining measures and

definitions. Although concerned with black status, an analysis of which could draw heavily on concrete indicators of social position, Jaynes and Williams believed a full understanding of this theme would have also to engage attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions and would need to attempt a formulation of the relationship between social institutions, race relations, and underlying social conditions. Sources of change in this complex of mutually dependent variables could occur at any juncture. Jaynes and Williams still thought it possible to identify those that would likely have longer and larger effects.

Although inferences about cause and effect in social systems were very difficult to make well, such efforts were indispensable to thoughtful policy formation. Key was to root such appraisals in particular social contexts where interrelated causes could be more fully understood. This work could help to intervene in debates over whether policy should aim to change black people's behavior or the opportunities and choices available to them. Jaynes and Williams conclude that reductions in discrimination and segregation had resulted from political mobilization of black communities and their white allies. These successes included improvements in black economic status and in educational attainment that, in turn, augured increased political participation. Driven by a concern for racial egalitarianism and obstacles to it, these authors emphasized how fundamentally quantitative social scientific work was shaped by its researchers. Rather than evade or deny this assessment, they strove to understand it and its political and ethical implications. As comprehensive an account as they offered, they repeatedly affirmed that a social world can never be completely explained, but that efforts to shape it must always be informed by as truthful a description of it as is humanly possible.

Qualitative Humanistic Work on Race

Herbert Gutman's *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, *1750–1925* begins with an epigraph written by Ralph Ellison: "Prefabricated Negroes are sketched on sheets of paper and superimposed upon the Negro community; then when someone thrusts his head through the pages and yells, 'Watch out there, Jack, there's people living under here,' they are all shocked and indignant" (H. Gutman 1976: 1). Gutman aims to offer an account of the black family during and immediately after slavery that neither paints this history as idyllic or as pure agony, and that frames black people as more than a response to their own oppression. Gutman writes that the methods used and the questions asked take account of the unique conditions of enslavement, but would be appropriate to the study of "all exploited and dependent social classes, slave and free, white and non-white" (ibid: 3). He continues: "The same approach, for example, will be used to study Afro-Americans before and after slavery, a point emphasized not to argue that slaves and free workers had a similar history but rather to suggest that the same questions can and must be asked of such classes to understand important simi-

larities and differences between them" (ibid: 3). His effort, Gutman explains, is through fragments of clues, to try to understand a small set of slaves and freed blacks. He says, quite simply, "our concern is with what sustained and nurtured their beliefs and behavior. Nothing more" (ibid: 4). Interestingly, Gutman brought to the archive many of the questions driving James Scott's ethnographic research. The findings of localized forms of resistance suggest that neither historical nor ethnographic approaches alone can fully account for the findings offered by these scholars. Gutman, like Scott, would challenge Paul Willis on the one hand, and Michael Buroway on the other, arguing that theoretical explanations are neither fully formed out of contact with communities under study (either through ethnographic research or through the imaginative encounter with archival materials) nor developed exogenously to be tested afresh against wholly new experiences (J. Scott 1985; P. Willis 2000; M. Burawoy et al. 1991). They should instead develop through a dialectic in which the very meanings of subjectivity and objectivity are transformed by one another.

Gutman frames his own work as a challenge to accounts of the black family offered by social scientists like E. Franklin Frazier, who stressed the crisis produced in the immediate aftermath of emancipation. In their account, the authority of the master had regulated sexual relations and marital ties, and crucially had sanctioned (while undermining) the need for the authority of the black father within the home. Sudden disorganization resulting from institutional change strained relations between husband and wife and removed what had previously functioned as restraints on disorderly impulses. Gutman bemoans that Frazier, though progressive in his commitments to racial egalitarianism, had fueled the flames of racist scholarship with such analyses that ultimately, in Gutman's view, distorted the relationship between continuity and change in the relevant circumstances. Slave familial bonds had not, he argues, depended on ambivalent bonds between master and slave, and slave families had never been recognized as unions or protected by law. Still, upon their emancipation, most Virginian ex-slave families were composed of two parents, and the majority of older couples had lived together for long periods in unions recognized by other slaves. The Union Army population censuses of Montgomery (1866), Prince Anne (1866), and York (1865) county blacks documented 1,870 black households in which two or more members had either blood or marriage ties. The Freedman's Bureau 1866 marriage registers for Louisa, Nelson, Rockbridge, and Goochland county blacks recorded the renewal of 2,817 marriages. These were the only documents of their kind found in the Virginia Freedman's Bureau manuscript records. Gutman describes the significance of these findings as follows:

> Instead, because the registers showed that settled slave marriages existed in very diverse social circumstances, it meant that young slaves everywhere learned from other slaves about marital and familial obligations and about managing difficult daily social realities. Adult slaves in long marriages were direct "models," making it possible to pass on slave conceptions of marital, familial, and kin obligation from

> generation to generation. The domestic arrangements visibly accessible to young slaves were not just those of shattered slave families and the more secure families of owners, other whites, and free blacks. How married slaves dealt with family life and social existence over time taught them much more than what they could learn from better-advantaged whites or from scattered communities of free blacks. (H. Gutman 1976: 17)

Rather than prizing marriage as an inherent good, Gutman sees it as evidence of a discrete social world with concerns for its own reproduction. More than raw sensuality, incapable of seeing beyond the circumstances most immediately before them, this evidence clearly refuted the assumption that slaves were incapable of sustaining meaningful domestic arrangements, a capacity that many social theorists, Frazier and de Tocqueville included, thought indispensable to organized, non-pathological familial life. Such authors had been right to emphasize the abusive and ubiquitous nature of anti-black oppression. What they missed was the ability of slaves to adapt to their life conditions and to teach their children to do the same. Gutman cites a particularly astute Freedman's Bureau officer, who wrote of the ex-slave in 1866: "He loves to congregate in families, in groups, in villages . . . This was his habit originally in Africa, and the plantation always had some *social* features which, in a measure, alleviated the negro's bondage. To this they are habituated and for it they show a fondness" (ibid: xxi–xxii). Cultural traditions with roots in the African continent as well as independent sets of rules and standards of conduct, practices of naming children after slave blood kin, and a discrete set of marriage rules of conduct were in evidence on plantations, including those begun during the Revolutionary War. The shift in the structure of agrarian slavery had the effect of spreading these cultural forms throughout the South. Like the more contemporary work of Lisa Garcia Bedolla (2000), who suggested that divergent forms of political participation on the part of Latino immigrant communities be understood through a more thoroughgoing engagement with their internal life and the ways in which it constituted an active response to cultural change and continuity in the face of experiences of immigration and limited acculturation, Gutman looks to individual practices to delineate the responses by slaves to oppressive conditions.

Gutman writes, perhaps alarmingly, of the methods and aims of this monumental book:

> The most important single piece of historical evidence in this book is neither an isolated statistic, a historical "anecdote," a numerical table, nor a chart. It is the photograph that adorns the jacket of this book and serves as its frontispiece . . . Those who study the tables and charts in this book should keep that magnificent photograph before them. The charts and tables tell mostly about men, women, and children like those portrayed in this unusual document. I hope that readers will know "five generations" better after finishing this book. (H. Gutman 1976: xxiv) (See figure 19.1)[7]

Figure 19.1

Significantly, Gutman visited the same archives as other historians of slavery before him, but his effort to see slaves and ex-slaves as human beings attempting to carve out human lives under oppressive conditions made a fundamentally different narrative appear out of the same documents. Far from corrupting, his concern to give an account that seemed to fit more accurately with his understanding of people's behavior offered a more complicated account of continuities and

changes in forms of black family life and penetrating suggestions about processes of cultural change and forms of community resistance in the face of dehumanizing circumstances. Although clearly immediately relevant to understanding black history, the insights offered and challenges raised were far-reaching, affirming again the ways in which political concerns can affirm commitments to rigorous social science. Interesting as well is the way in which work on black people by humanistic social scientists produces ambitious and grand work that refuses to stop short at disciplinary boundaries not devised for their purposes.

Joe Feagin and Hernán Vera's *White Racism: The Basics* (1995) is informed by a different but similarly humanistic concern, for what they call the human waste involved in sustaining anti-black racism.[8] They describe this as follows:

> In the past and in the present racial oppression has required very large expenditures of time, energy, and resources, not only on the part of the black victims of white racism but also on the part of whites themselves. Certainly, this time and energy could have been much more productively spent in self- or societal improvements and advancements. In a very real sense, all the victims and perpetrators are losers. (Feagin and Vera 1995: xii)

Many whites realize in a superficial way the waste of black talent caused by discriminatory practices, but few fully realize the loss it has constituted for black people. Whites also do not tend to realize the waste of their energy devoted to maintaining a stratified system. Influenced by the Marx-inspired writings of Georges Bataille, Feagin and Vera argue that all societies generate surplus energy and resources, more than what sustaining life requires. This excess, to quote Bataille, "must be spent, willingly or not, gloriously or catastrophically" (Feagin and Vera 1995: 8). Feagin and Vera suggest that how this surplus will be mobilized will depend upon cultural and social values of a given place and time. They have, Feagin and Vera remind us, been used to create social welfare systems that have limited poverty, crime, and human suffering. Racism, by contrast, which involves practices and deeply embedded myths, wastes talents, energy, and social, economic, and political resources. Feagin and Vera contend that the maintenance of such a wasteful system will soon threaten to destroy US society. Importantly, they urge that we consider the production as well as the consumption end of the contemporary political economy, thereby affirming Kevin Bales's charge that the increased number of people in the world need not have had the effect that it has had – driving down the value of people, making everyone, but especially those vulnerable due to their class – ethnic, racial, and gender – expendable and consumable (K. Bales 1999).

This kind of dissipation of human resources that Feagin and Vera describe often goes on in a heavily ritualized way, drawing on what they call "sincere fictions" or misconceptions that degrade blacks to furnish the grounds for narratives of white superiority. An understanding of it can give unique insight into other forms of equally decriable discrimination. Participation in racist rituals is done in different kinds of ways: actively (by obsessive racists for whom racism

offers a temporary resolution to deeper psychological problems), acolytes, and passive participants for whom racism is little more than an effort to conform to their environment. Some whites act hostilely toward black people out of genuine hatred; most are driven by a combination of fear, ignorance, a sense of personal vulnerability, a desire to do as others do, or from jealousy. Feagin cites Lillian Smith, who suggests that anti-black thinking is "ceremonial, [that it slips] from the conscious mind deep into the muscles" (Feagin and Vera 1995: 12). She continues: "The mother who taught me tenderness . . . taught me the bleak rituals of keeping Negroes in their place" (ibid: 12).[9] This, in addition to a substantial white consensus fueled by the writings of scholars like William Julius Wilson on the declining significance of race, and to changes from earlier periods that have led to whites eschewing "racist" as a personal trait, using instead layers of euphemisms to mask discriminatory actions, makes more difficult the challenge of studying racial events.[10]

Offering an existential or interpretive sociology of the kind for which Du Bois had argued, Feagin and Vera analyze recent racial events, offering "narratives [that] expose social phenomena as 'temporally ordered, sequential, unfolding, and open-ended "stories" fraught with conjunctures and contingency.' Most of these events could have followed a different path if certain factors were slightly or substantially different or if certain people had acted in different ways" (ibid: 17). Their concern is not to label individual white people as racist, but to understand how white supremacy constitutes vision, constituting not only what will serve as credible accounts of the historical past, but also more generally what people will attend to, listen, and notice (they cite Gordon H. Bower on this point) (ibid: 15). They illustrate the ways in which racist actions are inflected by the resources available to the actors involved that reflect their class, gender, and regional characteristics. The employer who does not interview black job candidates does not envision himself a cross burner. These different varieties of racist acts allow their interpretation as discrete and coincidental in their sequencing, rather than as constituting an integral and ritualized set of commitments.

Feagin cautions that much racism may well be shaped by the world of the unconscious, as psychologist Joel Kovel contends; that in blackness people project fears and associations with things and desires they consider dirty, dangerous, or scarily unknown. Still, the costs of a learned asociality along racial lines, a way of inhabiting the world that denies the humanity of others and that involves negotiating spaces in such a way as to avoid experiences that might contradict these "sincere fictions," are very great. In addition to material costs (Feagin and Vera argue that although anti-black racism may help individual whites in the short term – securing an insecure job for them over someone of color – it reduces the political efficacy of alternative bodies like unions), moral costs (a lingering sense of guilt over the actions of their forebears), and psychological costs (Thomas Pettigrew, like Frazier before him, argued that about 15 percent of the population were obsessive racists and genuinely ill; 25 percent were anti-racist; and the remaining 60 percent were conformists who would change their views if the

situation warranted it), the political costs are substantial: this racist tradition makes a thoroughgoing democracy impossible. If social life begins with the possibility of undergoing the kind of imaginative leaps that are required in empathy, an *a priori* aversion to it makes attempts to create equality futile. Racism destroys the likelihood of feelings of solidarity. The disdained target is, after all, seen as something less than human, as little more than an interfering object. Feagin and Vera point out that comparable experiences of oppression tend to help people to see through myths that frame black people as subhuman and suggest that the cultivating of such "approximate experiences" can be the basis of progressive education. Whether such experiences underemphasize the specificity of anti-black hatred and whether they do not, in fact, encourage an effort to distance oneself from potential future suffering is not clear in the analysis of Feagin and Vera. More likely to change people's attitudes toward race, however, is to make the form of change desired appear as the accepted way of doing things. As harrowing as such a realization might be, Feagin and Vera insist that in most instances it is not knowledge but understandings of expected behavior that shift people's actions.

The thoroughgoing and embedded nature of American racism in political life requires an eclectic and far-reaching set of solutions. Feagin and Vera argue, following Richard Delgado, that much contemporary racism is of a procedural as well as the more substantive overt kind. In the former, rather than the hostile anti-black activity of the latter, white established rules put the onus on blacks to provide tight "chains of causation" to demonstrate inequities (Feagin and Vera 1995: 182). Such efforts to repeal Civil Rights gains make many pessimistic about the possibility of change in a progressive direction. Feagin and Vera insist that the US has been a country with a history of attaining many seemingly impossible objectives. They have in mind the institution of democracy, the incorporation of stigmatized immigrants, and the brief reduction in anti-black racism in the period surrounding the World War II and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. In addition to more typically liberal insistence on education and enforcement of Civil Rights, Feagin and Vera also argue for a far-reaching infrastructure, building reparations for black people and the convening of a new constitutional convention.

Feagin and Vera conclude with Derrick Bell that racial progress will only happen when whites see it as in their own interest to seek such change.

> Critical to solving the problem of the great racial divide in the United States is a new type of human consciousness. This consciousness must involve a new type of white rationality that redefines racial relations as a reciprocal integration of whites with blacks as well as blacks with whites, and also the mutual integration of blacks and whites with all other racial and ethnic groups. (Feagin and Vera 1995: 192)

Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994) provide an interesting comparison with the work of Feagin and Vera. They also emphasize the political nature of race

and racial concepts and the necessity of understanding their development and use so as to oppose racism effectively. Unlike the work on race first produced by the US modern social science that had emerged during a period marked by the institutionalization of Jim Crow and a successful movement of Asian exclusion that made race absolutely central, more contemporary mainstream and left work on race frames it as a byproduct of some other, more fundamental social relation. The racial formation theory they offer instead emphasizes that concepts of race are always politically contested, irreducibly central features of US politics. They seek to counter theories that had not grasped the ubiquitous racial logic that penetrated both macro and micro levels of social life (Omi and Winant 1994: 60).

Although it would initially appear that Omi and Winant fulfill the requirements of a humanistic social science – they do, after all, emphasize human agency throughout and the fundamentally political nature of race – their work manifests several real shortcomings on methodological grounds. Their aversion to taking seriously biological categories is clearly out of a legitimate criticism of biologistic race reductionism, but it has the effect of producing a narrower account that brackets the relationship between race and biology completely. Few outside of a sliver of academics will believe that there is no such relation, however terribly or perniciously it may have been formulated. Although there are times when people misidentify the race of a particular person, their ability to make such identifications works well most of the time. What is more, few parents would accept such a view. Any pregnant mother with access to a physician is asked about the health conditions and ethnic and racial background of her own and the father's families. Although a rough method, these provide some indices of genetic issues most likely to be relevant to what one should know to handle the health of one's child responsibly. Fatimah Jackson illustrated convincingly that the challenge is not to eradicate scientific analyses of race, but to base it on a more thorough and genuine effort to understand the complexity of black communities and the ways in which race, ethnicity, region, culture, and biology intersect. Also, the emphasis of Omi and Winant on the politico-historical dimensions of race is a useful guide for reconstructing the history of their use, but does little to account for the meaning that race possesses in the lives of actual human beings. What is more, they unconvincingly eschew black specificity in their analysis, suggesting ultimately that the severity of discrimination directed at dark-skinned people amounts to historical accident. In comparison with the work of Feagin and Vera, Omi and Winant go but so far.

Comparable to the kind of differences I am describing are the different ways in which the communities under study appear in the work of Cathy J. Cohen (1999) on the one hand, and Ira Harkavy and John L. Puckett (1994) on the other. In Cohen, criteria for evaluating the social services that target the people under study do not emerge from them and in some instances even seem antagonistic to approaches they would choose. This itself is not grounds for criticism. Studying a community does not require subordinating oneself in the role of obsequious reporter. But what emerges as legitimate social critique does lack a depth that

can only come from efforts to reconcile tensions between conflicting but deeply held commitments and aspirations in ways that mediate the very meaning of objectivity and subjectivity. In Harkavy and Puckett, the framing of the problems worthy of study draws on genuine interaction with the people and perspectives of the community relevant to the research and communicates a real desire to embrace and grapple with the responsibility of universities to the communities in which they are based. Feagin and Vera emphasize the political nature of race and its history, but move beyond this to questions that other social scientific methods can illuminate. As a work that claims to do race theory, in contrast, Omi and Winant's lacks a sense for some of the categories relevant to social life and the aspirations, dread, and expectations that galvanize people to participate in political projects. They need an account of how such motivations would shift over time.

Changing Scientific Metaphors

Is it sheer *naïveté* to raise such questions about the relationship between race and social scientific method? Is such work, in the main, ultimately nothing more than an attempt to legitimate and preserve inegalitarian features of the societies in which it is done?

"Social science," according to David Goldberg, "is important to the modern state both *functionally* and *ideologically*. In the former sense, social science furnishes the state and its functionaries with information . . . Ideologically, the state often invokes expedient analyses and the results of social science, whether by collaboration or appropriation, to legitimize state pursuits and to rationalize established relations of power and domination" (D. Goldberg 1993: 152–3).[11] Goldberg argues that state functional social science can be conducted *in virtue* or *in service of* state ideology. In the former, the claims produced by the work can only hold if one accepts their ideological grounds. In the latter, as in the case of history that framed the landing of white settlers and northern African tribes in the Cape of Good Hope as simultaneous and leading to just war, efforts are made to substantiate the legitimate ground of political aspirations. State ideological social science clearly has functional value, in its ability to rationalize, legitimate, and conceal. It may define and affirm interests. The use of functional social science is instrumental and pragmatic, assisting in buttressing already existing ideas for states committed to social scientific research. Goldberg admits that one should add to the distinction between *in virtue* and *in service* whether something was produced simply by a desire to know.

Goldberg also admits that a defender of positivism would argue that the distinction between data and their use is legitimate and important and that ideological social science is not science at all. But such a point too easily glosses over the more foundational question of how deeply the study and analysis of human beings are

> affected in all kinds of ways by the *Weltanschauung* in terms of which it is conducted, that it is often conducted by and for the state, that it may be formative in constructing the "imagined community" of racialized state- or nationhood, and that once collected the data has to be interpreted before conclusions about social policy or action can be drawn. In short, there is nothing remotely resembling pure social data whose meaning and truth are incontestably self-evident. (Ibid: 154)

Goldberg traces the trend of disciplinary histories in colonial and postcolonial Africa, how anthropology departments were replaced by sociology departments at local universities. Political scientists replaced anthropologists as the functional and ideological representatives of the West and the argument that new markets could only be found within politically stable states. The indigenous modes of political organization that had so interested anthropologists now needed immediate modernization. The embrace of the project of capitalist development by African governments soon foretold the replacement of political scientists by economists. The transition from indirect rule was to an independence tempered by economic control by Western capital and techniques to rationalize the control of its advocates. Although radical social scientists have attempted to challenge epistemological colonization, they have not drastically influenced the terms of racialized knowledge production. Goldberg describes as more far-reaching and familiar three hegemonic conceptual schemata for talking about racialized others: the Primitive (manifest in anthropology, ethnography, art history, and legal and cultural studies and criticism), the Third World (including political economy, political science, sociology, development, and area studies), and the Underclass (sociology, politics, policy studies, justice studies, and urban planning). In each instance, their more uncontroversial meanings seem to give their racist ones respectability. Goldberg concludes:

> Exercise of raw power of repressive state apparatuses is difficult enough on its own to face down; the "normalization" of disciplinary coercion and control sanctioned by this State Social Science prompts a social collaboration of faceless and silent subjection that only a radical epistemological and axiological transmutation may be able to dislodge. So racial knowledge is not just information about the racial Other, but its very creation, its fabrication. Racial knowledge has been a foundational structure of the social sciences and humanities, even as it has been denied. (Ibid: 184)

If there is a limited range of roles social scientific work on race can play, what accounts for the groundbreaking work of scholars like Du Bois, Jackson, Gutman, and Feagin and Vera? How is it that they occupy such different roles? How can their contributions become normative? Do they exemplify the use of a fundamentally different set of analogies and metaphors as the structuring guide to their method of inquiry?

Nancy Leys Stepan (1990) argues that although relegated to the domain of imagination, poetry, and fantasy, metaphor and analogy underpin scientific explanation, if not, in fact, constituting scientific inquiry itself. Although many (including physicist Pierre Duhem) sought a scientific language comprised only of mathematical statements with analogies discarded, this has led to much confusion and many mistakes in grasping the scope of science, as in the example of mistaking nature, rather than our efforts to understand it, as mechanical. More recently, writers like Thomas S. Kuhn and Richard Boyd have argued that analogies are central to science. They are, according to Boyd, "irreplaceable parts of the linguistic machinery of scientific theory" (N. Stepan 1990: 39). Stepan writes: "Some philosophers of science are now prepared to assert that metaphors and analogies are not just psychological aids to scientific discovery, or heuristic devices, but constituent elements of scientific theory" (ibid: 39). Stepan aims to offer a critical theory of scientific metaphor, focusing on the historic ways in which analogies between race and gender have been used in the natural sciences. She suggests that this example can help to explain the cultural sources of scientific analogy, their role in scientific reasoning, their normative consequences, and the ways in which they change.

Stepan argues that scientists of human variation often used racial differences to explain gender differences and vice versa, so that women's low brain weights were compared with those of lower races, which supposedly explained the childlike behavior in both. The picking of such analogies is not arbitrary, argues Stepan. "In fact," she writes, "it is their lack of perceived 'arbitrariness' that makes particular metaphors or analogies acceptable as science" (ibid: 41). Some will extend already existing metaphors functioning as common sense within the given culture. In other instances, these will appear as strikingly new. All face a particular set of constraints drawn from the history of the discipline, the community studying them, and the objects of study. Stepan cites Sander Gilman: "We do not see the world, rather we are taught by representations of the world about us to conceive of it in a culturally acceptable manner" (ibid: 44). Metaphors construct similarities and with them, claims Stepan, new knowledge: likenesses that are not yet known; likenesses discovered through the metaphor. Guiding research and what is of relevance to it, metaphors organize scientists' understandings of causality. In the science of human difference, its central metaphors suggest that more than structural likeness between races of color and women, there is a similar cause of these similarities and of the difference between women and non-white men, on the one hand, and white men, on the other. Barry Barnes has argued that the analogy is an explanation precisely because understanding of one piece is understood in relation to the other. Crucially, a metaphor suppresses information that does not fit the metaphor; it selects out realities incompatible with itself. This process can be unconscious. Such an insight would suggest that concerns raised by the anticipatory adjustments of the approach of Lakatos might have counterparts in the very thinking that constitutes all comparable methodological techniques.

A central task of philosophers of science is to detect these structuring metaphors, rendering visible what has often become sufficiently commonplace to be taken literally rather than metaphorically. An explanation of how change in these paradigms takes place requires building upon Kuhn's work, in Stepan's view, emphasizing not necessarily the logical process generated by a paradigm from growth to decline, but also an instrumental sociology of the context out of which science emerges. This requires not only understanding the internal dynamics, domains, and aspirations of the scientific community itself, but changing political and social expectations as well.

Stepan concludes, arguing as Goldberg did, that many might frame the science she describes as analogic to be pseudoscience and unworthy of such analysis or expectation. She rejects this, arguing that this was not pseudoscience to its practitioners or in the eyes of mainstream scientific communities. She concludes: "We need a critical theory of metaphor in science in order to expose the metaphors by which we learn to view the world scientifically, not because these metaphors are necessarily 'wrong,' but because they are powerful" (ibid: 54). We need also, if we are so inclined, to choose different metaphors reflectively, trying, at each turn, to ensure that they are ones that will open and reveal, rather than affirm what is through a structural foreclosure.

Conclusion

The project of a humanistic social science (like that of radical humanism) cannot be compared to a journey with an attainable end. It must, by definition, lead a more isolated existence that embraces dislocation in its very constitution. It must be a nagging dialectic, urging on the possibility of greater freedom, the possibility of a richer human existence, never resting for more than a moment. It embraces a critical good faith that demands that responsibility not be deferred or forever located elsewhere. It must remind us of the difference between necessity and appearances of it, announcing that decisions were, in fact, decisions, even if only ones to affirm and to continue, and that familiarity makes these neither natural nor inevitable, but projects of their own, sustained by human energies and by human resources.

What we seek in humanistic social science then is an account of the social world that grasps as fully as possible what it is to be a human being. It does not recoil from the immensity of the task or retreat into methods behind which their genuine commitments may be hidden. It refutes bitingly the claim that to introduce substantive commitments is to open scientific research to fierce battles that promise never to be resolved. These are already being waged by those who were not fooled that there would ever be a respite. No, humanistic social science calls and commands that one jump into the fray. And it attempts in a resistant world, to embrace the role of the gadfly, demanding always, in the spirit of Aristotle's reflections on practical reason and social life two and a half millennia

ago, that things could be otherwise and that what we choose, we must choose reflectively.

In a similar spirit, Du Bois writes:

> To the Almighty dead, into whose pale approaching faces, I stand and stare . . . Teach living man to jeer at this last civilization which seeks to build heaven on Want and Ill of most men and vainly builds on color and hair rather than on decency of hand and heart. Let your memories teach those willful fools all which you have forgotten and ruined and done to death . . . Let then the Dreams of the dead rebuke the Blind who think that what is will be forever and teach them that what was worth living for must live again and that which merited death, must stay dead. (W. Du Bois 1968: 422–3)

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Notes

1 This formulation of bad faith is Lewis Gordon's (1995a: part 1). For a discussion of how the quality of dogmatism in intellectual traditions should not be sufficient grounds for their complete dismissal, whether in the case of African mythical and religious thought or dogmatic positivism and scientism, see Paget Henry (2000a: ch. 1).

2 I do not, in the defense of social science that is not premised upon the eradication of the subjectivity of the human subject, mean that social scientists should include sociological descriptions of themselves so that their readers will be "more informed" in their reading of the work produced. Although such self-descriptions need not do any harm, they do smack of a kind of race reductionism that suggests that descriptions of one's race, class, and gender add up to any clearly definable meaning. One may be a white middle-class person who turns to study race out of a reaction to one's environment, hoping, in such a move, to receive desperately desired recognition; or one could turn to the study of race with a sober love that desires to understand the community from which one has come. A simple descriptor would not capture such a difference and the many, many more potentially relevant ones. Often, it is the other things communicated in introductions and acknowledgment sections – about to whom one feels indebted, about what it is that one sought to accomplish in one's work, or how it is that one expresses love or feelings of collegiality – that may better bespeak the orientation and existential commitments of the researcher who approaches the study of race.

3 An objection could be raised here, that few scientific racists did practice procedurally rigorous science, that in fact few scientists use recipe-like procedures for anything beyond rechecking what they have already "found." This does not address the larger question that concerns me, however, which is about the consequences of reifying procedures themselves as the midwife of true and rigorous science. It would hardly be a surprise if charges of racist science were

countered by turning for legitimation to "the procedures" used, to the delineated hypotheses, data, testing, etc. that could be verified by outsiders regardless of their more subjective commitments. The response, for instance, to the work of someone like the esteemed former Harvard professor Richard Herrnstein would be that many readers did not (for politically charged reasons) like the outcomes of his scientifically rigorous work. Herrnstein was described in his *National Review* obituary, written by Charles Murray, as the prototype of the scholar: erudite, meticulous in his research, and as exhibiting a touch of genius in his insights. The procedures that lead to the awarding of positions of esteem within hierarchies of academic institutions take on similarly mythical proportions, so that the very fact of a scholar's ascendance takes on the status of evidence (for most) of the quality and unquestionable validity of their work.

4 In this instance and all others, when I refer to "faith" I am referring to an orientation to the world rooted fundamentally in an understanding of the significance of human life. Such understandings necessarily dictate what will constitute sources of moral authority; what will be believable and on what legitimating grounds; how one relates to the new and unfolding; what is and is not translatable or communicable and to whom.

5 Because of the pioneering nature of Du Bois's early work, he does not cite scholars who exemplify the limitations he is describing. Du Bois argued in this essay that a bibliography of research on the American Negro was needed. He did, in the same note, briefly summarize the existing literature with which he was familiar. He included general historical studies of the Negro, special histories of the institution of slavery in different US states, investigations into the economic aspects of slavery, the formation of anti-slavery opinion, government census and bureau reports, and the work of "foreign students" De Tocqueville and Martineau, Halle and Bryce. At the end of the brief list, he added that "there [was] a mass of periodical literature, of all degrees of value, teeming with opinions, observations, personal experiences and discussions" (W. Du Bois 2000a: 20).

6 What is at stake in sociogenic analysis is to understand human beings having rejected categories of human nature and overly simplified accounts of relevant history. Lewis Gordon writes: "The struggle must be waged, Fanon concludes on two levels: the ontogenic level of individual struggle and the phylogenic level of structural and biological imposition. The mediating factor here bridges the gap between the two as sociogeny" (L. Gordon 2000b: 54).

7 This photograph is now in the public domain, but I would like to thank the Library of Congress to whose collection it belongs. The photograph's film negative number is LC-B8171-152A. The photographer, Timothy O'Sullivan, was born in Ireland and came with his family to New York soon after his birth. He was apprenticed in the New York City studio of Matthew Brady in his teens. O'Sullivan took this and several other photographs of J. J. Smith's plantation when working as a photographer with the Federal Navy while on seaborne expeditions along the Atlantic coast of the Confederacy. I would like to thank "Librarian 2" in the reference section of the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress for retrieving this information.

8 They explain their specific focus on anti-black racism as due to its paradigmatic nature. An understanding of it can give unique insight into other forms of equally deplorable discrimination. Feagin and Vera add that although the treatment of Native Americans in some senses predated the importation and exploitation of Africans, there was no long range effort to incorporate Native Americans into the white economy and society.

9 Frantz Fanon wrote, with bitter humor, that when individual black people are in all-white settings they cannot help but begin to secrete blackness from their pores (see Fanon 1967b: ch. 6). For a discussion of this point in Fanon, see K. Oliver (2004).

10 Feagin and Vera compare this to white powerholders who had paraded their racism as a sign of honor, and employers and politicians who publicly joined the Klan in the 1920s and 1930s.

11 I am aware that aspiring political scientists are discouraged from talking of "the state" in Althusserian-style language, that this is taken to reify the series of complicated and interrelated processes and people that it is the work of this discipline to complicate. I am, however, still convinced that we must take seriously instances in which it was politically popular to aspire to create "states" or experiences of "the state" in antagonistic and heavily policed relations with subordinated black communities. The aim is not to then carry on with this limited language as before, but to suggest that criticisms of it may be characterized by shortcomings as well and that we seek an alternative that attends to these too.

CHAPTER TWENTY

African-American Queer Studies

David Ross Fryer

Introduction

African-American Queer Studies denotes the set of discourses on the study of sexuality and gender identity as they relate to issues of race and ethnicity, in particular blackness and African-American identity. Sexuality is one of the most highly contested sites of identity construction in modern times, highly regulated by normative social, political, and cultural institutions, structures, and discourses. It is also one of the greatest sources of human expression and holds within it profound possibilities for liberation and transformation. Consider that even in situations of political and social oppression at its most extreme, there exists the possibility of a sexually based encounter, with others or with oneself. American slavery enchained the physical and political bodies of Africans and people of African descent, but it could not take away the possibility of sexual expression, even while regulating it and controlling it. It is no wonder that sexuality remains one of the strongest fields of personal power, that it resists the trends to explain it away as nothing more than the product of discourse, that it holds its dignity even as society strips us of ours. Yet is has been repressed, it has been regulated, controlled, taken by others. Given its importance, its power, it is no wonder that when sexuality is dictated and taken from us we feel most deeply the loss of our selves, the violation of our souls, the degradation of the human spirit. Sexuality is one of the greatest sites of human liberation, just as it is one of the most dreaded sites of human oppression.

The history of sexuality in the United States is no exception to such opposition. Michel Foucault may have shown us how Victorian society was repressive in name only, while the actual mechanisms of power led to the proliferation of perversion in the service of social normativity, but in the US things have developed differently. The Puritan implantation is different than the Victorian one, and perversion here has been hunted in unique and destructive ways. And as sexuality has crossed paths with other forms of human expression and other fields of human oppression, such as race, gender, and class, new and different

modes of expression and oppression have emerged with correlative acts of resistance to bondage and oppression of homophobia and heterosexual normativity, just as there was resistance to the bondage and oppression of slavery and racism, sexism, and capitalism.

It is within this history that the discourses of African-American Queer Studies has emerged: first in individual expressions and acts of resistance, later as part of larger movements, finally on its own and in various ways; from its roots in the semi-closeted sexuality of the Harlem Renaissance and the possibilities of countercultural sexuality in the normative 1950s, through its involvement in the gay liberation movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, emerging in its own voices in the late 1970s and early 1980s as its first great theorists hit the scene. Today, it burgeons, breaking out in new directions and toward greater expressions of individual and group resistance and freedom.

But the term "queer" can be misleading, and must be used with caution and explanation. Why queer? Why not "lesbian and gay," or "lgbti" (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersexed), or "sexual orientation"? Why queer studies?

The term "queer" has only recently been "reclaimed" from its linguistic use as a slur to a term of self-identification. "Dyke," "fag," "fairy" – all once simply terms of debasement – are now part and parcel of the queer community. But what does "queer" signify? "Queer" is currently used primarily in three ways in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersexed communities. First, "queer" is used as an umbrella term, as an overarching way of bringing lgbti under one name, both to avoid the awkwardness of alphabet soup and to offer a display of solidarity among the disparate communities the term tries to cover. Second, "queer" is used as a challenge to the focus on sexuality implicit in the term "lesbian and gay studies." If, as Abelove, Barale, and Halperin (1993: xv) claim, "Lesbian/gay studies does for sex and sexuality approximately what women's studies does for gender," then it necessarily excludes the transgender community. "Queer" thus includes gender identity within its parameters in a way that "lesbian and gay" does not. Third, "queer" is used as a challenge to the conservative aspirations of many lesbian and gay liberation movements, movements that (a) base themselves on the existence of an essence and inner identity that determines its members and (b) work toward inclusion within the accepted norms of society, claiming that gay men and lesbians aren't a danger to normative society because they hold the same values as it does. "Queer" challenges both of those claims: first, it recognizes the contingent and constructed experiential and discursive realities of the lives of those who aren't normatively heterosexual; second it includes within that group not only those who are of a different "sexual orientation," but also those who don't fit into the normative gender binary of "man/woman" (gender identity), in relation to not only "masculine/feminine" (gender expression), but also in relation to "male/female" (biological sex); third, it refuses attempts at normalization, recognizing itself as a danger, as a challenge, indeed as a danger to the implicitly limiting goals of the heteronormative paradigm (e.g.,

forced monogamy, the two-parent family unit, monosexuality, and fixed gender identity).

So, why use the term "queer studies" instead of the term "lesbian and gay studies"? In the introduction to their edited volume, *Queer Studies: A Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Anthology*, Brett Beemyn and Mickey Eliason explain their choice of the term "queer" over and against other possibilities:

> We have chosen to use "queer" because it . . . leaves room for all people who are attracted to others of the same sex or whose bodies or sexual desires do not fit dominant standards of gender and/or sexuality . . . The concept of "queer" also aptly characterizes our relationship to the academy. The study of same-sex sexual identities and behaviors is seen as out of the ordinary, unusual, odd, eccentric. "Queer" thus describes our position in regards to the mainstream: we don't quite fit in, no matter what labels or terminology we use. (Beemyn and Eliason 1996: 5–6)

Beemyn and Eliason's volume stands as an explicit challenge to Abelove, Barale, and Halperin's *Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* (1993). To use the term "queer" in this chapter is for me to endorse the three meanings cited above, and to endorse the reasons Beemyn and Eliason cite in their use of the term. In particular, to use the phrase "African-American Queer Studies" is to recognize in African-American thought more than movements for inclusion, more than movements about validating inner, pure, identities, more than movements that turn on essence, and more than movements that, while still willing to fight for their own "rights," refuse the rights of others considered "too out there," as the terms "lesbian" and "gay" so often do. It is to include African-American bisexuals, but it is also to include the African-American transgender communities – from drag queens to FTMs (female-to-males) and beyond; it is to act as an umbrella that can explore the identity politics of 1970s' black lesbian feminism, but can see beyond the limits of such a view to look at the postmodern and anti-identity challenges that have emerged in the last twenty years in such full force both beyond and *within* African-American Studies. And as I use the phrase, African-American Queer Studies finds its roots in the experiences of African-American gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals of earlier generations, just as it finds its roots in the homoeroticism of the blues and Negro spirituals, the transgender undertones of passing and crossing, and the refusal to be what the white heteronormative US society demands.[1]

A Genealogy of African-American Queer Studies

The roots of African-American Queer Studies

In an instructive article, Gregory Conerly argues that African-American lesbian, gay, and bisexual theory didn't begin to emerge in full force and in its own right

until the late 1970s. He cites two reasons for this: "the politicization of sexual and gender identities brought on by the lesbigay and feminist movements" and the "racial/ethnic and gender divisions within the movements themselves" (G. Conerly 1996: 135–6). These two reasons actually are one. According to Conerly's argument, the emergence of a unique African-American "lesbigay" discourse owes itself to the inabilities – unconscious, accidental, and deliberate – of the dominant discourses of gender and sexuality to address issues of race adequately. In this, Conerly makes a good point. But equally important to the emergence of uniquely African-American queer discourses is the refusal of African-American movements for liberation to address adequately issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. Thus, we really can see a twofold reason for the late emergence of the discourse: a double refusal, or, more accurately, two unique refusals, one from each of these two large-scale political/theoretical movements, African American Studies born out of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and gay and lesbian studies born out of the Gay Liberation Movement that "began" in 1969, to address the uniqueness of how race, gender, and sexuality are co-experienced in the African-American queer communities.

But it would be misleading to say that there was no African-American queer discourse prior to the late 1970s, and it is worth looking back a bit further to see the precursors to the modern theorists of African-American queer identity and the foundations they laid for the more explicit African-American queer discourse to come. A few things require special mention, as they laid the ground for the African-American queer discourses that would soon emerge.

First, there are a few root sources that need to be recognized in order to understand the trajectory of contemporary African-American queer studies. One is the long history of sexuality throughout African-American history, dating back to slavery. It is this history in which the African-American community finds its roots, and in which much African-American discourse finds its foundations. The ability to recover a history of African-American queer sexualities is important in legitimizing queerness within the African-American community. The other is the explosion of aesthetic and philosophical production of the Harlem Renaissance. The Harlem Renaissance stands as one of the most important moments in African-American history and the development of African-American discourse. To be able to trace queer sexualities in particular back to voices from that time, including Countee Cullen, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, Angelin Weld Grimké, Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larsen, Alain Locke, and Bruce Nugent, is an essential move for contemporary African-American queer thinkers. Sexuality was an important theme in their lives as well as their writings, and the refusal of white normativity often included the refusal of a traditional compulsory heterosexuality.

Second, two movements stand as foundations for the African-American queer discourses that emerged in the 1970s, the movements that themselves actually launched both lesbian and gay studies and African-American Studies in the US academy, as well as made racism and heterosexism issues to be taken seriously in

the American political scene and in society at large: the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and the Gay Liberation Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The African-American Queer Studies that emerged in the late 1970s owe their existence to these two movements in two ways, one positive and one negative. First, it was the Civil Rights and Gay Liberation movements that forcibly thrust racial and sexual oppression into the modern public eye and that brought about the changes in social and political structures that allowed active challenges to racism and heterosexism to emerge from the closets into the mainstream of US society.[2] Second, as Conerly has properly suggested, it was the inability of both of these movements to see beyond their narrowly defined goals of identity-based liberation that forced a new, explicitly African-American queer discourse to emerge in their wake. The Civil Rights Movement was often profoundly sexist and heterosexist, even if its rhetoric was not, just as the Gay Liberation Movement quickly became predominantly white and notoriously liberal, even though its earliest proponents were neither.[3]

Third, one figure deserves special mention. While there were several persons in modern African-American history who figure into the development of African-American Queer Studies, one is worthy of particular note; we might see him as the great-grandfather to modern African-American gay history, and while not strictly a gay theorist, he nevertheless stands both as a brilliant novelist who captured the experiences of both the modern African American and the modern gay man and as the great public figure who expressed his identities proudly in the face of both homophobia and racism. We are speaking of James Baldwin. His first two novels remain two of his most important and present him as a significant voice for both African-American liberation and gay liberation movements, though politically he worked more for the former than the latter. *Go Tell It On the Mountain* immediately established Baldwin as a bard of the black experience in America, and *Giovanni's Room* equally established him as a voice of a gay male sensuality that generations of gay men clung to for years to come. In the 1960s Baldwin was dubbed "Martin Luther Queen" and harshly castigated for his homosexuality, but Baldwin did not back down from either his blackness or his gayness, and until his death in 1986 stood as a model for both African-American and gay liberation struggles to many. In this, he must be read as one of the foundational figures who laid the groundwork for the emergence of African-American queer discourses of the 1970s, even if he was insufficiently drawn on as an explicit source.[4]

From the 1970s to the 1980s: Black/lesbian/feminism, womanism, and the reign of identity politics

The late 1970s was a time of proliferation of African-American lesbian and gay discourse, but interestingly, the majority of what emerged was lesbian focused.[5] This is interesting precisely because of a profoundly different attitude found in the African-American community toward gay men than toward lesbians; this is

a recurring theme in reflections on gayness in the black community. Audre Lorde (1984) asks, "Why is the idea of sexual contact between Black men so much more easily accepted, or unremarked [than the idea of sexual contact between Black women]?" bell hooks makes a similar point when she notes that while growing up she found that "male homosexuality was much more widely accepted than lesbianism" in the black community (b. hooks 2001: 190). Perhaps because the black gay man was more widely visible and accepted, the black lesbian in particular found the need to express her own voice, to speak to and from her own struggles and her own identity. And if no single figure stands out as the voice of the African-American queer community in the 1960s and early 1970s, the one that does emerge in the late 1970s is arguably the most important in the history of the discourse. While many important black lesbian voices emerged in the 1970s (Ann Allen Shockley, Barbara Smith, Cheryl Clarke, Gloria T. Hull, to name just a few), none was quite so important as Audre Lorde – poet, essayist, and activist, and black/lesbian/feminist.

Audre Lorde's writings remain today as forceful and potent as when they were first published and read. "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" is a widely read feminist statement, one that has withheld the tides of postmodernist and poststructuralist innovations in feminist and gender theory, still important, still poetic, and still true in its vision. Lorde's reminder that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" remains somewhat of a battle cry in radical feminist circles. Her "Open Letter to Mary Daly" stands as a classic critique of a narrowly construed white feminism that refused to see beyond its own ethnocentric racism. Her poetry is as powerful and beautiful today as it was twenty years ago, and her courageous battle with breast cancer is a reminder of limits and possibilities of the human experience.

"Scratching the Surface: Some Notes on Barriers to Women and Loving" was first published in *The Black Scholar* (1978), and was reprinted in the collection of Lorde's essays and speeches, *Sister Outsider* (1984). While Lorde's writings were many, and while much of her work (especially her poetry) dates earlier, this essay stands as a classic statement of Lorde's theories, and bespeaks her status as the high priestess of African-American Lesbian Studies. Lorde's aim in the essay is twofold: first, she wants to connect various forms of oppression and the struggles for liberation that follow from them; second, she wants specifically to defend the black lesbian from attacks from other positions within struggles for black liberation. On the second aim, Lorde exposes the twofold attack on the black lesbian, from the black man and from the heterosexual black woman (A. Lorde 1984: 48). Lorde fends off both critiques with the claim that "In the same way that the existence of the self-defined Black woman is no threat to the self-defined Black man, the Black lesbian is an emotional threat only to those Black women whose feelings of kinship and love for other Black women are problematic in some way" (ibid: 49). Arguing against the forces that have taught black women to "view each other with suspicion, as eternal competitors," Lorde argues for a mutual respect among black men and women, heterosexual and

homosexual, as they band together to fight the various structures that oppress them all, thus bringing us back to the first aim of the essay: to recognize the necessity of all oppressed persons to join together to fight all forms of oppression (ibid: 52).

One of the reasons why Lorde's ideas remain as powerful today as twenty-five years ago is because of her empowering and profound ability to think politically from a position of identity – what we call identity politics – and, in turn, to encourage us to do so. Identity politics is a sticky and dangerous business, though, as we have come to see. One of its most serious dangers is that it often sets up specific definitions of what it is to be an identity, a list of essential criteria that one must possess or embody for membership in the political community. Lorde's writings here are a good example of both the possibility of resisting this trap of essentialism and the impossibility of doing so completely. On the one hand, she resists essentialism, as in her works there is no theory of the true lesbian or the true black, with certain qualifications that must be present to be called that name. Consider the claims made in the prologue to her autobiographical work, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*. She writes:

> I have always wanted to be both man and woman, to incorporate the strongest and richest parts of my mother and father within/into me – to share valleys and mountains upon my body the way the earth does in hills and peaks.
>
> I would like to enter a woman the way any man can, and to be entered – to leave and to be left – to be hot and hard and soft all at the same time in the cause of our loving. I would like to drive forward and at other times to rest or be driven. When I sit and play in the waters of my bath I love to feel the deep inside parts of me, sliding and folded and tender and deep. Other times I like to fantasize the core of it, my pearl, a protruding part of me, hard and sensitive and vulnerable in a different way. (A. Lorde 1982: 7)

There are no claims to the normative woman or the normative lesbian here. There is no sense of the purity of the woman over and against the man, no sense of the lesbian who must despise men and penetration and power; there are none of these classic essentialist, sexist claims, so common to 1970s lesbian feminism. Lorde speaks an appreciation of man and woman, including an appreciation of the hardness of the phallus and the act of penetration; Lorde recognizes the play of pleasure in both mutual exchange and power play. There is an openness to difference and pluralism and the validity of different forms of expression that seems a necessary component of alternative theories of sexuality, but that are still so often left out of the fold by the drive for inclusion in gay and lesbian theory. There is no desire to be seen as "just like you," no desire to be accepted as "just like the uni-racial heterosexual monogamous couple" at the expense of other forms of love and sexual, gender, and racial self-expression. Lorde's words hold within them a tolerance and a respect for diversity all too often lost in the drive to be accepted into the mainstream.

On the other hand, there is the above made claim that it is black men and black women who will fight racism, and black women and white women who will fight sexism. Lorde herself did not believe that only blacks could fight racism. In several of her works she speaks with love and reverence of her relationship with her partner Frances, who is white, and their mutual struggles against racism. Yet, Lorde also strongly endorses the need to step into all black spaces, arguing that "our own spaces are essential for developing and recharging" (A. Lorde 1984: 78). So long as there are "black only" or "women only" spaces, the question of who counts as black and who counts as a woman will continue, and the dangers of the list of essential criteria for membership will remain. Also consider her struggles to raise her son not to be sexist, heterosexist, or homophobic, beautifully reflected upon in her important essay "Man Child." Yet, even though one might think her language would lead her to do so, Lorde stops short of claiming that she is trying to raise Jonathan to be a feminist, implicitly endorsing the claim that only women can be feminists, again not only essentializing feminism, but reopening the question of membership in the category "woman."

Connected to the problem of identity politics, Lorde's writing suffers from other shortcomings. For one thing, Lorde seems to rely on a theory of sexual orientation as innate, biological, and fixed. For instance, take the closing line of *Zami*: "it is said that the desire to lie with other women is a drive from the mother's blood" (ibid: 256). While we can read this as poetry, it also signals an uninterrogated willingness to accept sexual orientation as biologically based. As we shall see below, this claim doesn't hold up in queer theory today, and now signals a reactionary positivism that is neither scientifically, phenomenologically, nor politically sound.[6] For another, writing in the 1970s and 1980s, Lorde still took for granted the gender binary and the fact of the stability of biological sex and the cultural order of men and women that seems to follow necessarily from it. While there is room for variety in gender expression in Lorde's works, male/female and man/woman are never called into question. This, too, keeps Lorde's work from reaching fully into future directions. And finally, on a slightly different note, Lorde is strongly attached to the woman/nature pairing indicative of much feminist writing of the 1970s. Take the following: "Woman forever. My body a living representation of other life older longer wiser. The mountains and valleys, trees, rocks. Sand and flowers and water and stone. Made in earth" (A. Lorde 1982: 7). The uncritical linking of woman and nature is a classic 1970s feminist trope, one that has come under attack from various other feminist positions, and while it has not been discredited entirely, it has been sufficiently called into question as to render it at the very least highly problematic and in need of defense. These are all further evidence of the dangers of the identity politics that Lorde endorses.

However, these shortcomings remain just that – shortcomings. They do not discredit Lorde's ideas, nor do they allow us to dismiss her in due course. To do so would be not only careless, but also stupid. Lorde's voice calls to us today with

fire and passion and anger and hope, and remains an important foundation for African-American Queer Studies. Due to the time and place of Lorde's writings, she may not always be current with the direction of the discourse of contemporary African-American Queer Studies – a fate we will all suffer one day as new worlds open up of which we had not yet dreamed – but she remains one of its leaders, and its first and most important voice.

Lorde's influence was widespread and profound. Her insistence on her position as black/lesbian/feminist/poet/activist helped shape movements in feminism, queer studies, and African-American Studies, and helped make identity politics the dominant theoretical model in the 1980s. But identity politics did not stay static, and while it grew and took hold of larger and larger segments of the activist and theoretical worlds, it did so through an evolution and metamorphosis. While Lorde was black and lesbian and feminist, these labels still stood as *separate* labels, signifying Lorde's allegiance to multiple struggles. However, as the political manifestation of these struggles remained separate, contrary to Lorde's hopes and vision, a new model was necessary to accommodate those with multiple conditions of identity, multiple sites of oppression, multiple struggles for liberation. If Audre Lorde as black/lesbian/feminist was the most important voice in African-American Queer Studies of the 1970s, Alice Walker, specifically in her vision of the womanist and womanism, followed as the most important voice of the 1980s.

Walker's writings date back almost as early as Lorde's, of course. She was writing and was widely read from the late 1960s into the 1970s. Most of her early work, however, was written from a black feminist perspective, and thus did not yet speak to the queer community at large, and did not emerge as a unique contribution to queer studies. However, her coining of the term "womanist" opened up a new approach within black feminism, one more closely aligned with the growing interest in things lesbian, gay, and, later, bisexual of the late 1970s and early 1980s, and became deeply important in the growth of queer studies in the 1980s and 1990s.

On one reading, "womanist" signifies a unique position of the black feminist. While black liberation focuses on issues of racism and feminism focuses on issues of sexism, womanism focuses on the unique position of the woman of color and her need for liberation from not only these two oppressive regimes, but from the oppression of separation as well, from the idea that these forms of oppression are in fact separate, and can be dealt with separately, or one at a time. This was an important shift in feminist theory, signaled as well by Cherríe Moraga's influential words, "My brother's sex was white, mine brown" (C. Moraga 1998: 390).

But "womanist" meant more than simply the unique position of the black feminist. It also signified a particular relation between women, and it is this that was important for Walker's contribution to queer studies. In her dictionary-style definition of womanist, Walker includes this as the second entry: "Also: A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and

prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strengths. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health" (A. Walker 1983: xi). Two themes thus emerge as explicitly womanist, and as a unique challenge both to white feminist movements at large as well as to lesbian identified movements. First, a womanist is committed to supporting lesbian culture and the possibilities of lesbian sexual expression, though she need not be a lesbian herself. Second, a womanist is committed to the liberation of both men and women, and refuses a separatist politics.

Womanism argued that one was not simply an African American and a feminist, and that being a black feminist didn't simply mean one supported black liberation and gender equality. Womanist does not *simply* equal black plus feminist. It is more than that. Womanist signifies a unity in the experience of the black woman, where her blackness and her femaleness are mixed, fused, into a singular identity, creating her unique space. Walker's advancement of the uniqueness of the position of the "mixed" was hugely significant. Already because of Lorde and others, feminism could no longer speak for all women, as different women had different social locations and needs. As well, black liberation needed to take seriously the difference between the experiences of black men and black women as they experienced oppression in the world, not only as raced and as sexed, but as raced/sexed. And further still, gay and lesbian, and, subsequently, bisexual liberation needed to take seriously sexual attraction and expression and the unique ways they are experienced in different gendered and racial locations. But now, with Walker's womanism, identities were not simply to be understood as a shopping list of ingredients, each separate, but rather as a fusion, a mix, a stew of ingredients combining into a singular identity. Walker's womanism was an important impetus in the development and evolution of identity politics, which remained the dominant discourse for African-American, feminist, and gay, lesbian, and bisexual liberation movements in the 1980s, and thus the dominant discourse for African-American gay, lesbian, and bisexual theory during this time. Walker's own work in African-American gay, lesbian, and bisexual theory stands as its clearest and most profound example.

In addition to its focus on the uniqueness of positions of identity as not simply multiple, but rather as fused, Walker's work in African-American gay, lesbian, and bisexual theory had two other foci worthy of particular mention. First, Walker, like Lorde before her, attacked homophobia within the black community, thereby helping to open up a space for gayness, in particular female gayness, a space where sexuality could be experienced and expressed beyond the heterosexual mandate and where doing so need not be understood as a challenge to the black community, but rather could be seen as a celebration of its richness and diversity. In "Breaking Chains and Encouraging Life," first published in *Ms.* in April 1980, Walker takes this up with eloquence and passion. She speaks of the inexcusable fear that many black women feel at being labeled lesbian, criticizing

it because "black lesbians are black women," and, following her womanist position, shows strongly the connections between racism, sexism, and homophobia (ibid: 287–8). She suggests that the response is to validate women who love women and stand behind all black women in their quest for self-definition: "perhaps black women writers and nonwriters should say, simply, whenever black lesbians are being put down, held up, messed over, and generally told their lives should not be encouraged, *We are all lesbians*" (ibid: 288–9).

Second, Walker worked for a growing awareness and acceptance of bisexuality and its legitimacy in and against the monosexual landscape of most of the gay and lesbian politics and theories of her time. Here we can cite Walker's own coming out process, but more influential in African-American Queer Studies on this point was her Pulitzer Prize and American Book Award-winning novel *The Color Purple*. The relationship between Celie and Shug is often read as a lesbian relationship, but such a reading is misleading, for neither Celie nor Shug ever denounces her feelings for men and the possibility of loving men and women alike. Shug gives voice to Celie's anger toward how men have treated her and beaten her down, both physically and spiritually (A. Walker 1982: 179). The enemy here is not men; rather, the enemies are sexism and patriarchy, in particular the patriarchal image of God as a man. Men remain potential and real lovers in Celie and Shug's world, just as women do. The monosexuality of the 1970s gay and lesbian theory came under attack as bisexuals became more vocal throughout the 1980s, and Walker was an important voice in that movement. Womanist may be about black women loving women's culture, but there is nothing *narrowly* lesbian about it.

Walker's was not, of course, the only voice of African-American Queer Studies in the 1980s, but she did advance a theoretical position that was new and highly influential, in both African-American feminism and African-American Queer Studies. Walker's womanist fiction and non-fiction, her poetry and prose, stand out as an important contribution and development in African-American Queer Studies. The advancement and enrichment of identity politics remained the dominant way of theorizing sexual identity in the 1980s, and shaped lesbian, gay, and bisexual writings. Her fights against homophobia in the black community were powerful and highly visible. She advanced the cause of gay and straight black women, but also took a humanist stance toward people in general, black and white, men and women, gay, lesbian, and bisexual. Of course, the same problem remains with Walker's womanism as with Lorde's black lesbian feminism: as Walker defines it, only a woman can be a womanist. Moreover, only a certain kind of woman can be properly called a womanist: the kind who supports "women's culture." The traps of identity politics return. What is a woman? Who is allowed to be called a woman? What is women's culture? Is women's culture monolithic? If so, what specifically makes it *women's* culture? If not, why aren't cultures where women are not women-identified allowed? If we're not sure who women are, then how do we know who lesbians are, who gay men are? Without stable terms of identity, where will we be?

The 1980s to the 1990s: The critique of identity politics, queer theory, and the rise of the queer postmodern

Identity politics is plagued with a problem: Who must I be such that I can be part of your political struggle? What is that thing that I must be, and how do I know if I am it or not? What is the essential ingredient that makes one that thing? African-American, feminist, and gay and lesbian theories of the 1970s and 1980s all presumed that these questions could be easily answered. An African American is black, a racial designation, and is of African descent; a feminist is a woman, and a woman has XX chromosomes, breasts, a vagina, vulva, and a clitoris, menstruates, and can give birth; a gay man is a man who is sexually attracted to other men only (to maleness itself?) and a lesbian is a woman who is sexually attracted to other women only (to femaleness itself?), and, again, men and women can be identified by their biology. What if sexual identity/orientation isn't as stable a category as we think it is? Then where does that leave queer studies, particularly African-American Queer Studies, a set of discourses that seemed to be based on a double identity?

In the early 1980s, a new voice emerged alongside Alice Walker and Audre Lorde, ready to challenge their reign as leading black feminist theorists. When bell hooks published her *Ain't I a Woman* in 1981, while she was still an undergraduate, she exploded onto the scene with a fierce attitude and a fresh, new vision. She has since earned a lasting place as one of the preeminent leftist black intellectuals, with some eighteen books to her name and a strong public presence surrounding her. It was in her second book that she quickly announced that she had something to add to queer issues, and in so doing she immediately established herself as an important voice in African-American Queer Studies.

Interestingly, hooks announced herself as having something important to say in queer studies in response to an earlier comment from her first book arguing against a trend in black lesbian studies. In *Ain't I a Woman*, hooks argued that "attacking heterosexuality does little to strengthen the self-concept of the masses of women who desire to be with men" (b. hooks 1981: 191). In her important essay "The Failure to Transform," Cheryl Clarke (1983) takes hooks to task for this statement, stating that hooks is homophobic and afraid to relinquish her heterosexual privilege.[7] In *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center*, hooks responds to these charges forcefully and intelligently. She writes:

> Feminist activists need to remember that the political choices we make are not determined by who we choose to have genital sexual contact with. In her introduction to *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, Barbara Smith asserts: "Black feminism and Black Lesbianism are not interchangeable. Feminism is a political movement and many Lesbians are not feminists." This is also true for many heterosexual women. It is important for women, especially those who are heterosexual, to know that they can make a radical political commitment to feminist struggle even though they are sexually involved with men – All women need to know that

> they can be politically committed to feminism regardless of their sexual preference. (b. hooks 1984: 152)

On the surface, hooks's statement may seem like a challenge to the womanist belief that feminism must support the possibilities of lesbian sexuality. However, it is not. hooks is explicit that feminism must fight heterosexism and homophobia. She argues that the "feminist movement to end sexual oppression should create a social climate in which lesbians and gay men are no longer oppressed, a climate in which their sexual choices are affirmed" (ibid: 153). But she continues: "It should also create a climate in which heterosexual practice is freed from the constraints of heterosexism and can also be affirmed" (ibid). It is clear that hooks is disagreeing with Clarke. But is she also disagreeing with Walker? To what extent? Clearly, Walker would agree with hooks's defense of the heterosexual and bisexual feminist woman, but would Walker be able to go as far as hooks? Where exactly does hooks go further?

hooks's challenge to Clarke and Walker is not a challenge to the womanist assumption that feminism must be pro-lesbian. Rather, it is a challenge to the assumption that the political must be solely defined by the personal, and vice versa. It is a challenge to Walker's claim that womanists are womanists not solely because of their political ideas, but also because of their shared culture. It is a challenge to Clarke's claim to connect lesbianism with feminism and liberation and to do so based on a personal assumption of lesbianism as "an act of resistance" (C. Clarke 1983). When hooks argues that women can be politically committed to feminism regardless of their sexual orientation, she slaps identity politics in the face: one's identity is not part and parcel of one's political affiliation, she says, and there is no identity criterion for entry into the political agenda. Moreover, if we're going to fight for sexual freedom, we're doing so not based on fighting for the rights of one group over and against another; rather, we're fighting for sexual freedom itself. Notice the difference – the struggle initiated by gay liberation should not be a struggle for gay and lesbian rights. Fighting to get a group its rights isn't radical. Rather, the struggle that both gay liberation and feminism should be focusing on is the struggle for sexual freedom itself – for freedom of sexual expression. This goal is not based on identity, is not geared toward rights, and is not focused on a particular group. It is based on and geared toward political and social freedoms and is focused on any and all members of society. This stance has clearly distanced itself from identity politics, and in so doing escapes its traps. hooks's politics require no stable identity upon which to stand; they do not require a "woman" or a "lesbian" to make sense. This is not to say that these identities fall out of the picture in hooks's vision. They do not. Women and lesbians remain. And they even remain as identities that have political significance and are in many ways constructions of the sociopolitical world. But they are no longer the ground from which to do politics, and as such they need not be as fixed and stable as identity politics required them to be.

hooks's critique of identity politics goes even further, though, further establishing her as a new and important voice in African-American Queer Studies. After her defense against Clarke, she goes on the offensive once again, challenging the categories of sexual identity, not simply as foundations for politics, but rather as categories of identity themselves, by challenging the norms of sexual identity (b. hooks 1984: 154–5). She argues that implicit in the idea of heterosexuality is the mistaken assumption that one is available to all members of the opposite sex, and underneath that lies the equally mistaken assumption that one is attracted to all members of the opposite sex. This is no truer for homosexuality than for heterosexuality. Yet these labels assume precisely these claims, and thus promote not only objectification by the other, but also objectification by the self, a form of Sartrean bad faith. When sexual identity becomes defining to the point of determining one's possibilities, it not only becomes a lie to oneself, but also ceases to hold any liberatory potential. In hooks's critique of fixed and essential sexual identity, what we often refer to as sexual orientation, we are opened up again to the possibility of a politics beyond identity, and an identity beyond essence. We are opened up to a new way of thinking politics as what we want to achieve (end sexual oppression, end gender oppression, end racial oppression) and who we are (actors, agents, existentially choosing selves in a world of possibilities).[8]

hooks's early work prefigured a move that would emerge in queer studies in the early 1990s. In 1991 a new discourse of sexuality emerged in US theory circles, one based largely on the recent writings of Michel Foucault on the history of sexuality, now translated into feminist and queer circles. In the early 1990s the discourse we now call "queer theory," a movement borrowing the language and insights of poststructuralism (again, in particular in its Foucauldian variety, but to a lesser extent in its Lacanian variety) was born. Its forefathers included British sociologist/historian Jeffrey Weeks, but it began to take shape with the work of three US theorists who explicitly claimed the name "queer theory": Judith Butler, Teresa de Lauretis, and Eve Sedgwick. It was Lauretis who announced the birth of queer theory in her introduction to the special issue of leading feminist journal *differences* on the topic "Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities" (T. de Lauretis 1991). Butler and Sedgwick continued the use of the term in articles and books, notably Butler's "Critically Queer," first published in the first volume of the journal *GLQ* and later worked into her 1993 book *Bodies that Matter* (J. Butler 1993), and Sedgwick's "Queer and Now" in her 1993 book *Tendencies*. Historian William Turner defines the basic approach in queer theory, specifically referencing Butler's *Bodies that Matter*, as

> the investigation of foundational, seemingly indisputable concepts, such as "matter." Queer theorists perform those investigations with an eye to tracing the historical development of those concepts and their contributions to definitions of "sex" and "gender" such that differences of power along those axes of identity pervade our culture at a level that resists fulsomely the ministrations of political action conventionally defined. (W. Turner 2000: 3)

As Turner sees it, queer theory engages in a series of contestations, arguing against dominant trends in feminism, lesbian and gay studies, and other traditional forms of leftist politics, the most significant being its critique of identity as the foundation of politics. This is clearly the stance Butler takes in her work, a stance that she began in the predecessor to *Bodies that Matter*, her landmark second book *Gender Trouble* (1990).[9]

Gender Trouble calls into question "the category of women" as both the one who "initiates feminist interest and goals" and the one "for whom political representation is pursued" (J. Butler 1999: 3). The book unfolds as a critique of (1) gender as a stable signifier of sex, gender, and desire, (2) sexuality as prediscursive, instead seeing it as shaped by a compulsory heterosexual matrix, and (3) the body as the preexisting sexed nature onto which gender is transposed, instead exposing the performative nature of gender as constituted in and through its always-already politically inscribed acts. It stands as a forceful critique of feminism as identity politics, and sets the stage for Butler to develop those theories into an explicitly queer theory of gender, sex, and sexuality. In *Bodies that Matter* Butler further explains the materialization of the body, wherein the body is given status as an ontological foundation through the discursive practices of gender performativity, then exploring the possibility of subversive gender performances, finally endorsing the category *queer* as a needed corrective to identity and its inescapable fictions. She writes:

> The temporary totalization performed by identity categories is a necessary error. And if identity is a necessary error, then the assertion of "queer" will be necessary as a term of affiliation, but it will not fully describe those it purports to represent. As a result, it will be necessary to affirm the contingency of the term. (J. Butler 1993: 230)

Butler laid out with force the goal of queer theory, its presuppositions and its directions. And it is into this new queer landscape, made possible by Foucault, named by Lauretis, and further concretized by Butler and Sedgwick, defined by its critique of identity politics and its insistence on the contingent category of anti-identity, queer, that the preeminent African-American queer theorist of the 1990s comes onto the scene.

If Baldwin set the stage for African-American Queer Studies in the 1950s, and if Lorde, Walker, and hooks dominated the debates in African-American Queer Studies of the 1970s and 1980s, then Phillip Brian Harper emerges as the newest and most important voice in African-American Queer Studies in the 1990s. If Lorde, Walker, and hooks focused their questions on the relations of black women, feminism, and queerness, Harper focuses his questions on queerness in relation to African-American masculinity. Harper's work, like Lorde's, Walker's, and hooks's before him, is concerned with questions of identity, but it places these questions within a different framework, one that accepts the basic insights of queer theory. Indeed, Harper, a cultural critic and theorist, is among the first

African-American theorists to actively adopt the word "queer" as a designation for his work and his theoretical and political stance. For instance, in the introduction to a special issue of the journal *Social Text* dedicated to the topic "Queer Transexions of Race, Nation, and Gender," Harper and his co-authors Anne McClintock, José Esteban Muñoz, and Trish Rosen write: "In terms of this special issue, then, queer theory is an articulating principle functioning in, across, between, and among various social domains and political experiences, and it is therefore consciously provisional and dynamic, strategic and mobilizing, rather than prescriptive or doctrinal" (Harper et al. 1997: 1). The critique of identity politics is at the forefront of Harper's project, and it is his reframing of questions of African-American, masculine, and gay identity from a uniquely queer perspective that makes his work so provocative.

While Harper's first book established him as a serious cultural and literary critic, it was a series of articles and his next two books that established him as the premier African-American queer critic of the 1990s. His second book, *Are We Not Men? Masculine Anxiety and the Problem of African-American Identity*, takes up the issue of "authentic blackness," exposing this concept both as constraining fiction and as inherently tied to a conception of "authentic masculinity." Ultimately, Harper argues that blackness and black masculinity need not follow normative models, examining several of what he calls "African-American cultural interventions" that offer alternate models of identity and self-expression (P. Harper 1996: xi).

It is no accident that in the first chapter of the book, "Eloquence and Epitaph: AIDS, Homophobia, and Problematics of Black Masculinity," Harper takes up these issues directly in relation to the AIDS epidemic. Given the disproportionate number of African-American males affected with the virus, and given the significance of the epidemic in Africa today, Harper takes on members of both the traditional black and the traditional gay establishment for not recognizing the connections between race, gender, and sexuality, and thus between racism, sexism, and homophobia. He adeptly analyzes the problem of silence in the black community, taking on the symptomatic responses to the death of the first black network news anchor, Max Robinson, to AIDS and Magic Johnson's admission of his HIV status. In both cases, notes Harper, the desire to preserve the men's normative masculinity, that is, their straightness, was overwhelming, and indicative of a deeply rooted homophobia in the African-American community. To Harper, this homophobia exposes a deeply rooted connection between authentic blackness and authentic masculinity, in which the only true black man is the normatively masculine man.

Equally important as black homophobia to Harper is gay racism. In his important article "Gay Male Identities, Personal Privacy, and Relations for Public Exchange: Notes on Directions for Queer Critique" (1997), Harper takes up this issue in a critique of mainstream white gay journalist Andrew Sullivan. Harper takes Sullivan to task for his meditation on the end of AIDS as achieved through the rise of protease inhibitors, published in the *New York Time Magazine*,

November 10, 1996. He shows that Sullivan's logic (or lack thereof) states that while the "vast majority of HIV-positive people" are those who will not have access to protease inhibitors, and will thus die, "most people in the middle of this plague" no longer consider HIV a death sentence, instead seeing it as merely "illness." Harper rightly concludes that the only way to read this is as such: "in Sullivan's conception, 'most people in the middle of this plague' are not nonwhite, or non-US residents" (ibid: 8). Harper continues to interpret Sullivan's words to say, "I know that not all people who have AIDS are US whites, but in my narrative, they are." Harper rightfully takes Sullivan to task for his fetishization of "masculinized normative whiteness" (ibid: 8).[10] In the end, Sullivan represents to Harper the gay theorist of authentic homosexuality (read as "normative" – specifically, read as "monogamous, white, masculine, and socially conformist homosexuality based on a 'natural' homosexual identity"). Thus Sullivan emerges as "the effective poster boy for a legitimated gay male experience" wherein his "masculinized white normativity" is "'authentic' homosexuality" (ibid: 14).

Alongside his projects of exposing the homophobia of the black community, the racism of the gay community, and the intertwined logic of normative black and normative masculine identities, all aimed at exposing the fiction and danger of "identic fixity," Harper seeks to make space for identity within contemporary culture without falling into the trap of identity politics. He attempts to do so by introducing a new method to theorizing, one that seeks to write identity without essence, that seeks to write the personal without exalting the particular as the universal. He explains this new method as his "use of personal anecdote as a central analytical strategy" (P. Harper 1999: xiii). This method plays a central role in "When Plagues End," where Harper uses his critique of Sullivan to launch into a meditation on identity and the binary of particular/universal in which it is necessarily caught. In his use of the personal anecdote, Harper hopes to "discover the quotidian effects of social structures and cultural formations all too often conceived as 'merely' theoretical" (ibid). By showing how social structures and cultural formations shape the everyday, Harper hopes to break down the supposed lines between public and private, instead showing how these lines are elastic enactments of a social demand meant to control and regulate personal behavior.

For instance, Harper takes up the topic of public sex in order to see how public and private are mobilized for the sake of social normativity. Examining Paul Reubens's arrest for public masturbation alongside his own experience of being accused of engaging in public sex with his lover at their local Y, Harper effectively shows how lines of public and private, while not arbitrary, are not fixed, either, and instead are deliberately drawn to regulate the personal (ibid: 76). Lines between public and private are strategic interventions in daily life, meant to regulate, in the sense of both controlling and creating. Harper very effectively shows, in his analysis of his own personal life, the structuring agency of the social in both defining and delineating the personal itself.

What does this mean for explicitly queer critique? How is Harper's problematizing of the public/private binary as enacted through the use of the personal anecdote a problematizing of the notion of "identic fixity"? In Harper's work, we can see a parallel between the idea of inner identity and the private and a parallel between the idea of discursive construction and the public, and by showing how the lines between public and private are not natural, but rather are strategically enacted in different power relations, he effectively problematizes the idea of an inner, essential identity. The very idea of "identic fixity" is clearly exposed as a fiction.

What is so powerful about Harper's exposing of identic fixity in the use of the personal anecdote is that at the very same time he is calling fixed identity into question, he is making room within hegemonic discourse for agency and political action. One of the most striking critiques of Butler's position is that, in its critique of the liberal subject of identity politics, it disallows all forms of political agency, despite Butler's careful attempts to argue that it is precisely new forms of agency that emerge when identity is seen as a fictive effect of performative discourses. What is effectively achieved in Harper's method is a rewriting of the personal that Butler herself was unable to achieve: a model of the personal replete with the awareness that the social constructs and structures the personal, but a model that allows for and encourages agency actively and practically, not just theoretically, which is all that Butler's model seems to do. All of the difficulties of employing the personal remain, for even though Harper effects a certain kind of post-Butlerian agency, he does so with Butler's critique of voluntarism clearly in sight, and further sees the important connections between agency and capital, thus further recognizing that the social structure works in such a way as to keep its agents in line, doing what it wants them to do, in the ways it wants them to do it (P. Harper 1997: 24). Still in the end, Harper seems to get done what Butler could not; and he does so simply by *doing it*.

How is Harper's a project of and for queer theory? According to Harper, queerness stands as a challenge to normativity, not in order to displace and redefine the normal, but in order to challenge the very idea of normal itself (ibid: 24–5). Queer critique enacts its subjectivity in ways that challenge the hegemonic norms of the liberal agent, but recognize that it can only do so within the system it is trying to dismantle. Queer critique is wholly queer and critical, not yet construction in its own right, instead enacting the deconstructive moment in order to open up space for something like what Foucault (1997) called "the undefined work of freedom."

Harper's contribution to African-American Queer Studies is thus threefold. First, it gives to African-American Studies one of the strongest and most intelligent critiques of normative masculinity, authentic blackness, and their connection in the African-American community and psyche since Fanon. Second, it offers a unique contribution to queer theory in the personal anecdote as subversive moment, recognizing not only the social structuring of the personal, but also the possibility of using the personal to disrupt the social norm. Third, it

does so all the while exposing the impossibility of seeing race, gender, sexuality, and class as separable categories. We cannot speak of queer without talking about race, and we cannot talk about race without talking about gender, and we cannot talk about any of these without considering the realities of class.[11] Thus, Harper's theory offers itself as the first uniquely *queer* African-American queer discourse and as the first uniquely *African-American* queer discourse precisely because it refuses to see these things as separate. In all of this, in its poststructuralist insights, subversive deconstructions, and located contextual positionings mobilized by the use of the personal anecdote, Harper's theory presents itself as the specifically African-American queer heir to those of Foucault and Butler, and emerges as the voice of what I would call the new "queer postmodern."

This is not to say that in Harper's writings all the work is done. For even in its anti-identity politics stance internal to queer theory, all the dangers of the earlier positions remain. It is still all too easy to slip from the analytic use of the personal into the positing of the personal as both (a) a description of a fixed, inner essential identity and (b) a model for a universal identity to which others "of that kind" must subscribe. Harper is aware of this, of course. He is vigilant about reminding us that his use of the personal is *not* meant to do *either* of these things. For instance, he writes: "What I hope *not* to do . . . is to write others *out* of the scenario I envision" (P. Harper 1997: 23). And he explicitly connects this desire up with queer critique when he continues: "I want to conceive of my advocated project of discursive admissiveness in terms of 'queer theory'" (ibid). Still, this does not mean that Harper can be entirely successful in his use of the personal anecdote, for no matter how much we insist otherwise, the norm is still for us to read identity as fixed and to universalize individual experiences, even when not our own. So for all our protestations to the contrary, and against Harper's good intentions, his work still often comes across as a narrative both too much about what seems to be his inner life and too easily read as a meditation on the essential experience of black gay identity.

Future Directions of African-American Queer Studies

Clearly, as Lorde, Walker, hooks, and Harper have shown us, identity is an important category in queer studies. But if lesbian and gay studies rest on the mobilization of repressed identities, queer theory rests on a critique of identity itself. Turner writes:

> The practice of assigning persons to categories, while it depends on relations of authority, power, and force operating in specific institutions, also depends on the logic and justification that the categories themselves provide. Queer theorists examine the meanings that attach to pairs of categories: man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual, white/black, young/old, rich/poor . . . Insofar as we stuff each other into binary categories anyway, the process is historical and political; we

> cannot understand these categories apart from their past and their change over time. (W. Turner 2000: 34)

For Turner, as for Beemyn, Eliason, Harper, and myself, the term "queer" signifies the refusal of stable notions and essentialist notions of identity, understands issues of sexuality and gender to be fundamentally intertwined such that they resist a neat separation into "lesbian and gay" issues as opposed to "feminist" issues, and forces us to rethink issues of sexual and gender identity in terms of history, politics, and intricate discursive productions of truth via strategic mobilizations of knowledge/power.

However, as Harper himself has shown, even after the fall of identity politics, "identity" does not cease to be an important category in queer theory. Adopting a queer stance is more sophisticated a move than a simple refusal of the categories of identity. To simply refuse identity would be not only silly, but also impossible. Identities remain, and we continue to define ourselves with and in relation to normative as well as anti-normative identities. As Jane Gallop wrote some time ago: "Identity must be continually assumed and immediately called into question" (J. Gallop 1982: xii). Still, after queer theory, it is not just the political and historical that must refigure itself, with identity no longer the ground of politics and with identity now seen as a historical event, but the more personal question of what it is to have an identity at all. What is it to "have" an identity at all, if queer theory has exposed the fictions that have surrounded our ideas of identity?

Robert Reid-Pharr explores these questions in his provocative book, *Black Gay Man*. In an attempt to rescue and recuperate a non-essentialist, non-identity politics form of identity as a potential site for political action, Reid-Pharr notes that the "dissolution of identity comes precisely at the moment when many American institutions, particularly American universities, are less and less hospitable to poor people, Black American people, and other people of color" (R. Reid-Pharr 2001: 2–3). While endorsing the critique of essentialism and supportive of the discursive/genealogical approach of a Foucault or a Butler, he first notes that the "attack on identitarian discourses is indeed an attack on the actual lived reality of the American left" (ibid: 6). In its place, he argues that we must "offer an alternative that speaks to the realities of people's lives, the means by which they seek not only for justice, but also for beauty, light, the transcendent, the metaphysical" (ibid: 8). To do so, he appeals to both Rorty and Žižek as two theorists of community who can guide us to envision politics beyond essentialist identities while still allowing for empowering identity-possibilities for the non-normative subject.

Reid-Pharr represents one exciting new possibility in African-American Queer Studies that helps us think both identity and politics after and beyond the shackles of identity politics. The most shining example of this comes in the chapter entitled "Living as a Lesbian" (ibid: 160–1), in which he declares his love for women *as a black gay man*. Reid-Pharr writes not simply of his kinship with a

lesbian culture, not simply of his status as a "dyke tyke"; rather, he writes of his experience of "living as a lesbian" in which he creates the identity lesbian as an expression of himself, not limited to or by a male anatomy, refusing the essentialist determinations that would otherwise exclude him. He writes of both an inner and an outer experience, a shared community in which his lesbianism is recognized and validated. He affirms his identity, in all its variedness and in the richness of its contradictions. He writes: "*By becoming a lesbian then I have done nothing more nor less than become myself* . . . I also realize that as I struggle to lay claim to my lesbianism I am always confronted with the reality of my own masculinity, this strange and complex identity that I continue to have difficulty recognizing as privilege" (ibid: 162; original emphasis).

Respect, love, and what appears to be almost a sense of desperation come through in Reid-Pharr's words. Recognizing the impossibility of putting aside "masculine privilege," he nonetheless refuses to speak of his masculinity only as a cherished possession, instead telling of his desire for his lesbian self, refusing to foreclose it, refusing to shut it out and tear it down, yet all the while realizing that it lies within him as contradiction. It is this brutal honesty that makes Reid-Pharr's work so moving. It is this brutal honesty applied to the most important question of identity that makes his work so interesting. It is this brutal honesty applied to the most important question of identity without falling into the traps of essentialism and instead claiming the identities that identity politics would have refused him that makes his work so important, so groundbreaking, and so useful as we look to what new ground we may forge in the twenty-first century.

We may have thankfully put "identity politics" to rest in the last ten years, but the politics of identity are far from decided, far from over. As we refuse identity-based politics precisely because identity has itself been called into question, it is now this "question of identity" that we must confront. What is it to "have" an identity? Where does it come from? To what extent are the poststructuralists right that it is merely an "effect" of discourse? To what extent does this not even matter? For even if identity is an effect of discourse, isn't it an effect that is experienced as real? How, then, are we to proceed in our interrogation of identity? These are the newest questions that emerge in the wake of the poststructuralist deconstruction of essential identities, and this is the pressing question for queer studies today.

Queer studies must interrogate the question of identity, and it must do so from new and different angles, previously unexplored. The poststructuralism of Foucault and Butler has been a deeply important development in queer studies, precisely for its ability to deconstruct our given notion of an inner, essential identity. But where poststructuralism has stopped is in asking the question "what now?" As Reid-Pharr has shown us, identity is not a dead issue. In fact, it is more alive than ever. Explaining inner identity as a discourse-effect does not explain it away; in fact, it only makes us all the more keenly aware of how powerful a fiction inner identity is, forcing us to confront it head on. What queer studies needs to do now, in response to the poststructuralist critique, is interrogate

identity as a lived category of experience. That is, it is time for a return to phenomenology.

Here African-American Queer Studies is in the unique position of being able to take the lead, for much of the work in the phenomenology of identity has already been done in African-American Studies in the work of Lewis Gordon, Linda Alcoff, and others. Consider Gordon's project, the most developed existential phenomenological analysis of race to date. Gordon's project is bold and inherently simple. Following Husserl, Sartre, and Fanon, Gordon tells us that in theorizing about race we need to start with the fact of race as the lived experience of racialized bodies. What makes us "raced" isn't the point. Whether or not race is "real" in some biological sense isn't the point. The point is that we, in this world, experience race, experience ourselves as raced, and that in this world, as a matter of fact, our experience of race is predominantly racist. We live in an anti-black world where anti-black racism permeates our very being to the point of predetermining our responses in ways that we haven't even begun to sufficiently explore and question. In order to confront the issue of racism, we must confront the issue of race, and vice versa, and the only way to confront either of these issues is to explore them from an existential phenomenological starting point.[12] Queer studies needs to share with Gordon a belief in the basic insights of existential phenomenology *à la* Husserl, Sartre, and Fanon. It needs to push beyond what we might call the positivist impasse and work on these questions as existential questions, that is, as rooted in the lived life of the human subject.

In offering a reading of identity, in particular gender and sexual identity, from the perspective of phenomenology, queer studies can move past the inherently positivistic discourses of both identity politics and poststructuralism. This may seem an odd charge, calling both identity politics and poststructuralism "positivistic" discourses, but upon careful examination, that is precisely what we come to see. Consider: we have the "gender and sexual identity are my real, true, inner essence" theorists on the one hand and the "gender and sexual identity are nothing but discursively produced fictions" theorists on the other. What both of these discourses assume is the primacy of a positivism. What some theorists turn to today to root their belief in the metaphysics of essential identity is science, in particular the so-called "gay gene" theorists. They say, "if science can prove it's there, then it's there and we can't ignore or change it." The poststructuralist response is equally positivist for, from its perspective, the final nail in the coffin of the fiction of metaphysical essence is the refutation of the objectivity of scientific discourse, and this is a move that, even in its critique, preserves science as the final court of appeals. The poststructuralist response says, "if I can show how science posits it as real because science unwittingly buys into the normative claims of society, then we can ignore it and get beyond it." However, doing so implicitly endorses the primacy of science, understood as the objective search for value-neutral truth, because doing so ultimately says that if science did succeed, the poststructuralist critique would fail. It thus preserves science as an ultimate authority for what we know and how we ought to act. In other words,

both of these positions buy into the pre-Husserlian claim that objectivity is only objective if it is divorced from subjectivity and agree that we are either objective or subjective, but never both. It matters not whether or not both of these sides of the debate endorse scientific objectivity as possible, for in the end they both still privilege it.[13]

Thus, queer studies has hit an impasse. Butler has effectively undone the primacy of identity politics, and hooks and Harper have done excellent work in the wake of its fall. But identity still remains an under-interrogated concept because the function of identity has remained under-explored. While I fundamentally agree with the poststructuralist claim that sex and gender are, like race, scientific fictions created by a dominant social order and falsely posited as objectively real, that doesn't mean they aren't subjectively real, in the existential phenomenological sense; just because they aren't scientific doesn't mean we can dismiss them. Just as we experience race, we experience sex and gender as real categories of our lived lives and lived bodies. And, just as we experience race, we experience sex and gender in a sexist and heteronormative world. The only way forward is for us to ground our studies of sex and gender in our experiences of them. We need a study of sex and gender rooted in existential phenomenology.[14] Queer studies needs to do for gender and sexual identity what Gordon and others have done for race – an existential phenomenological analysis of the lived experience of identity, gender and sexual, beyond essentialism and beyond genealogy, examining identity in all its richness and in all its contradiction. What needs to be understood is not simply that normative discourses function in such a way as to lead us to believe that identities are inner essences, but also how this comes to happen and what this means for how we live our lives. It is these next steps that Butler fails to do, that Harper begins to look at, that Reid-Pharr continues to further, but that we need to push forward even more.

One of the sites where this work on identity is beginning to happen is in transgender theory. The work of trans theorists Kate Bornstein and Riki Anne Wilchins has laid the ground for a new generation of trans theorists to interrogate gender and sexual identity as sites of lived experience, and the border-crossing experiences of transgender identities offer itself as a particularly rich area for exploration.[15] As Foucault has already shown us, it is in exploring sites of oppression and resistance that we can gain the most insight into normative discourses and how to undermine them. More importantly, transgender experience gives us something else that will help us in investigating identity: a wide and conflicting variety of experiences in the transgender communities, including, in particular and to name just three interpretive paradigms for understanding the trans experience of gender and sexual identity, experiences of identity as positively claimed (the identity politic trans community), negatively challenged (the poststructuralist trans community), and profoundly called into question while experimentally explored (the gender fuck trans community). In this, transgender experience gives us particularly fertile ground for exploring the question of identity.[16] And, again, African-American Queer Studies is in the unique position of being a fertile

site for precisely this kind of exploration, given the under-explored but profoundly important history of transgender experiences in the African-American community, from the black drag queens of Stonewall to RuPaul, from Vaginal Davis to Craig Hickman, from Dennis Rodman to Alexander John Goodrum.

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Notes

1 I will use the term "queer" to signify all three of these meanings I outlined above, but to keep the reader from confusion, I will try to be clear when I am doing which. In particular, I will use the term "queer studies," "queer discourses," and "queer community" in the first, umbrella, sense of the term, to cover all studies about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersexual issues from a theoretical perspective, while I will use the term "queer theory" only in reference to a specific movement within queer studies that emerged in the 1980s, in response to the works of, among others, Foucault and Butler, and that explicitly aligns itself with all three meanings of the term "queer."

2 I use the term "sexual oppression" to refer to oppression based on one's sexuality, meaning the sensual, physical, and erotics of the mind/body. I use the term "gender oppression" to refer to oppression based upon one's perceived or internalized gender identity (man/woman) or gender expression (masculine/feminine). Thus, "sexual" will refer to issues of sexuality and "gender" to issues of gender identity and/expression. I will use the term "sex" to refer both to the acts of sexuality as well as to the biological distinction between males and females, a distinction that I will call into question later in this chapter.

3 Consider, for instance, Eldridge Cleaver's and Imamu Baraka's heterosexist and homophobic stances and consider the rewriting of the Stonewall riots to have been led by white, gay men, when in fact a large contingent of the rioters were people of color and drag queens.

4 Of course, the reason he was not so drawn on was precisely because he primarily did not write about the "gay black experience," and did not present himself as a prominent figure in gay liberation movements. His work has been drawn on by two important queer theorists recently: Lee Edelman and Robert Reid-Pharr. I will discuss Reid-Pharr's work in the last section of this chapter.

5 Here I use the phrase "lesbian and gay" because nearly all of what emerged in the 1970s was explicitly about sexual orientation and argued from a monosexual perspective.

6 Here and in the next paragraph, I mean to reference all three meanings of the term "queer."

7 Interestingly, in the essay, Clarke paints hooks as no less homophobic than Imamu Amiri Baraka is. No doubt Clarke would take issue with my claim that hooks is an important positive voice in African-American Queer Studies today.

8 I doubt hooks would be comfortable with my existentialist language in reference to her work, but it does seem to fit.

9 I here explain queer theory through a quick overview of Butler's work, though I also could have done so through an overview of Sedgwick.

10 Harper stops short of calling Sullivan's comments racist. I see no need to pull punches. Sullivan's comments are a *racist* fetishization of masculinized normative whiteness.

11 Thus, even the way I just framed Harper's contribution runs counter to his theory, for it makes little sense to separate "African-American Studies" from "queer theory" at all.

12 Gordon says that his work is rooted in existential phenomenology. In this, he is presenting himself as a student of Sartre, Fanon, and Alfred Schütz more than Husserl, though one often notices that in his work Gordon is critical of Sartre from a Husserlian perspective. See, for example, L. Gordon (2000b: 72–80).

13 For a more sustained critique of Butler's positivism, see D. Fryer (2003).

14 Of course, poststructuralism makes this a suspect enterprise; if all experience is socially constructed from the get go, then how can we legitimately turn to experience as a ground? As suspicious as I am of experience as an epistemic ground, I don't however think we can simply write it off as nothing more than an effect the way Butler and Foucault do. It seems to me that Husserl was onto something when he claimed that human subjects constituted knowledge of the world, and this is worth exploring.

15 Three edited volumes are particularly worthy of mention here. The first two, Susan Stryker's "The Transgender Issue" of *GLQ* (1998) and Kate More and Stephen Whittle's *Reclaiming Genders* (1999), focus explicitly on trans issues, while the third, Harper, McClintock, Muñoz, and Rosen's "Queer Transexions of Race, Nation, and Gender" issue of *Social Text* (fall/winter 1997), has several important essays exploring trans issues, including José Esteban Muñoz's excellent " 'The White to be Angry': Vaginal Davis's Terrorist Drag."

16 For more on this, see D. Fryer (2003).

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Black Studies, Race, and Critical Race Theory: A Narrative Deconstruction of Law

Clevis Headley

There is the general perception that Black Studies programs are primarily politically tolerated by the dominant academy in order to pacify lunatic Black nationalists. That Black Studies emerged from extremist demands by Black nationalists, it is believed, has delegitimized such programs as being scholarly and intellectually valid. This seeming display of manic euphoria when denouncing Black Studies smacks of a certain analytical mental bias. Of course, the charge is not that Black Studies programs are immune to criticism and that any criticism of such programs must be necessarily motivated by less than respectable intentions. Rather, the effort is to underscore the unproductive tendency, characteristic of many supporters and critics alike, to view Black Studies only from the context of Black nationalism. Black Studies programs, so viewed, are considered merely the political sites of ideological hysteria, academic extortion chambers, and not credible sites of legitimate analytical and critical scholarly activity. It is my claim that viewing Black Studies merely from a political perspective is doing a great disservice to its legitimate scholarly and academic goals and concerns. Instead of burdening Black Studies with ideological rhetoric, I suggest an alternative interpretation of Black Studies. On this alternative reading, Black Studies is an ethical enterprise, but not in the sense of seeking to develop a code of ethics or to produce a theory of morality. Rather, Black Studies, construed as a research program, is an ethical endeavor to the extent it seeks to give voice to the other, in this case the racial other, those not part of the Eurocentric hegemony.

Race plays a primary and critical role in the ethical development of black Studies, meaning that race serves as the perspective by which various black thinkers seek to represent, as well as critically investigate, black existence. Now, we should be clear that race is not universally understood by black thinkers as being a biologically valid concept or category. Instead of courting biological

essentialism, these thinkers pioneer a critical perspective on race, and in turn, use race as the basis for launching critiques of mainstream ideas by appealing to an existential phenomenological approach to race. This approach sanctions the attempt to describe phenomena as revealed to consciousness without imposing any predetermined concepts, categories, and prejudices on phenomena. While eschewing false essences, phenomenology calls for a new approach to philosophy by returning philosophy to the existence of the living human subject. In its radical existential version, phenomenology summons a return to the concrete, a turn to lived human experience in all its thickness. To the extent that certain existential phenomenological insights were either consciously or unconsciously integrated into the new paradigm of Black Studies, race is to be understood from the perspective of lived everyday reality and not from a disembodied domain of disinterestedness.[1] Race consciousness becomes the point of departure for the various interpretive activities only because race is understood to be a lived category, a way of existing in the world. Again, we should keep in mind that this notion of race consciousness need not be dependent on any biological essentialist understanding of race. Consistent with the existential thrust of the call for the importance of race consciousness, race consciousness is understood as meaning "that one's position in the social structure of race relations makes a qualitative difference in how one sees and experiences the world" (G. Peller 1990: 758). But that race consciousness takes on such significance does not necessarily entail it being summarily embraced as a positive factor. Before examining in depth the analytical role of race in recent critical race theory, we need to examine the political career of race consciousness in the debate between integrationists and Black nationalists.

Integration and Race

The integrationist perspective on race views race as a suspect category. Blacks who support integration at best embrace an ethnic-based notion of race. On this view, blacks form one more ethnic group, among others, and, consistent with the assimilationist mindset characteristic of integration, just as other ethnic groups surrendered their ethnic identities and blended into the mainstream, blacks too will similarly merge into the mainstream of American society, contingent upon the removal of the barriers to social advancement. Race, hence, comes to be seen as insignificant in understanding the position of blacks in American society. Indeed, to the extent that race is a suspect category, many believe that thinking based upon race is the source of racism and racial discrimination. The elimination of race would thereby represent a crucial move towards a truly egalitarian society. The integrationist's stance on race hence takes the form of denouncing race (see G. Peller 1990: 771).

In rejecting what they consider the fiction of race, integrationists structured their position on the basis of an analytic firmly committed to universalism.

Implicit in this embrace of universalism is the further sanction of formal equality, neutrality, impartiality, and objectivity. Integrationism is highly dependent upon a disembodied consciousness, a subject position not in any way contaminated by the particularities of socially contingent characteristics, especially race. It is obvious that as the Black Studies paradigm argues for the significance of race in making an ethical challenge to the mainstream marginalization of black existence and reality, integrationists find common cause with an Enlightenment rhetoric of objectivity and reason at odds with vulgar particularistic notions of race. This preference for the universal and the objective leads integrationists to view racism as an irrationality, a deviation from a historical normativity (ibid: 779).

The integrationists also construe racism in cognitive terms. On this view, racism is a form of consciousness, a certain cognitive incapacity, based on the erroneous assignment of social significance to arbitrary morphological factors such as skin color. Accordingly, racism can take the form of prejudice, namely adopting an attitude towards a person on the basis of stereotypes, treating an individual as a generalized other rather than as a unique and singular other. Here, an individual can claim subjective loyalty to certain preferences, with regard to certain groups of people that are based on false generalizations about the members of the group. Racism as prejudice can take a material form when put into practice. Racism manifests itself as discrimination when individuals are treated differently on the basis of irrelevant factors.

Since integration opposes race, that is, advocates the transcending of race in order to achieve equality and justice, the integrationist solution to racism and segregation takes the form of demanding the rejection of prejudice based upon skin color. Rejecting the practice of treating people on the basis of race requires seeing people as individuals, not through the lens of racial membership or identification. Clearly, then, integrationism represents a certain critical perspective on race. This liberal view assigns no substantial analytical, political, or moral significance to race. Race, on this view, becomes the cause of many social ills precisely because race facilitates treating individuals on the basis of arbitrary characteristics such as skin color. Discrimination, racism, and segregation are all possible precisely because of thinking premised upon race.

Black Nationalism and the Question of Race

Black nationalists adopt a radically different approach to race. Whereas integrationists advocate transcending race, nationalists argue that the resolution of social and political problems affecting blacks must take race into consideration. It is not surprising that nationalists claim that integration is “a form of painless genocide” (Ture and Hamilton 1994: 54). Indeed, Harold Cruse in his *Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (1967) argues that those black intellectuals who championed integration were delusional to the extent that they failed to recognize that American social reality is the product of ethnic pluralism. We recall that

integrationists view blacks as comprising an ethnic group and believe that blacks similarly will melt into mainstream society so long as the barrier of race is eliminated. Nationalists prefer to view blacks as constituting a race. Indeed, nationalists model their conception of race on the notion of a nation. On their view, blacks constitute a unique nation, for, after all, in one of the classic models, a race is a nation.[2] In short, then, "black nationalists [assert] a positive and liberating role for race consciousness, as a source of community, culture, and solidarity to build upon rather than transcend" (G. Peller 1990: 761). To the extent that Black nationalists embrace race and race consciousness, it comes as no surprise that integrationists consider Black nationalism anathema to the values of equality, neutrality, objectivity, and rationality. Accordingly, integrationists consider Black nationalism a carbon copy of white supremacy. They apparently believe that thinking premised on race inevitably courts irrational beliefs grounded in prejudice and bias. "With the centering of integrationism as a mainstream ideology of American good sense, nationalism became marginalized as an extremist and backward worldview, as the irrational correlate in the black community to the never-say-die segregationists of the white community" (G. Peller 1990: 790).

It is important to focus on the integrationist's take on Black nationalism from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge. Given a certain convergence of interest between black elites and the mainstream society, integrationism became the dominant paradigm on race, namely, the notion that race is an arbitrary factor that should play no significant role in decision making. This idea of the insignificance of race ultimately migrated to the academy and other areas of society. To the extent that Black nationalism was seen as an aberration because of its commitment to the historical and analytical importance of race, it is obvious that the ethical challenge of Black Studies would similarly suffer the fate of being seen as an irrationality fascinated with the analytically invalid and explanatorily impotent category of race. As we know, even the use of race in law to construct public policy designed to be consistent with a substantive conception of justice was considered illegitimate only because, as opponents argued, considerations of race violate the constitutional sanction against the use of arbitrary factors to develop public policy. Once integrationist assumptions became institutionalized, ideas and arguments premised on the significance of race were unable to compete within the political economy of ideas. The rapid and recurrent circulation of the integrationist rejection of race created the normative conditions for the belief that mainstream society was a society immunized against race consciousness. But, as I will argue, race was integration's anxiety of influence.

Returning to our main concern, Black nationalism, unlike white supremacy, refuses any commitment to strategies of exclusion and subordination whose sole purpose is to subject whites to discrimination and segregation. The histories of white supremacy and Black nationalism are sufficiently dissimilar for, as is obvious to all, the former championed a history of racial terror, while the latter supported a history of resistance to racial subordination. Indeed, Black

nationalism and white supremacy embody different understandings of race. Whereas white supremacy embraces a biological conception of race such that whites are biologically superior to blacks, Black nationalists adopt a radically different paradigm of race. Black nationalists invested in a new metaphorical interpretation of the presence of blacks in American society. As mentioned before, they defined race in nationalist terms. The understanding of race as a nation facilitated the embrace of the metaphor of colonialism to understand the conditions of African Americans. Transcending the integrationist's view of racism as manifestations of prejudice and discrimination, Black nationalists alternatively view racism as a type of colonialism. The metaphor of domestic colonialism captures the subordinated conditions of African Americans, clearly underscoring the historical dynamics underpinning the structural features of racial inclusion and exclusion. According to Harold Cruse, "domestic colonialism . . . instead of establishing a colonial empire, [Americans] brought the colonial system home and installed it in the Southern states. Emancipation elevated [the African American] only to the position of semi-dependent man, not to that of an equal or independent being" (H. Cruse 1968: 76). Unlike the integrationist paradigm which appeals to the notion of society as an aggregate of individuals, the Black nationalist paradigm is structurally dependent on the idea that political reality is made up of groups. In holding this conception of political reality, Black nationalists could not escape pointing out that the dramatic stage of American history was dominated by the tragedy of race, where a self-declared white race determined the nature of the various institutions of American society. Race is not an arbitrary factor to be, as it were, summarily rejected in the name of objectivity, rationality, and neutrality. The explanatory potency of race is beyond reproach in any effort to make sense of the turbulent history of America's racial reality.

But to give the impression that the Black nationalist paradigm is internally coherent and monolithic is misleading. In order to avoid this trap, we need to examine the analytical tensions of Black nationalism and its theoretical implosion. The Black nationalist paradigm implodes under the weight of its own analytical prowess relative to the integrationist paradigm. Manning Marable has identified at least four different strands of Black nationalism. He names them as follows: cultural nationalism, revolutionary or left nationalism, Marxism-Leninism, and Pan-Africanism (M. Marable 1981: 18). Of these four strands of black nationalism, cultural nationalism proved most troublesome. Indeed, its various failures became so intimately identified with Black nationalism, that the factors active in the collapse of Black nationalism are identical to the problems attributed to cultural nationalism. "Cultural nationalism," according to Marable, "was the most romantic and chauvinistic of all the dominant ideological tendencies. Petty bourgeois in class origin and parochial in outlook, cultural nationalism presented to its constituents a strictly skin-color analysis of political events. All whites, due to either genetic or sociocultural reasons, were the enemies of all peoples of African descent" (ibid: 19). The cultural nationalist view was

unfortunately responsible for imposing a medical model on the behavior of African Americans. African Americans were judged psychologically healthy only to the extent that they grounded their lives in a distinctive black perspective on reality. Any African American seemingly embracing white values such as marrying white mates was considered psychologically ill, an individual infected with self-hatred.

Not surprisingly, the complicated political realities of everyday life did not accommodate the purist logic of cultural nationalism. In the end, cultural nationalism proved politically inept in dealing with the challenges of an aleatory environment. Jerry Watts charges that the "black nationalist movement quickly became mired in black parochialism; cathartic/therapeutic, ethnic cheerleading; and sectarianism. Despite its militant-sounding rhetoric, black nationalism became an ideology of economic and status mobility for bourgeois intellectuals" (G. Watts 1994: 8–9). Clearly, then, the rhetoric of racial authenticity and purity, despite whatever strategic uses it was put to, render Black nationalism vulnerable to charges of extremism, as being outside the scope of mainstream society.

With the preceding historical analysis in place, we are well situated to turn our attention to the most clear and direct articulation of critical race theory. Critical race theory in its truest form is a movement within law. But before discussing critical race theory itself, we need to trace briefly its tense relationship to critical legal studies. This discussion is warranted due to the characterization of critical race theory as partly the "critique of the critique" of progressivism within critical legal studies.

Understanding Critical Legal Studies

The critical legal studies movement rejects the construal of law as structured or analytically dependent upon rationality, objectivity, neutrality, and universality. The law, according to critical legal studies theorists, is an ideological construction whose function is to legitimize class hierarchy. Indeed, critical legal scholars view the law not as a natural kind but as a construction which operates to maintain and legitimate American society. Put differently, law is a political tool used to reinforce, camouflage, and reify structures of advantage and status that privilege the class interests of the powerful. In so viewing the law, critical legal studies understands its task as follows: "To explore the manner in which legal doctrine and legal education and the practices of legal institutions work to buttress and support a pervasive system of oppression, inegalitarian relations."[3] Critical legal studies is not necessarily an attempt to substitute a more rational and objective normative theory of law, but rather a commitment to undermine the ideologically repugnant features of the legal tradition and its complicity in oppression and exploitation.

Minow (1986) lists four concerns of critical legal studies scholars: (1) "the critical scholar seeks to demonstrate the indeterminacy of legal doctrine: any

given set of legal principles can be used to yield competing or contradictory results"; (2) "the critical scholar engages in historical, socioeconomic analysis to identify how particular interest groups, social classes, or entrenched economic institutions benefit from legal decisions despite the indeterminacy of legal doctrines"; (3) "the critical scholar tries to expose how legal analysis and legal culture mystifies outsiders and legitimates its results"; and (4) "the critical school may elucidate new or previously disfavored social visions and argue for their realization in legal or political practice in part by making them part of legal discourse" (ibid: 84–5). Let us look in greater detail at the core claims of critical legal studies.

Critical legal studies theorists reject the traditional deductive view of law, the idea that legal judgments are conclusions arrived at through formal inferences drawn from self-evident legal principles. This deductive formalism is believed to render law a determinate and logically consistent domain. In the view of critical legal studies theorists, however, the law is fundamentally indeterminate. From this indeterminacy thesis, critical legal studies theorists further charge that the various contradictions inhabit the internal structure of law. Law dances around such polarities of objective/subjective and public/private. We should note that the indeterminacy thesis of critical legal studies has its origins in the legal realist observation "that various substantive categories of law consisted of principles and counterprinciples, rules, and exceptions, policies and counterpolicies that were resistant to attempts to reach determinate resolution" (G. Minda 1995: 110). In following the legal realists, critical legal studies theorists argue against the idea of there being any possible foundational grounding of indeterminate law precisely because law and legal doctrines, contrary to the traditional view, are philosophically and analytically dedicated to contradictory norms and policies.

Critical legal studies theorists also detect another blight in law. They call attention to the way in which law dupes people into accepting as fair a system of inequality. This critical legal studies insight speaks to the ideological and hegemonic disposition characteristic of law. Critical legal theorists insist that "legal doctrine [is] a series of ideological constructs that supported existing social arrangements by convincing legal actors and ordinary citizens that the legal and social systems were inevitable and basically fair" (ibid: 110). Again, the concept of hegemony is important to the program of critical legal studies theorists, for they connect the political career of law to the phenomenon of the manufacturing of the objectivity of social reality; law duplicitously succeeds in getting people to cooperate in their own oppression. According to Robert Gordon, one should look at the way in which law, as hegemony, creates a situation in which those who are dominated are unable, in his words, "even to *imagine* that life could be different and better" (ibid: 287). To the extent that law functions hegemonically and in so doing limits thinking and imagination to the degree that the reigning social order is seen as given, as discovered, we can conclude that law encourages the illusion of necessity. This illusion in turn functions to sanction non-imaginative thinking, a condition where the dominated fail to conceive of

new possibilities, of radically different social arrangements. The fact that the existing social structure can be otherwise than it is is beyond the grasp of the hegemonic consciousness sustained by law. Let us examine another feature of this hegemonic process.

Besides denouncing the ideological and reifying tendencies of law, critical legal studies thinkers also denounce the progressive masquerading of the law. On this view, the law is not a progressive tool for social change. Their inclination is to view the law as being more conservative in thrust than progressive. Hence, critical legal studies thinkers claim that the "conservative power of legal thought is not to be found in legal outcomes which resolve conflicts in favor of dominant groups, but in the reification of the very categories through which the nature of social conflict is defined" (Gabel and Harris 1982–3: 373).

In calling attention to the power of law to shape consciousness and secure agreement about how to structure reality, critical legal studies theorists draw analogies between the function of law in constructing reality and religion. Just as religion successfully promotes an uncritical mindset, law similarly induces blind faith in its principles and concepts. Consequently, critical legal studies scholars declare: "Like religion in previous historical periods, the law becomes an object of belief which shapes popular consciousness toward a passive acquiescence or obedience to the status quo" (ibid: 369, 374).

Finally, critical legal studies, consistent with its assault on the dominant legal ideology, denounces the liberal defense and glorification of rights. Mark Tushnet has argued against the language of rights on the grounds that such language, the rhetoric of rights, is another aspect of the ideological legitimating function facilitated through the law (M. Tushnet 1984: 1362–4). On Tushnet's view, the appeal to rights does not provide any determinate results, and furthermore any attempt to fix the context of rights is fated to instability. Finally, Tushnet calls attention to the fact that the language of rights reifies and abstracts experiences and, in doing so, frustrates attempts to change things to the extent that rights language renders the state of things opaque.

Tushnet does not consider the move to ground various agendas in legal rights discourse as liberating. Such a strategy becomes frustrated precisely because rights language distorts original goals to the extent that they become constrained by the ideological closure of the law. Tushnet warns: "If we treated experiences of solidarity and individuality as directly relevant to our political discussions, instead of passing them through the filter of the language of rights, we would be in a better position to address the political issues on the appropriate level" (ibid: 1384).

Clearly, then, the critical legal studies movement exposes the ideological role of law, its hegemonic function, with the attendant consequences of reified thinking and excluding from imagination transformative possibilities to unsettle existing arrangements. Nevertheless, we should note that it is an exaggeration to identify the core insight of critical legal studies with cynicism. According to Gordon, "The point is to unfreeze the world as it appears to common sense as

a bunch of more or less objectively determined social relations and to make it appear as . . . it really is: people acting, imagining, rationalizing, justifying" (R. Gordon 1998).

Besides sharing critical legal studies' assault on law as providing an ideological legitimization for the existing social order, critical race theorists also dismiss mainstream legal discourse as working in the service of legitimating a hierarchical structure of privileges for some and oppression for others. But critical race theorists consider the critical legal studies attack on dominant legal discourse incomplete – even a victim of the same hegemony critical legal theorists repudiate. Hence, let us examine the critical race theorist's response to critical legal studies before pursuing a detailed examination of critical race theory itself.

Criticizing Critical Legal Studies from the Perspective of Critical Race Theory

Kimberlé Crenshaw's groundbreaking (1988) article offers an insightful response to critical legal studies. First, Crenshaw claims that despite the self-proclaimed task of critical legal theorists as having an interest in domination, specifically exposing the law's role in maintaining domination, critical legal theorists have failed to focus on racial oppression. It is not that racial oppression is more important than other forms of domination, but it would be ill-advised to assume that we can easily assimilate it to a formal logic allegedly characteristic of all forms of domination. In problematizing the critical legal studies' take on domination, Crenshaw states: "While Critical scholars claim that their project is concerned with domination, few have made more than token efforts to address racial domination specifically, and their work does not seem grounded in the reality of the racially oppressed" (ibid: 1356).

In underscoring the importance of focusing on racial domination in criticizing mainstream legal discourse, Crenshaw claims that not only is it important to expose law's role in facilitating oppression, but that it is equally important to trace the historical causes of oppression. Put differently, besides analytically dismantling the claim of law to neutrality, it is also crucial to expose the various historical formations that have rendered racial oppression a stubborn structural feature of mainstream society; racial oppression is not a benign epiphenomenal feature of social reality. Crenshaw maintains:

> Critical scholars have criticized mainstream legal ideology for its tendency to portray American society as basically fair, and thereby to legitimate the oppressive policies that have been directed toward racial minorities. Yet Critical scholars do not sufficiently account for the effects or the causes of oppression that they routinely acknowledge. The result is that Critical literature exhibits the same pro-

> clivities of mainstream scholarship: it seldom speaks to or about Black people. (Ibid: 1356)

Crenshaw denounces critical legal studies' critique of rights as well as its critique of the hegemonic nature of legal thinking. In her view, "trashing" the notion of rights without any vigorous critique of white supremacy is politically misguided. Indeed, Crenshaw acknowledges the politically strategic effectiveness of the use of the notion of rights by Blacks to obtain some degree of inclusion in American society. Crenshaw also addresses the critical legal studies' connection between domination and reification. We recall the argument of critical legal studies theorists that law contributes to domination with such unforgiving effectiveness that even those who are dominated become themselves complicit in their own domination. Ultimately, dominated individuals reify the current state of things and become incapable of imagining new possibilities of social arrangements. Crenshaw again finds this position limited precisely because it fails to account for one core element of racial domination: coercion. Furthermore, she maintain that with regard to racial domination, what blacks believe is not as important as what is believed about blacks, specifically the consensus that black domination is legitimate (ibid: 1357). This failure to appreciate the unique role of racial subordination in the history of mainstream society marks an investigative shortcoming that necessitated the emergence of critical race theory. Indeed, critical race theory is the heir of the early Black Studies Movement, critical legal studies, and the Civil Rights Movement. In light of its critical association but beneficial involvement with these movements, we turn now to investigate critical race theory on its own terms, to gauge the extent to which it has furthered the various debates surrounding the academy, race, and law.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will (1) offer a brief discussion of the core themes of critical race theory[4] and (2) focus on affirmative action as a practical example of how critical race theory offers a perspective robust enough to advance the cause of the marginalized. Before pursuing these tasks, it should be made clear that the main focus is going to be on the true paradigm of critical race theory. The task at hand is not to focus on those thinkers who have been concerned chiefly with the semantic and ontological status of the concept of race. Similarly, critical race theory should not be understood as a theory of race in the tradition of Marxist critical theory as espoused, for example, by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. Lucius Outlaw, for instance, distinguishes between critical theory and a critical theory of race. He sees himself as involved in the latter project due to his concern with investigating the social reality of race, namely, "the hows and whys of humans forming themselves into bonding, self-reproducing social collectives" (L. Outlaw 1996: 4). Of course, it would be premature to deny various connections among the diverse traditions of critical thought and critical race theory. Here, the critical race theory movement within law is considered as representative of the true critical race theory connected to the Black Studies Movement.

Introducing and Defining Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory eschews "both the conservative view that racial equality has largely been achieved and the traditional liberal one that more litigation and better enforcement of anti-discrimination laws are all that are needed to ensure it" (R. Delgado 1994: 3). Seeking to move beyond the analytical inertia of the above political perspectives, the point of departure for critical race theorists emerges from two postulates: "(1) that racism is ordinary and normal in American society, and (2) that a culture constructs its own social reality" (ibid: 4). Critical race theory, a recent research program within the law initiated by minority legal scholars, chooses as its general thrust the task of legitimizing race as a valid category of analysis and reinforcing the significance of taking into consideration the lived reality of black existence. To this end, critical race theory is not another descriptive victimology. Rather, critical race theory is a sustained theoretical and analytical interrogation of the concepts, principles, and epistemological assumptions of dominant legal discourse. Critical race theory, as one leading critical race theorist claims, is a raid on this mindset (R. Delgado 1993: 744–5).

It is not the strategy of critical race theorists to pursue a critical engagement with the dominant legal discourse by employing its institutionalized methods of analysis. Since critical race theorists desire to unsettle the inertia of the dominant tradition, they employ subversive strategies to destabilize "the bundle of presuppositions, received wisdoms, and shared understandings against a background of which legal and political discourse takes place" (R. Delgado 1989: 2413).

The root metaphor of critical race theory is "voice."[5] Voice, in this context, suggests the importance of minorities speaking for themselves instead of having passively to utilize the hegemonic mindset of the dominant culture. By speaking for themselves, we should understand minorities as structuring the cultural world in terms of their own root metaphors or world hypotheses, as embracing cognitive sovereignty while excluding the possibility of being dependent upon ideologically tainted institutionalized styles of thinking.

The metaphor of voice also refers to narratives and stories. Critical race theorists acknowledge that stories and narratives have the representational power to "shatter complacency and challenge the status quo" (ibid: 2414). Critical race theorists describe this new legal voice variously as "the black voice," the "voice of color," or the "minority voice." Whatever designation one uses to describe this new legal discourse, its main objective is "to develop a jurisprudence that accounts for the role of racism in American law and that works toward the elimination of racism as part of a greater goal of eliminating all forms of subordination" (M. Matsuda 1991: 1331).

Critical race theorists focus their writings on the struggle for racial justice, the persistence of racial hierarchy, and other issues of special importance to marginalized communities. They challenge the efficacy of both liberal legal theory and communitarian ideals as vehicles for racial progress, destabilize the supposedly

neutral criteria of meritocracy and social order, and call for a reexamination of the very concept of "race" (R. Hayman 1995: 62, 63).

One group of critical race theorists emphasizes the uniqueness, distinctiveness, and radical, undomesticated alterity of the lived reality of marginalized communities. This group includes theorists such as Richard Delgado, Alex Johnson, and Jerome McCristal Culp, Jr. Perhaps it would not be too much of an exaggeration to claim that this group favors a certain strategic voice of color, although one not restricted by the representational demands of a realism for a literal and adequate reproduction of the existence of all those persons who belong to communities of color. A second group of critical race theorists, including Mari Matsuda, Angela Davis, Regina Austin, and John Calmore, have expressed concerns about any form of vulgar essentialistic commitment to the existence of a stable notion of race while blind to the multi-dimensionality of different marginalized communities. These theorists emphasize the "multiple consciousness" of selfhood; they warn against embracing notions of a unitary black community, and urge a recognition of the "many dualities" characteristic of African-American life (ibid: 64, 65).

A second area of debate among critical race theorists concerns the possibility of racial justice. Reconstructionists believe in the transformative potential of the law through the fulfillment of the liberal quest for "rights" and the realization of "equality." Another article of faith of the reconstructionists is the possibility of the elimination of hierarchy from society through an emancipatory reconstruction of society. This group of critical race theorists includes Patricia Williams, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Charles Lawrence.

Racial realists, such as Derrick Bell and Linda Greene, on the other hand, caution against the "innocent" and naive eagerness to believe that there can be a significant reconstruction of society through the expansion and realization of liberal ideals. They maintain that hierarchy is a persistent feature of the dominant society, and precisely because of its foundational and structural features, it is highly capable of compromising as well as resisting strategies of reconstruction.

To the extent that critical race theorists challenge the main values of the dominant legal discourse, there is a sense in which critical race theory is postmodernist. Of course, associating critical race theory with postmodernism is quite controversial. Nevertheless, it is fair to make such an association once we come to realize that postmodernist jurisprudence similarly assaults certain values of the dominant legal discourse. Robert Hayman, Jr., has succinctly summarized the shared perspective of critical race theory and postmodernism:

> First, Critical Race Theorists reject both realist and conceptualist epistemologies and insist instead on the importance of perspective and context in assessing claims to truth. Second, Critical Race Theorists reject the contention that texts and practices have objective, neutral meanings and insist instead on their relentless deconstruction, and, perhaps, reconstruction. Third, Critical Race Theories reject the

> conception of the self as innate, immutable, and autonomous, and insist instead on the recognition of "race" as – like all attributes of personhood – a political construction. (R. Hayman 1995: 70)

I have already cautioned that the relation between critical race theory and postmodernism is complex, being neither one of total agreement nor total disdain. There is, however, one serious area of contention between them. Postmodernists underscore the fracture between the theoretical arm of the law and the practice of the law; that is, legal theory, instead of being allied with the practice of law, becomes alienated from legal praxis. This gap is most pronounced in the noticeable divorce of the academic study of the law and law as practiced by lawyers and judges. From the postmodernist perspective, there are those who celebrate the free reign of theory and those who despise theory and urge that more critical attention be focused on the concrete and contested domains of power and privilege. Critical race theorists do not celebrate the divorce of theory from practice. They favor the marriage of the two (ibid: 70).

In summary, it is clear that a certain theme permeates critical race theory: an emphasis on the existential, lived condition of people of color. Hence, critical race theory is not an abstract, *a priori* perspective, but emerges from the actual experience of being subjected to racism, as well as the history of creatively developing concrete strategies to respond to that experience.

Critical Race Theory: Stories and Narratives

One strategy of critical race theorists is the deployment of narratives and stories to register the perspectives and concerns of communities of color. This focus on narrative and stories strategically captures the historical and institutional treatment of subordinated groups as opposed to the majoritarian focus on individual harm, which suggests racism is more a set of random individual acts of hatred than a systemic phenomenon. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to acknowledge that "Narrative has emerged as the preferred genre of scholarship for scholars of color" (A. Johnson 1994: 804). Oppressed communities, according to critical race theorists, cannot unsettle the sedimented layers of consciousness embedded in the dominant tradition simply by advancing formal procedural challenges complacently committed to analytical strategies of logical consistency. Undermining the complacency of hegemonic dominant discourse is possible through the creation of counter-stories (see R. Delgado 1993b: 666). The emphasis on narratives and stories is not a matter of creating fictions that distort social reality or that suspend truth, reference, and the importance of reason and evidence. Rather, the goal is to unsettle complacent styles of thinking by bringing certain marginalized and disregarded perspectives to bear on our understanding of social reality. Stories, Delgado states, "can show that what we believe is

ridiculous, self-serving, or cruel. They can show us the way out of the trap of unjustified exclusion. They can help us understand when it is time to reallocate power" (R. Delgado 1989: 2415).

However, critical race theorists do not sanction stories or narratives solely to entertain or to amuse. Nor do they employ narratives to reinforce rigid barriers for the sake of maintaining the hegemony of the same and the marginal status of the other. Acknowledging the cognitive powers of narratives, they claim that these can effectively initiate communication across different social worlds and thereby facilitate understanding of the subjectivity of the other in a way that is not dependent upon the pathology of recognition in which the other depends upon recognition as the same. Consequently, Delgado insists that narratives not only facilitate the ability to apprehend different ways of being, new perspectives, and new possibilities of life, but also are therapeutic for those seeking to establish their voice (ibid: 2414–15). In this context, being able to tell one's story of oppression is cathartic to the extent that one purges oneself of potentially negative emotions and styles of thinking (ibid: 2437). Narrative is both deconstructive as well as constructive, precisely because narrative not only unsettles fossilized layers of thought, but also offers new possibilities to imaginatively create new constellations of cognitive "seeings."

Now that the voice of critical race theory has been identified, it is appropriate to examine critical race theory in action.

The Dialectics of Affirmative Action

Affirmative action is an excellent test case for demonstrating the radical difference between mainstream and critical race theorists' perspectives. Alan Freeman's technical distinction between the victim and perpetrator perspectives effectively captures the cognitive difference that separates critical race theory from mainstream legal discourse.

Alan Freeman identifies the victim perspective with the actual victims of racial discrimination; it is a cognitive smashing of the logic of the reigning legal categories structuring social reality from the "underside" of the social world. "For black Americans, that experience has been one of harsh oppression, exclusion, compulsory reduced status, and of being perceived not as a person but as a derogatory cultural stereotype" (A. Freeman 1989: 287). Freeman further characterizes the victim perspective as centered on results and as not being particularly infatuated with notions of abstract equality.

Not surprisingly, the perpetrator perspective centers on concerns diametrically opposed to the victim perspective:

> From the perpetrator perspective, the goal of antidiscrimination law is to apply timeless and abstract norms, unsullied by history or social reality. Its job is to isolate

> and punish racial discrimination viewed as an instance of individual badness in an otherwise nondiscriminatory social realm. Thus, we cannot find violations of antidiscrimination law in objective social conditions, but only in the actions of identifiable perpetrators who have *purposely* and *intentionally caused* harm to *identifiable victims* who will be offered a *compensatory remedy*. (Ibid: 288; original emphasis)

The perpetrator perspective conveniently avoids any talk about social reality or structural racial harm. Its goal is simply to track down isolated individuals who intentionally and purposefully cause harm. Its focus, accordingly, is not on results but on establishing fault. Freeman further adds: "The perpetrator perspective also denies historical reality – in particular, the fact that we would never have fashioned antidiscrimination law had it not been for the specific historical oppression of particular races" (ibid: 288).

Freeman's victim/perpetrator dichotomy will prove almost indispensable as we critically examine the critical legal literature on affirmative action. Indeed, this dichotomy, Freeman claims, "may be recast starkly as the difference between equality of results and equality of opportunity, between *de facto* and *de jure* segregation, between substantive and formal equality" (ibid: 289). With this background in place, let us examine how the mainstream legal tradition implodes in its efforts to repudiate affirmative action from an alleged realm of objectivity and neutrality.

The dominant legal tradition, in the view of critical race theorists, cannot meaningfully address the lived situation of peoples of color, a deficiency suffered by the dominant legal tradition because of its hegemonic mindset. Although it celebrates an undisputed impartiality, it nevertheless sanctions, in the name of this alleged impartiality, policies and decisions that impose a negative racial impact on communities of color (R. Hayman 1995: 77).

Examining the dominant tradition's take on race demonstrates why critical race theorists find this tradition less than effective in addressing race and racism. The core theme of the dominant tradition regarding race and racism is the root metaphor of color-blindness. The basic idea is that the Constitution is color-blind and that any policy or law granting special favor or privilege to any group on the basis of race is unconstitutional. Another feature of the dominant tradition is the strict interpretation of the Equal Protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The dominant tradition embraces the view that the Equal Protection clause protects all citizens, regardless of race, from any and all possible forms of discrimination on the basis of race. Consequently, the claim is advanced that the use of race to exclude citizens from enjoying privileges and benefits available to others is unconstitutional.

The pernicious metaphor of color-blindness has its origins in Justice Harlan's famous dissenting opinion in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). It is instructive to quote Justice Harlan at length, if for no other reason than to underscore the persistent history of the myth of color-blindness. According to Harlan:

> The white race deems itself to be the dominant race in this country. And so it is, in prestige, in achievements, in education, in wealth and in power . . . But in view of the Constitution, in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior, dominant, ruling class of citizens. There is no caste here. Our Constitution is color-blind . . . It is, therefore, to be regretted that this high tribunal, the final expositor of the fundamental law of the land, has reached the conclusion that it is competent for a state to regulate the enjoyment by citizens of their civil rights solely upon the basis of race.

It is this refusal to see race as a sociocultural reality in the dominant society that leads critical race theorists to break with the dominant legal discourse. The denial of the social reality of race, as well as a certain cognitive incapacity to acknowledge and register the continuing effects and persistence of racism, serve as foundational presuppositions underwriting the dominant tradition's theoretical stance on race (R. Hayman 1995: 80–1). In favoring color-blindness and merit-based entitlement, among other things, the dominant tradition clearly cannot take race seriously; indeed, it would seem that any attempt to force the social reality of race upon this tradition will be met with the accusation of playing "the race card." In rejecting the social reality of race, it comes as no surprise that this tradition views affirmative action as a source of racial injustice. Let us examine the dominant tradition's take on affirmative action.

First, affirmative action, according to its critics, undermines the normative principles of American society. These principles range from constitutionally sanctioned acknowledgments of the right of each citizen to equal treatment, to those that affirm the moral worth of each individual, regardless of race or sex, etc. Not surprisingly, many critics of affirmative action find it morally objectionable on the grounds that it violates the basic values of American society. Still other critics consider affirmative action both as a symptom of social decay and a morally corrosive element in the decline of American society. Second, the majoritarian tradition views affirmative action as a form of naked racial preference, hence a form of reverse discrimination. In this construal, affirmative action, its critics maintain, not only assaults the meritocratic tradition of American society, but also compromises the legal and moral validity of the Equal Protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. One major negative charge against affirmative action resulting from this construal is that it violates the rights of innocent white males. In the words of David Oppenheimer: "To its critics, affirmative action is both a euphemism for discrimination against white men and a system that bureaucratizes the entire society at the cost of meritocratic decision making; it is a symbol for all that has gone wrong with American society since the sixties" (D. Oppenheimer 1988–9: 42).

Let us briefly examine a number of cases involving race to further illustrate the ideological consensus of the dominant legal discourse. In *Wygant v. Jackson Board of Education* (1896), a case of a union collective bargaining agreement to prevent the disproportionate layoff of minority teachers, Justice Powell

argued against the position of the school board on the grounds that its efforts to remedy societal discrimination were too "amorphous." Race-specific preferences, according to Powell, are permitted only in situations of official acts of discrimination. Powell even considered the argument of the school board for hiring minorities to serve as "role models" too "indefinite" to legally justify policies that "work against innocent people . . . [particularly when such remedies] are ageless in their reach into the past, and timeless in their ability to affect the future."

In *City of Richmond v. J. A. Croson Co*. (1989), a case involving a set-aside program of the city's subcontracts for minorities, the court once again expressed its disapproval of affirmative action. Blacks comprise about 50 percent of the city population but receive less than 1 percent of the city's subcontracts. The city, in viewing this problem as connected to the history of past racial discrimination that effectively excluded Blacks from active participation in the construction industry, sought to blunt the negative effects of racial discrimination. While scrutinizing the evidence, Justice O'Connor argued there was inadequate evidence to support "amorphous claims" that racial discrimination was the main factor explaining the disparities between whites and blacks in receiving contracts, and further proceeded to dismiss arguments based upon the statistical probability of racism as "sheer speculation." O'Connor warned about the pitfalls of race-conscious policy and concluded that the "sorry history" of unfortunate racial discrimination is ill-equipped to justify the use of a "rigid racial quota." Justice Scalia, agreeing with Justice O'Connor, considered the attempt to use race-conscious policies to remedy the effects of past and present racial discrimination as more sinister than the effects of past discrimination. According to him, "The difficulty of overcoming the effects of past discrimination is as nothing compared to the difficulty of eradicating from our society the source of those effects, which is the tendency – fatal to a Nation such as ours – to classify and judge men and women on the basis of their country of origin or the color of their skin." Indeed, Justice Scalia's position is quite clear, for he tells us in *Adarand Constructors v. Pena* (1995) that "government can never have a 'compelling interest' in discriminating on the basis of race to make up for past racial discrimination." Allowing that it is proper to remedy individuals wronged by racial discrimination, Justice Scalia denies its valid extension to groups. Hence, he further claims: "To pursue the concept of racial entitlement even for the most admirable and benign of purposes is to reinforce and preserve for future mischief the way of thinking that produced race slavery, race privilege and race hatred." The message of the court is clearly at the center of the dominant discourse. Race-conscious policies, such as affirmative action, are permissible in the presence of "identified discrimination," namely, intentional discrimination. However, discrimination cannot be identified when there is no direct numerical correspondence between the composition of the labor market and the general population in a specific area. Similarly, we cannot establish racial discrimination by reference to "amorphous claims" of past discrimination. Racial discrimination should and can be identified only by reference to acts of purposeful discrimination involving both intent and deliberate causation.

The import of the preceding discussion firmly establishes how a commitment to color-blindness reinforces (1) "an almost obsessive desire to exclude 'race' from public discourse"; (2) the claim "that the cost of race talk outweighs its benefits"; (3) "a literal inability or unwillingness to see color and its effects"; and (4) "an almost congenital blindness to the reality of racial hierarchy" (R. Hayman 1995: 89, 90).

The Counter-Discourse of Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory attempts to shatter the dominant hegemonic mindset on affirmative action. Its core insight with regard to affirmative action is that "without talking about structural inequality, unconscious racism, institutionalized patriarchy, and antisubordination theory, it is impossible to defend affirmative action" (C. Lawrence 1998: 323). We recall the court's continuous concern not so much to address the reality of race as to establish why historical and ongoing racism did not render race a valid category of legal analysis. This effort to make race explanatorily impotent as well as analytically inert is unjustifiable in the context of a society where race has been used to structure access to its dominant institutions. It is hard to believe that institutions structured on the basis of race can be meaningfully transformed without seriously acknowledging the strategic role of race in the dynamics of exclusion and inclusion.

Critical race theorists reject the notion of color-blindness, the idea that the law should not make appeals to race as the justification for public policy. Critical race theorists maintain that the notion of color-blindness sanctions a certain way of thinking and perceiving which unjustifiably legitimates invisibility with regard to the condition of minority communities. This invisibility has the effect of placing the concerns of minorities beyond the reach of the law. Instead of claiming a premature color-blindness, critical race theorists argue that accurate cognitive "seeing" must acknowledge that efforts to erase race from any cognitive surveillance of the social world functions to uncritically legitimize a social world where race – far from being benign – is operationally at work. Hence not to see race is to embrace a certain cognitive incapacity. Being color-blind, far from being progressive, results in a certain analytical deficiency and theoretical awkwardness. As Kimberlé Crenshaw states: "This belief in color-blindness and equal process however, would make no sense at all in a society in which identifiable groups had actually been treated differently historically and in which the effects of this difference in treatment continued into the present" (K. Crenshaw 1988: 1345). And the obvious point that the critical race theorists underscore is that we do indeed live in a society structured along racial lines. To this extent, the appeal to color-blindness is an attempt to "fake" a certain historical blindness, to bleach and distort the history of the society.

Clearly, the blanket call for color-blindness entails suspicion of affirmative action as, in the view of its critics, aggravating racial tension by inflating race

beyond what is necessary. But before proceeding with our discussion, I want to break at this time and investigate in greater detail why the appeal to color-blindness is ideologically disabling from the critical race theorist perspective.

Appeals to color-blindness must be approached with skepticism and seen as regressive instead of progressive precisely because such appeals invite us to consider history as being insignificant when thinking about matters of racial justice. The metaphor of color-blindness mutates into a static literalism that encourages the purchase of formal equality at the price of renouncing substantive equality. Color-blindness is highly dependent upon a certain "formalistic analytics" (ibid: 281).

Formalistic analysis usually takes the form of a certain "repressive tolerance" in that it only sanctions thinking complicit with mainstream definitions of concepts. Thinking that embraces alternative definitions of concepts, when judged by formal rules of inference, is judged invalid precisely because such thinking consists of arguments constructed with semantic content dissimilar from the established definitions. To the extent that alternatively defined concepts conflict with mainstream definitions of concepts, these concepts, from the perspective of mainstream thinking, are judged vague; semantic vagueness, as the story goes, does not give rise to clear thinking.

Critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw offers one construal of this formalistic analytics. The strategy is "to formalize equality basically to constitute only symmetrical treatment and then render the social, material context of segregation as well as its effects private or unknowable" (ibid: 282). It is this style of thinking, the tendency to treat differences as horizontal sameness, that contributes to the picture of society as a natural struggle between two equally situated races. This picture of things inevitably must "erase" the history of racial subordination. As one critical race theorist states, "the Court has employed historical amnesia to create a colorblind fantasy world" (C. Lawrence 1998: 314). Again, two paradigmatic examples of this formalist alchemy at work are *City of Richmond v. J. A. Croson* and *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Crenshaw writes:

> Both reduced the question of racial equality to mere formalism, completely abstracted from history or contract. The different meanings and experiences of whiteness and blackness are completely erased, with the categories formally construed to represent an ahistorical essential view of skin color. A denial of social power differentials between groups reproduces and insulates power disparity. Formal equality in conditions of social inequality becomes a tool of domination, reinforcing that system and insulating it from attack. (K. Crenshaw 1998: 285)

The purpose of the preceding discussion is to demonstrate that while the dominant legal discourse is fanatically committed to a symmetrical model of racial equality, critical race theorists argue for a non-symmetrical model or an affirmative model that advocates taking active steps to unsettle various regimes of racial subordination. Nevertheless, instead of wishing for a bland sameness of races,

> asymmetrical models assume the possibility and desirability of racial differences. Asymmetrical models of racial equality hold that the races are "often asymmetrically located in society" and reject "the notion that all [racial] differences are likely to disappear, or even that they should." Asymmetrical equality refuses to condition the success of racial minorities on their adopting the behaviors, values, and appearances of white Americans. (Brooks and Newborn 1994: 802)

A third response to the dominant discourse's take on affirmative action concerns the ontological configuration of political reality with regard to the issue of structural injustice or rather racial hierarchy. The dominant view considers the individual the basic unit in social ontology. On this view, individuals – not groups – have rights. Similarly, the wrongs suffered by a victim are suffered only on an individual basis, not because of membership in a group. Social relations are not modeled on a hierarchical perspective, but rather on a horizontal plane. Society is seen as an aggregate of free individuals voluntarily pursuing their own self-interest. And even to the extent that group talk is allowed, blacks and whites are seen as occupying a level playing field and freely competing for a fair share of goods and opportunities. Social inequality, on this view, is not a matter of racial discrimination but rather the fair outcome of rational social competition and expression of individual choice. According to this take on things, affirmative action is wrong precisely because it misleadingly seeks to compensate groups of individuals, hence it falsely suggests that groups have rights; there are no group rights, the very notion of group rights is a fiction.

Critical race theorists do not consider the individual the basic unit of social ontology. Instead, they analyze society in terms of groups. On this view, social relations are hierarchical and not horizontal. To the extent that whites control more economic resources than blacks, receive better education than blacks, and reside in better neighborhoods than blacks, etc., social relations are actually hierarchical, with society being structured along lines of race such that one race is considered superior to the other and possesses significantly more power than those who have historically suffered racial exclusion. Differential income distribution, according to critical race theorists, does not reflect individual differences in "special qualifications" and in "entrepreneurial choice." To the extent that race determines one's access to education, which in turn determines one's level of qualification and access to capital, which in turn determine one's entrepreneurial choices, it keeps minorities from being in positions to fairly compete with the dominant group. Critical race theorists defend affirmative action on the grounds that its purpose is to compensate those harmed by structures of racial injustice by offering them various deserving opportunities. Hence, in a society where social relations are hierarchically structured on the basis of race, one must take race into consideration in any attempt to create a truly egalitarian society.

Critical race theorists also reject the attempt of the dominant tradition to oppose affirmative action by invoking notions of justice and equality interpreted

in formalistic and procedural terms. They maintain that appeals to notions of merit and dessert dependent upon formalistic construals support rewarding those who benefit from past discrimination. By not taking account of this historical situation, hyper-formalistic and procedural notions that entail treating all cases as identical function to maintain a status quo that benefits the dominant social group. Again, they urge turning to history to understand the complex reality of race in shaping the deep contours of American society (see D. Bell 1990: 402).

While rejecting the dominant legal tradition's take on affirmative action, critical race theorists both steadfastly pursue a substantive notion of equality and eschew any abstract notion of equality. The formal notion of equality can take the form of equality of opportunity. Consistent with formalistic legal thought, formal equality of opportunity is simply the requirement that all Americans, regardless of race, color, or gender, are to have equal legal status. This model of formal equality of opportunity anticipates a society in which all races are symmetrically situated. Critical race theorists are as unconvinced by the symmetrical model of formal equality of opportunity as they are with formalistic notions of procedural justice. Indeed, they believe that this very model has frustrated efforts to obtain substantial progress on matters of racial equality. Freeman eloquently makes the critical race theorists' case for a substantive notion of equality: "The quest for justice must become a substantive one, finally discarding the shackles of merely formal equality that have served to reproduce hierarchy" (A. Freeman 1988: 390). The real problem with formal equality of opportunity is that it fails to acknowledge the structural and historical features of racism. "Formal concepts of equality treat racism as an anomaly, an illness, a sort of cancer on an otherwise healthy body. They aimed at deviations from a status quo or baseline assumed to represent equality. If we spot such deviation, we punish it" (Brooks and Newborn 1994: 798). But racism is not a deviation from an otherwise rational norm.

In a different context, Charles Lawrence writes that the "limited vision of racism, which prohibits explicit racial exclusion but leaves intact almost all of the social practices and institutional structures of White domination, is called formal equality" (C. Lawrence 1998: 315). Hence, instead of remaking equality in the formal guise of abstract individualism, the idea that society is an aggregate of atomic individuals pursuing their rational self-interest and that race and color are irrelevant in this natural struggle by individuals to better themselves, critical race theorists are inclined to argue that "There is only one way to make equality real: to attack and dismantle inequality" (ibid: 325).

In light of the critical race theorists' rejection of formalistic and ahistorical approaches to affirmative action that reinforce current patterns of racial inequality, we need to briefly investigate the presumptive conception of race motivating critical race theory.

Finally, critical race theorists adopt a certain ontological stance with regard to race. They insist that race is real, but they do not establish its reality on natural,

biological grounds; on their view, race claims no objective biological reality. The issue of race, as they see things, is not a matter of determining its biological validity. Indeed, critical race theorists focus on the existential reality of race, on its lived reality, and eschew formalistic and abstract "witch hunts" regarding the semantic validity of race. So they maintain that race is real precisely because it is a construction; race claims a sociocultural reality. In saying that race is a construction they do not intend to claim that it is a fiction or that it is unreal. Again, on their view, race is real precisely because we exist in a cultural world structured on the basis of race. Race is real because of its social persistence, and it persists because it is real. Hence, to urge the elimination of race from our discourse is an act of bad faith, for we would be pretending that race does not matter in a world where race matters. Critical race theorists maintain that denying the reality of race will not do much to change a world structured on the basis of race.

Critiques of Critical Race Theory

Randall Kennedy (1989) has leveled a serious challenge against critical race theory. He attributes two main theses to critical race theorists: the "exclusion thesis" and the "distinctiveness thesis." He considers both theses false. He writes that the critical race theorists "fail to support persuasively their claims of racial exclusion or their claims that legal academic scholars of color produce a racially distinctive brand of valuable scholarship" (R. Kennedy 1989: 1749). In another context he adds: "There is a considerable difference . . . between hypotheses and persuasive theories. What separates the two is testing" (ibid: 1760). The implication is that critical race theorists present untested hypotheses under the pretense that these hypotheses are empirically true. According to Kennedy, the exclusion thesis "is the belief that the intellectual contributions of scholars of color are wrongfully ignored or undervalued" (ibid: 1745–6). The distinctiveness thesis "is the belief (1) that minority scholars, like all people of color in the United States, have experienced racial oppression; (2) that this experience causes minority scholars to view the world with a different perspective than their white colleagues; and (3) that this different perspective displays itself in valuable ways in the work of minority scholars" (ibid: 1746). Kennedy's strategy of attack is to interpret these theses as empirical claims about the state of legal scholarship. Then putting the most literal spin on them, he proceeds to argue that there is really no empirical evidence to substantiate them. To the extent that these theses are empirically suspect, critical race theory itself is suspect; it is a flawed research program.

Let us briefly examine Kennedy's criticisms of the three critical race theorists he singled out for examination. Kennedy rejects Bell's charge that, regardless of qualifications, majority scholars have set a limit on the number of minority legal scholars hired. Bell attributes this fear to possible insecurities on the part of

majority scholars. Kennedy argues that there is no evidence establishing that the small number of minority scholars hired is due to fear and insecurity by majority scholars. Instead, he suggests that the small number of black professors may be explained by the fact that the pool of qualified black professors is distressingly small in number. And in considering other possible reasons, he infers "another explanation may involve self-limiting social-psychological adaptations" (ibid: 1769). He further intimates that this development may cause scholars of color to "engage in various strategies of avoidance: for example, exempting themselves from the risks of failure by refusing to compete on the same terms as whites or refraining from investing themselves wholeheartedly in their careers" (ibid: 1769).

Richard Delgado is the next critical race theorist criticized by Kennedy. Delgado charges that scholars of color are excluded by majority scholars who refuse to cite work produced by scholars of color dealing with race related issues. According to Delgado, a small number of majority scholars who work on affirmative action and Civil Rights issues cite and quote each other while ignoring work produced by scholars of color. Delgado makes his point by actually producing cases of work produced by scholars of color on race related matters that majority scholars did not cite.

Kennedy responds to Delgado by questioning whether the work produced by scholars of color merited citing. Kennedy shares the traditional view that the quality of scholarly work is determined by objective standards of excellence, not in terms of the race of the person who produces it. Hence, he further claims that the fact that a scholar of color produced a work on race does not warrant citing the work if it fails to satisfy objective standards of scholarship. So Kennedy would explain the phenomenon of majority scholars not citing work produced by scholars of color in terms of this work not satisfying standards of scholarly excellence, rather than because majority scholars are unconsciously motivated by race. Kennedy maintains that the ideal of scholarly work is work based on "established impersonal criteria," not on group identity. He also holds that "a work is appropriately citable if it provides support for a given proposition" (ibid: 1772). Consequently, his main attack against Delgado is that he fails to appeal to established standards of scholarly work. Kennedy's main tool of attack is the meritocratic model. Again, he writes that this model "dictates that, for purposes of citation, a scholar should be indifferent to the personal identity of the producers of scholarship. Under this model, all that is relevant is the relative merits of the works competing for recognition" (ibid: 1772).

Finally, Kennedy rejects Matsuda's claim that there is a unique and distinctive voice of color. Focusing on what he identifies as Matsuda's theme of distinctiveness, he attributes to her the claim that "because of their minority status and the experience of racial victimization that attaches to the status, people of color offer valuable and special perspectives or voices that, if recognized, will enrich legal academic discourse" (ibid: 1778). But Kennedy claims that there is no empirical

evidence to substantiate either the uniqueness or distinctiveness of a voice of color. He writes that Matsuda "fails to show the newness of the 'new knowledge' and the difference that distinguishes the 'different voices'" (ibid: 1779). Furthermore, in Kennedy's view, Matsuda's claim of uniqueness and distinctiveness is particularly troubling in that she is guilty of a certain essentialism, both with regard to the experiences and beliefs of people of color. Kennedy maintains that there is no uniformity of experience shared by persons of color. Class, region, and gender, according to Kennedy, are some of the factors which unsettle any claim to homogeneity of experience. Similarly, there is a diversity of opinions expressed by persons of color. According to him, "Matsuda's analysis is marred by both her tendency to homogenize the experience of persons of color and her tendency to minimize the heterogeneity of opinions held and articulated by persons of color" (ibid: 1782).

Responding to Kennedy

I want to respond to Kennedy's criticisms before offering my own critical assessment of critical race theory.[6] I will be responding to Kennedy by borrowing certain crucial insights from the sociology of knowledge. One major claim of the "radical program" in the sociology of knowledge is that knowledge cannot be innocently explained in terms of what is true, rational, successful, and progressive. Here, there is concern to demonstrate the ways in which different institutional mechanisms function to establish truth and knowledge, giving rise to the construction of knowledge.

One critical notion found in the sociology of knowledge program is the idea of the "interpretive flexibility" of data. The simple idea is that in the natural sciences there will be disagreement about how to interpret experimental outcomes. Of course, for our purposes, our attention is not on experimental outcomes. To the extent that we are dealing with the law, it would seem that our data would be arguments, ideas, concepts, and principles. I take it that the critical race theorists are attempting to call attention to the interpretive flexibility, that is, differences in the interpretation of legal arguments, ideas, concepts, and principles between scholars of color and majority scholars. They want to emphasize the fact that groups draw different conclusions from the same premises, define the same concepts differently and interpret principles differently, and that this is all indicative of the fact that the two communities of legal scholars are working from different perspectives. Kennedy seems to deny this interpretive flexibility, in that he assumes that there can be rational and widely acceptable solutions to the issues under dispute. This is all possible once we again recognize that, as he alleges, "There is a considerable difference . . . between plausible hypothesis and persuasive theory. What separates the two is testing" (ibid: 1760). So, on his view, we can respond to the claims of critical

race theorists by testing them, by determining whether the evidence supports their accounts. But Kennedy refuses to appreciate that the issue is precisely about how to interpret certain principles and how to define concepts, and that it is disagreement about these activities that will determine the results of his proposal to test critical race theorists' hypotheses by examining the evidence. Interpretive contestability does not vanish in the presence of empirical evidence when empirical data are themselves the products of the imposing of theoretical concepts that structure experience.

Kennedy is also guilty of attempting to terminate prematurely the thinking of critical race theorists. Collins introduced the idea of "mechanisms of closure" to explain the attempt to end debates generated by interpretive flexibility. One mechanism of closure is "rhetorical closure."[7] This is the strategy of weakening resistance to one's view by presenting simple-minded arguments with huge persuasive appeal for a wide audience, the latter being either a highly technical audience or a general non-technical audience. Although Kennedy is not necessarily seeking to weaken resistance to his position, he is using a mechanism of closure in that he frames his attack against critical race theory in the language of scholarly merit. In other words, he employs the rhetoric of scholarly merit which is dependent upon a notion of "objective truth" and "preestablished impersonal truth." In using this language, critical race theorists who seek to underscore the role of race in the production and evaluation of scholarly work are made to appear as a tribe of race-conscious legal renegades who blindly repudiate established standards of scholarly excellence and, instead, embrace personal identity as the mark of good scholarship. Kennedy's appeal to majoritarian standards also gives the highly questionable impression that the scholarly community is homogeneous and firmly united in the embrace of objective standards. With this sham assumption in place, critical race theorists are transformed into a radical band of racial separatists urging the ghettoization of scholarship, objectivity, and excellence.

A second strategy of closure is "closure by redefinition of the problem." We recall that the critical race theorists seek to interject issues concerning the reality of race into current legal debates. Among other things, they seek to show that, to the extent to which the court denies the reality of race, it is unable to address the problems and challenges faced by communities of color. One way out of this difficulty, according to critical race theorists, is for scholars of color and members of disadvantaged communities of color to challenge the dominant discourse. The problem, however, is that scholars of color find themselves in the frustrating position of having to introduce a new paradigm of legal scholarship. This process is difficult. Although they were trained in the dominant paradigm and to some extent remain a part of it, they must challenge this legal vocabulary while addressing those whose criteria of legal intelligibility are dependent upon it. This effort requires the use of various imaginative and creative strategies that conflict with the dominant majoritarian model of scholarship (e.g., the utilization of narratives, stories, and parables).

Kennedy does not take on critical race theorists on the grounds mentioned above. Rather, he retreats to the mechanism of closure by redefining the problem, by changing the terms being debated. Again, the critical race theorists seek to alter the dominant discourse by introducing new concerns and insights. As they see things, they are intimately engaged in a struggle over the evaluation of arguments, definitions of concepts, and interpretation of principles from the different positions of the groups variously located in a contested social plane. Kennedy, however, redefines the debate as an empirical issue. He interprets the critical race theorists as positing the existence of an objective, independent world of legal scholarship. Next, he interprets them as seeking to offer an objective description of this world, in the form of an empirical language that is subject to testing. Hence, on Kennedy's view, the statements of the critical race theorists about this legal world should obey the law of non-contradiction and yield statements that are determinately either true or false. Being confronted with this empirical task, Kennedy claims that the critical race theorists' challenge is primarily empirical. Consequently, Kennedy claims that, on empirical grounds, critical race theorists fail to offer an empirically adequate description of the legal world. I maintain that Kennedy's challenge to critical race theory does not engage critical race theorists on the main issues of concern to them. Indeed, he self-servingly simplifies critical race theory and this reduction allows him to treat it unimaginatively as a false empirical theory of the legal world. In essence, he models critical race theory on the basis of a scientific theory of the physical world. Legal discourse is not about the physical world, but about a social world constructed and structured on the basis of intentions, beliefs, and practices.

Assessing Critical Race Theory

Critical race theorists maintain that they speak in a different voice from the dominant discourse; they speak in the voice of color. To the extent that they claim this voice, they must describe it as unique and distinctive in order to differentiate it from the dominant discourse. However, to claim that the voice of color is unique and distinct would seem to suggest that those speaking in the majoritarian voice cannot understand the voice of color. Further, if the voice of color emerged from those who claim a different group identity as well as social and cultural experiences, then the voice of color is a positional voice. Because it is a positional voice it then delivers epistemological insights and claims that contradict the epistemological insights and claims of the dominant discourse. But it would seem that to construe the voice of color in literal epistemological terms entails the existence of two radically different epistemic systems of truth production: a majoritarian truth system and a minority truth system. And to the extent that these different truths emerge from different cultural, social, and political worlds, those who inhabit these worlds cannot talk to each other. The majoritarian world, from the perspective of the person of color, is an oppressive

and exclusionary world and the world of the people of color from the perspective of the majority is an alien barren landscape. It would seem that here we have a paradigmatic case of incommensurability, of two ways of thinking, speaking, and experiencing, where conflicts cannot be resolved by appealing to neutral objective criteria. Assuming that this is the case, we must settle for radical incommensurability, the impossibility of communication across racial worlds. And if we accept this outcome, then instead of objective truth and the appeal to *a priori* impersonal criteria, we must make do with a notion of relative truth. But the problem is that relativism ultimately collapses; it cannot coherently sustain its own theoretical commitments. Since relativism is unacceptable, we would seem to be back where we started, to the meritocratic objective standards of the majority. On this view, critical race theory is a self-refuting relativism. Interestingly enough, charges of relativism vanish once we come to realize that critical race theory seeks not to denounce truth and objectivity but, rather, to underscore the contestability of these concepts. To this end, it challenges the assumption of the law being objective and neutral and of mainstream scholarly discourse as also equally objective and neutral. For critical racial theorists, a marginal perspective can be most empowering, particularly since such a perspective can unsettle the complacency of a centered perspective that uncritically accepts institutionalized presuppositions of the social world. Marginal perspectives remind us that centered perspectives, at times, are too close to core assumptions of society to question them, to adopt a critical stance against social arrangements partial to majoritarian interests.

Earlier, I commented on Kennedy's failed attempt to treat critical race theory as though it were an empirical theory of the world. However, it would seem that by treating critical race theory as an interpretive theory one can better appreciate its significance. On this view, critical race theory more closely resembles a political theory than a physical theory of the world.

So let us operate with the following characterization of a political theory: "Political theories are assertions of power as well as claims about power. Political theories are political acts" (D. Johnson 1994: 5–6). This characterization of a political theory as being a political act applies to a legal theory in virtue of the fact that legal theories are assertions of power and claims about power, as well as the fact that law structures power relations among individuals. The political thrust of critical race theory is thus not all that strange if we were to accept that legal theories are political acts, and that mainstream legal discourse is a political act of exclusion whereby the social and historical realities of race, both past and present, are considered irrelevant to promoting social arrangements committed to human flourishing.

I have been arguing that critical race theorists consider the history of racial subordination a legitimate and sustained challenge to mainstream legal notions of formal equality, procedural justice, and formal equality of opportunity. In this regard, critical race theory continues in the tradition of the ethical challenge initiated by Black Studies. So, although the critical race theorists have not

described critical race theory as an ethical challenge to the dominant discourse, I suggest that it is such a challenge. This contention is in keeping with my earlier characterization of Black Studies as an ethical challenge to the dominant academy. It is not merely another epistemological challenge, nor for that matter an empirical challenge. It does not seek to attack truth, objectivity, or rationality. What it seeks to do is to prevent the dominant discourse from conveniently and complacently taking refuge behind these notions, all in the name of being impartial, universal, and procedural. What critical race theorists seek to do is get the dominant tradition to face the existential situation of people of color and acknowledge the way in which the dominant legal tradition makes the law complicit in maintaining structures of inequality. To this extent, critical race theorists want the dominant tradition to appreciate more intimately the relationship between law and power, and why it is the case that those who control the major institutions of society will use the law as a tool of legitimacy for special interests while claiming to be neutral, impartial, and objective. Again, critical race theory is an attempt by scholars of color not to offer a "colored" theory of truth, objectivity, or rationality, but rather to confront the dominant tradition with the ethical challenge of taking the existential condition, the lived experience, of people of color seriously, of responding to the voice of the other and a willingness to be addressed by the other. Furthermore, critical race theory claims no firm commitment to the existence of external standards of evaluation. It can argue that its standards of evaluation are immanent to the discursive community of critical race theory, meaning that its evaluative standards more closely resemble a hermeneutical method of inquiry than a rigid mechanical method of evaluation constrained by the demands of abstract formalism. Hence, internal to this discursive commitment are standards of judgment capable of determining whether a scholar of color claiming to be speaking in the "voice of color" is actually so speaking. Ironically, Oliver Wendell Holmes captures the thrust of the theoretical commitment of critical race theory:

> The life of law has not been logic; it has been experience. The felt necessities of the time, the prevalent moral and political theories, intuitions of public policy, avowed or unconscious, even the prejudices which judges share with their fellow-men, have had a good deal more to do than the syllogism in determining the rules by which men should be governed. The law embodies the story of a nation's development through many centuries, and it cannot be dealt with as if it contained only axioms and corollaries of a book of mathematics. (O. Holmes 1997: 138)

Critical race theory is an attempt to tell the story of race within the development of American law. It is not so much an attack against meritocratic standards of scholarship, but rather an attempt to represent a voice excluded from the story of American law, as well as a critical interrogation of law from the perspective of race.

Clevis Headley

The Future of Critical Race Theory

The task here is not to offer an assessment of critical race theory in terms of the common biography of theory, starting with the initial inception of a theory, subsequent rejection and critique, and finally its embrace by its former opponents. Of course, it is not the ambition of critical race theory to displace mainstream legal theory and then assume the role of defining the legal status quo. Critical race theory is best construed as being a relentless and restless advocate for justice such that, to the extent that race remains a permanent feature of social reality, there must be constant vigilance for justice. There can be no determination of the absolute arrival of true racial justice; its advent is forever deferred, its pursuit reaches no termination. Consequently, the insomniac career of critical race theory is one without end.

There is another significant way to frame the future of critical race theory. In *The Social Reality of Religion*, Peter Berger has argued that societies possess a dialectical character with three features:

> Externalization is the ongoing outpouring of human being into the world, both in the physical and the mental activity of men. Objectivation is the attainment of the products of this activity (again both physical and mental) of a reality that confronts its original producers as a facticity external to, and other than, themselves. Internalization is the reappropriation by men of this same reality, transforming it once again from structures of the objective world into structures of the subjective consciousness. It is through externalization that society is human product. It is through objectivation that society becomes a reality *sui generis*. It is through internalization that man is a product of society. (P. Berger 1967: 4)

The dialectical movement involving externalization, objectivation, and internalization can serve as an explanatory mechanism for charting the future of critical race theory. Roughly speaking, critical race theory, despite being the focus of some critical examination, is in the mature stage of externalization, which is to say that it is currently being manufactured in the various texts of critical race theorists. The actual inscribing of critical race theory represents its externalization in the world of law. Quite soon, it will achieve objectivation, assuming some independent ontological status such that it is seen as a "taken-for-granted" aspect of things. Its objectivation certainly will take the form of its being institutionalized, so that it will not be seen as the subjective outpouring of a few malcontents but as a body of thought worthy of rational consideration, scholarly respect, and critical admiration. The third stage of critical race theory will represent an internalization, namely, it will assume the role of being a world hypothesis or rather a root metaphor in terms of how societies understand the role of law and the importance of race in understanding the structures of their basic institutions. Internalization of critical race theory will also serve as an antidote to the current bad faith involved in the denial of the significance of race.

Notes

1 For a brilliant existential phenomenological approach to race and racism, see Lewis Gordon (1995a, 1997b).
2 For criticisms of this view, see Omi and Winant (1994).
3 "Statement of Critical Legal Studies Conference," in Fitzpatrick and Hunt (1987).
4 "The first conference on Critical Race Theory was held in June 1989 in a small seminary outside Madison, Wisconsin" (R. Delgado 1992: 721, n. 34). See also R. Delgado (1994).
5 The appeal to voice by scholars of color can be seen as an attempt to displace the visual metaphors of the dominant tradition with aural metaphors. For more on this issue, see Bernard Hibbitts (1994).
6 Kennedy's criticism of critical race theory has been the focus of much attention by scholars of color. For a symposium on Kennedy's article, see the *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 103 (1990).
7 Richard Delgado has been quite perceptive in addressing Kennedy's rhetorical strategy in criticizing critical race theory. Delgado maintains that Kennedy encounters problems with his mixing of insider and outsider language and his use of analogy and metaphor. He also points out that Kennedy uses two different kinds of arguments. According to Delgado, Kennedy's "deployment of two approaches – at times scientific, rational, meritocratic, at other times the direct opposite – makes us question his sincerity. Both modes of attack have the same bottom line – the empowered remain empowered, while the disempowered are rendered even more so. Neutrality and objectivity are deployed to make the current system impregnable. And deconstruction, anti-essentialism, and other critical tools are used to atomize, weaken, and invalidate the claims of the outsiders asking to be let in" (R. Delgado 1990: 1874).

C Having Hitherto Interpreted the World, the Point is to Change It

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Unthinkable History? The Haitian Revolution, Historiography, and Modernity on the Periphery

Sibylle Fischer

The British historian Eric Hobsbawm begins his seminal *The Age of Revolution 1789–1848* with a reflection on words. "Words," he says, "are witnesses which often speak louder than documents." In sixty years from 1789 to 1848, words like "industry," "industrialist," "factory," "middle class," "working class," "capitalism," and "socialism" were either "invented or gained their modern meanings." The list also includes "aristocracy," "railway," "liberal," and "conservative," as well as "nationality," "scientist," "engineer," "proletariat," and "(economic) crisis." Regardless of our political or ideological commitments, our conceptual space has been shaped, Hobsbawm seems to say, by philosophical, economic, and technological revolutions and we cannot understand ourselves if we fail to grasp this fundamental fact. "To imagine the modern world without these words . . . is to measure the profundity of the revolution which broke out between 1789 and 1848 and forms the greatest transformation in human history" (Hobsbawm 1962).

Strikingly absent from Hobsbawm's list is any concept that would refer us to racial slavery, colonialism, and the political struggles against them. We have "aristocracy" but not "slaveholder," "nationality" but not "colonial subject," "factory" and "socialism" but not "plantation" and "abolitionism." Are slavery

and colonialism not part of modernity? Or did they play no role in the conflicts of the Age of Revolution?

The Haitian Revolution and the Suppression of Revolutionary Antislavery

One of the most extraordinary events in the Age of Revolution took place not in France or England, but in the French Caribbean colony of Saint Domingue, where in 1804, after years of bloody battles, the insurgent slaves and their free allies declared independence from France.[1] Like most revolutionary states, Haiti announced radically new beginnings. Adopting the old American Indian name of the territory, the first self-proclaimed black state in the Americas announced a complete reversal of imperial hierarchies and social goals: the territory's European name was obliterated, slaves had become masters, and racial equality had come to form the core of the new state's ideology.

Unsurprisingly, there was a general consensus in the region among colonial authorities and settlers of European descent that Haiti did not represent a commendable model for the future.[2] In response to the revolution, a *cordon sanitaire* was drawn around the island to interrupt the flow of information and people. The authorities in Cuba prohibited the introduction of "French" slaves and even the mere mentioning of the events in Haiti. A letter from the Haitian President Boyer to John Quincy Adams, requesting the establishment of diplomatic relations, bears a handwritten note: "Not to be answered." The only newly independent state in the Americas to have unequivocally abolished slavery (and until the 1830s, the only post-slavery state in the New World), Haiti was also the only one that was not invited to the Pan-American Conference in 1826.

For most of those eyewitnesses who left behind written testimony, the revolution was not a political and diplomatic issue, but a matter of body counts, rape, material destruction, and infinite bloodshed. It was barbarism and unspeakable violence, outside the realm of civilization, outside politics, and beyond human language.[3] As an "excessive" event, it was relegated to the margins of history: to rumors, oral histories, confidential letters, and secret trials.

By the mid-nineteenth century the international antislavery movement had achieved some of its more modest goals, but the actual area of land cultivated by slaves had gone through a significant expansion (R. Blackburn 1988: 548). The most important slave economies – Brazil, the United States, and Cuba – appeared to have emerged strengthened from the period of contention. Even black abolitionists in the United States had ceased to hold up Haiti as the example for black liberation and achievement (see B. Dain 1993: 139–61; H. Lynch 1971).

And it does not seem that things have changed all that much today. There is of course now a substantial body of historical scholarship about slave uprisings, abolitionism, and the Haitian Revolution. But agenda-setting reconceptualizations of European history are to this day written without reference to the events

in the colonies. François Furet and Mona Ozouf's voluminous *Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, published with some fanfare at the occasion of the bicentennial of the French Revolution in 1989 and now probably one of the most widely consulted reference works on the period, has no entry for either colonialism or slavery. The revolution in Saint Domingue is not mentioned at all. And in his grand mapping of world civilizations after the end of the Cold War, Samuel Huntington tells us that because of its peculiar origins and culture, Haiti cannot be counted among any of the world's great civilizations: "While Haiti's elite has traditionally relished its cultural ties to France, Haiti's Creole language, Voodoo religion, revolutionary slave origins, and brutal history combine to make it a lone country . . . Haiti, 'the neighbor nobody wants,' is truly a kinless country" (Huntington 1996: 136–7). One of the most extraordinary events of the history of the black diaspora has thus been banished from the records of history and the circuits of world civilizations.

The traces and remnants of radical antislavery and its attendant cultural practices are now scattered across languages, histories, and continents. We know that the cultural face of the struggle against colonialism in the Caribbean, as elsewhere in Latin America, was literary. The cultural face of radical antislavery is much more elusive. And not without reason. Having emerged in response to the colonial slaveholders' structuring of the hemisphere through slave routes and slave markets, it always was a radically heterogeneous, transnational network whose political imaginary mirrored the global scope of the slave trade. Within that network, Haiti had, at least for a few years in the early nineteenth century, an important place – be it as an example for the possibility of liberation or as a cautionary tale.[4] But generally speaking, radical antislavery was a shadowy, discontinuous formation with a rhizomic, decentered structure which involved both those who could write in one of the metropolitan languages and those who could not write at all.[5] It was ephemeral, a vanishing moment overridden by the victory of nations who, even when they wanted to eliminate the institution of slavery, did not want to follow the revolutionary model of Haiti. The rise of the nation in the nineteenth century, even where it happened against colonial rule, produced its own archives, and along the way, its own areas of deep silence. Most testimonies of the cultural and ideological practices that pertained to the hybrid formation of radical antislavery – reports of traveling revolutionaries and radical abolitionists, trial records about the practices of insurgency among slaves and free colored populations, remnants of popular forms of cultural production, letters exchanged between colonial reformers and radicals, manuscripts that circulated between colonial territories and metropoles – did not become part of the archive of high culture and respectable political theory.

Deeply ingrained Eurocentrism, racial hierarchies that express themselves in the weight assigned to some forms of oppression over others, and a continuation of colonialist ways of assessing "what matters" are likely root causes for some of the striking omissions in the historical records. There is, moreover, a longstanding tradition in the theories of capitalism of various kinds, from Adam

Smith and Karl Marx to Max Weber, of linking slavery to mercantilism and backward social structures. Slavery was superseded in due time – indeed, abolished by capitalism – and thus does not really belong to the landscape of modernity.[6] Other explanations might be found in the ways in which disciplines were formed and power and prestige are distributed within and across them. The most highly prized areas of study – like the history of the French Revolution in France, or the study of Hegel in German philosophy – are the least likely suddenly to give up on the claims to centrality and self-containment of the subject. Interstitial kinds of scholarship – scholarship between the disciplines, between nation-states, between different cultural and political traditions – are rarely generated from within those core areas in which national ideologies reproduce themselves.

Now, of course, this is not to say that slavery and the attendant struggles have not become the subject of scholarly interest. In fact, there is now an immense body of diverse historical work devoted to the topic. There is also an important critical historiography that argues that we cannot understand the history of the West without accounting for slavery and colonialism. But along with this increased volume of scholarly production, a striking dispersion has come into being. Elite abolitionism, slave resistance, Haitian Independence, postcoloniality, abolitionist literature, and religious antislavery are claimed by disciplines and subdisciplines which do not always look kindly on their neighboring scholarly practices. The study of abolitionism, for instance, is for the most part the domain of intellectual historians, while studies in slave resistance tend to be the domain of social historians. Postcolonial studies are dominated by literary critics, while all issues concerning Haiti tend to be the domain of a very small group of specialists, often with biographical links to Haiti. Linguistic difference commonly translates into different narrative preferences and scholarly traditions. Different styles of argument, different professional alliances, venues for publication, etc., make it increasingly difficult to see the map of the slaveholding Atlantic in its entirety, with its complex networks of communication and exchange that included Africa, Europe, and the Americas. As the study of slave resistance has become a subdiscipline in its own right, new lacunae of "silence" emerge that prevent us from perceiving the cultures that surrounded slavery and the slave trade as part of the same global cultural and economic system.[7]

These causes combine in various ways; they reinforce each other and provide excuses. If colonialism and slavery can be reduced to a host of "specializations" or "subdisciplines," then core areas can continue to treat them as mere disturbances on the margins of history: an anomaly, a more or less bothersome irregularity in the march of progress and the unfolding of individual liberties. At most, there might be a concession to the effect that modernity is an "unfinished project," to adopt Jürgen Habermas's much quoted phrase. Ignoring slavery and colonialism may produce certain gaps in the historiographical record, but it will not lead to any fundamental misconceptions. The history of the West can be written without them.

Disavowal

Many scholars of the African diaspora, of colonialism, and post-slavery cultures have taken issue with this view of their insignificance, but when it comes to articulating more specifically the relationship between Western modernity and its "darker side," there is little agreement. One of the most important studies of the status of the Haitian Revolution in the historiography of the West comes from the anthropologist and historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot, who in *Silencing the Past* (1995) powerfully argued that the Haitian Revolution "entered history with the peculiar characteristic of being unthinkable even as it happened" (ibid: 73). Power shapes the writing of history: ultimately, the silencing of the Haitian Revolution is "only one chapter within a narrative of global domination" (ibid: 107). Things will not change, Trouillot argues, unless there is a profound revision of our accounts of the history of the West. The question, however, is whether this project is helped by the deployment of the category of the "unthinkable." Here is what Trouillot says about those who did the silencing:

> Lest accusations of political correctness trivialize the issue, let me emphasize that I am not suggesting that eighteenth-century men and women *should* have thought about the fundamental equality of humankind in the same way some of us do today. On the contrary, I am arguing that they *could not* have done so . . . *The events that shook up Saint-Domingue from 1791 to 1804 constituted a sequence for which not even the extreme political left in France and England had a conceptual frame of reference.* They were "unthinkable" facts in the framework of Western thought. (Ibid: 82; original emphasis)

As an alternative to the currently fashionable explanations of the effects of historical or personal catastrophes in terms of "trauma," "the unrepresentable," and "memory," this account seems preferable in that it does not erase the ideological and geopolitical charge of "silencing."[8] Yet there are a number of important questions here which are not addressed in Trouillot's argument.

Firstly, what are we to make of the fact that despite all efforts of containment, people on both sides of the Atlantic did know about the events? The press in Europe reported about them at some length. In the Caribbean, the officially ordained silence was accompanied by meticulous record keeping, confidential exchanges of letters, spy reports, comparative demographies, etc. But more than anything else, the story was passed on by people. French settlers from Saint Domingue moved to Cuba's Oriente province first, then on to other islands or to Louisiana.[9] Sailors, merchants, and slaves, too, passed on the story of the successful slave uprising in the harbors and port cities of the Caribbean. Diplomatic correspondence between the colonial administrators in the region and the Spanish authorities in the decades after 1791 is replete with calls for vigilance and admonitions to maintain controls "in order to prevent the entrance . . . of any reports about what is happening in the French Islands and Empire." "Any reports that

might have spread in writing, or that in general make known the disorders" are to be suppressed, and French and other foreigners are strictly forbidden from entering the territory (Franco 1954: 64). Obviously, "silencing" was the preferred strategy of the authorities. But that did not keep the news from spreading: the story was certainly known. In fact, I think that we cannot understand the particular shape that Creole nationalism took in the Caribbean Basin without reference to this knowledge that was covered with silence. No doubt, reactions to the potential threat varied enormously – thus the differences in the national imaginary that developed in nineteenth-century Cuba and the Dominican Republic – but none can be understood without the "specter of Haiti."

The second issue concerns the claim that the events were "unthinkable" because they did not fit the "framework of Western thought." But was there really such a stable, readily identifiable framework at the time? It was a time when the meaning and scope of "liberty" and "equality" were contested in parliamentary debates and the subject of endless pamphleteering. It would be more plausible to think of the revolutionary period as one when, as Hobsbawm claims, new concepts were invented and old concepts took on radically new meanings. Moreover, it seems crucial to keep in mind that the political thought that became hegemonic in the nineteenth century is not exactly of a piece with eighteenth-century revolutionary thought. Trouillot acknowledges that there were some radical writers like Denis Diderot, Abbé Raynal, and of course Jean-Paul Marat in eighteenth-century France, but dismisses them on account of their ineffectualness, their advocacy of gradual abolition, or simply on the ground that their arguments were contradictory. True enough, these radicals did not win the battles of the day. But they show that racial equality was, in fact, thinkable: their failure was political rather than epistemological. Instead of assuming that the Haitian Revolution is best accounted for as "not fitting" certain always-already established Western paradigms, it would seem more plausible to think that the paradigms themselves developed, at least partially, in response to those events in the Caribbean that were, after all, known. The issue is of some consequence: if we truly believe that Haiti was "unthinkable," we implicitly (and paradoxically) accept that the history of the West can continue to be written without Haiti and revolutionary slaves.

The third issue concerns the concept of "silencing" itself. There cannot be any doubt that "silencing" was in fact one of the preferred strategies of the colonial powers and local elites when it came to dealing with the fact that a slave revolution had indeed occurred, and Trouillot needs to be credited with having conceptualized it so poignantly. But the question is whether "silencing" and the attendant concept of an "unthinkable history" are not in some sense incompatible. Would we bother to impose silence if we found the proposition in question "unthinkable"? Would that even be possible? If we think about history not from the standpoint of the archive, not from the standpoint of that which imposed itself as "reality," but from the standpoint of the actors at the time, actors before they acted, as it were, we will note that in order to prevent a certain undesirable

future from occurring, we will take certain measures – but only after having imagined that future. Just as the silence was not quite as complete and all-encompassing as it might seem at first sight, we need to assume that there was a specific content that was, and could be, silenced.

Considering all these issues together, it seems that we need to think about the political, ideological, and cultural situation in ways that allow us to account for all the different forms denial can take before there can be any "silence." In order to grasp the peculiar epistemological and political constellation that came into being in response to the slave revolution in the Caribbean we need, I submit, a wider range of concepts. They should include notions that can capture psychological, affective, and ideological operations and thus look at history as it is being made rather than as result or outcome, history as process rather than structure or archive.

A range of peculiar cognitive stances toward the idea of revolutionary slaves can be observed: the admission of knowledge through its denial, the disavowal of one's own theory, and even the embrace of two contradictory beliefs. Psychoanalytic theory tells us that such epistemological attitudes are by no means rare and often occur in response to a traumatic event, to perceptions for which we have no explanations, or to explanations or theories we find in themselves threatening. No doubt, the problems are deep here, and there is disagreement in the psychoanalytic literature about how to interpret and distinguish among the array of concepts that refer to forms of denial, from simple "negation" to "repression" and "foreclosure." But the underlying complexities may be an advantage rather than an obstacle. There is no need to assume that all those who contributed to the "silencing of the Haitian Revolution" did so for exactly the same reasons; nor that all forms of silencing have the same structure. Psychoanalysis can no more give us a ready-made answer than any other theory of human behavior. What matters is that we have concepts that allow us to open up the texts of the past so we can more precisely identify what ideas people may have been willing to entertain at some moment in the past, what ideas they found too threatening, and how they processed the latter.

An idea that was unspoken, but implicit and perhaps recognizable to contemporary readers, in a text at one point might be entirely lost in the subsequent readings or rewritings. (The opposite may be true too, of course.) In the Dominican Republic, for example, we can discern in the nineteenth-century literature and the extravagant fantasies the writers entertained the traces of another future that existed in the imagination of those who did everything to prevent that future from becoming reality. But let me illustrate the complexities of denial here with a brief reading of a much better-known text: the short section often referred to as the "master–slave dialectic" in Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit* of 1805/6.[10] As one of the most debated and celebrated pieces of philosophical writing in modern times, this passage is particularly interesting for our purposes since one might think of it as the moment when slaves enter history, or, more

accurately, the modern philosophy of history. Historians of slavery and abolitionism, at any rate, seem to have read it that way: David Brion Davis, Orlando Patterson, and Robin Blackburn all offer their comments, amendments, and criticisms of Hegel's story, as does one of the foremost scholars of the post-slavery Atlantic, Paul Gilroy, following the example of an earlier generation of anti-colonialist activists that included Frantz Fanon and Amiri Baraka.[11] It may come as a surprise, then, that among philosophers and Hegel scholars there is almost universal agreement that Hegel's text about masters and slaves has nothing to do with modern racial slavery, the Haitian Revolution, or radical abolitionism.

So what does this section refer to if not modern slavery? The recent commentary on the *Phenomenology* by Michael Forster, for instance, argues that Hegel was influenced by a 1789 work by the now largely forgotten German historian J. F. Reitemeier. As the specific historical referent for the master-slave dialectic sections, Forster identifies two historical processes: the decline of the "ideal culture" of fifth-century Athens and the demise of the Roman Republic from the Second Punic War onward (M. Forster 1998: 317–22). According to Forster, Hegel, following Reitemeier, saw both of these historical periods as characterized by a "loss of political freedom by the mass of the citizenry" and a "growth in the enslavement of noncitizens" (ibid: 317). Whether or not we are persuaded by Forster's claim (he has only indirect evidence for Reitemeier's influence), it is striking that in a reading that not only *admits* history into our reading of the *Phenomenology* (which some commentators refuse to do) but also calls for *multiple* historical references in a single section of Hegel's text, the possibility of a reference to contemporary slavery or perhaps of an allegorical representation of the present is not mentioned.

In an article entitled "Hegel and Haiti," Susan Buck-Morss has recently mounted a spirited attack against the canonical view on the issue of slavery in Hegel scholarship. Her evidence is compelling indeed. The events in the French colony were reported at length in the German and English press in the 1790s and early 1800s. We know that Hegel was a keen observer of political events, closely followed the reports about the French Revolution, and was an avid reader of the German political journal *Minerva*, which had been reporting on the Saint Domingue uprising from 1792 onward. Buck-Morss concludes that "either Hegel was the blindest of all the blind philosophers of Freedom in Enlightenment Europe," even more so than Locke or Rousseau, or "Hegel knew" (Buck-Morss 2000: 844).

The evidence points to the latter. He started to work on the early versions of the master-slave dialectic in 1803. He wrote the final version in 1805–6, "the first year of the Haitian nation's existence" (Buck-Morss 2000: 843), and from the early drafts on, continuously revised the conceptualization of the master and slave relationship in terms that recall legal documents such as the *Code Noir*, where the "thinghood" of the slave was enshrined. If there is silencing of

the Haitian Revolution, it is done by us, the readers, who fail to supply the historical references we readily supply when Hegel appears to be talking about the French Revolution or Napoleon.

So it seems that Hegel knew about Haiti and that Haiti may well have inspired him to write some of his most celebrated pages. This in itself is a very significant correction to the Eurocentric provincialism of most professional philosophy and an important step toward acknowledging that modern racial slavery was far more central to the making of European modernity than most of its apologists are willing to admit. But does that mean that one of the most famous pieces of philosophical writing in modernity is, in fact, about revolutionary slaves? That Haiti, far from being silenced, was in fact placed at the heart of European modernity by one of modernity's most canonical thinkers?

Not quite. In order to understand the full complexity of the issue we need to take a brief detour into some longstanding debates in Hegel scholarship. You will remember that Hegel's story is of two embodied consciousnesses of equal standing, both demanding recognition from the other, engaging in a "life-and-death struggle," as a result of which the one who prefers life to recognition submits and falls into bondage. One of the debates concerns the resolution of the master-slave dialectic and the question of "what happens next?" Here is what the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor offers as a summary of the dialectic:

> The master-slave relation has thus brought about a reversal. The master's prerogative of being only a consumer leads him to stagnant self-coincidence. While the slave who is subject to the refractory existence of matter, gradually turns the tables, turns this resistance to account by making it the standing reflection of himself as universal consciousness. The reversal is the more complete in that he owes his transformation to his subjection; only under the discipline of service would he have undertaken the work which has raised him above his original limits. (Taylor 1975: 57)[12]

So toward the end of the master-slave dialectic, there is a gradual overcoming through service and discipline on the part of the slave. But can we say that the slave is finally victorious? Does the master simply vanish from sight? Is he killed? Taylor does not say. Buck-Morss, whose argument could have led her to claim otherwise, puts it very succinctly: "Hegel's text becomes obscure and falls silent at this point of realization."

Compare this with the commentary that has had the greatest influence on the reading of Hegel's master-slave dialectic, especially outside disciplinary philosophy: Kojève's *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*.[13] In fact, it is typically this version of Hegel that keeps returning in those accounts that link Hegel to modern slavery. Kojève's reading is joyously practical. It stresses labor, socio-economic oppression, and violence. But there is not only an intensification of the drama of Hegel's story; there is also a change of emphasis that sets it apart

from other influential readings. While most philosophical commentators interpret Hegel's dialectic along the lines proposed by Taylor (i.e., as proceeding through the slow disappearance of the master-slave dualism that stands in the way of the fully realized universality of freedom,)[14] Kojève claims that this dualism continues to reappear as a sharp opposition that is overcome only by force: "In transforming the World . . . the Slave transforms himself, too, and thus creates the new objective conditions that permit him *to take up once more the liberating Fight for recognition*" (A. Kojève 1980: 29; my emphasis). The slave is objectively destined to carry out the "revolutionary overcoming of the World" (ibid: 29). The master, who had once risked his life in a struggle for recognition, becomes a mealy-mouthed reformer at best, who is bound by the strictures of a given reality. For Kojève, the future belongs to the revolutionary slave.

It is not my goal here to adjudicate between different interpretations of Hegel's master-slave dialectic. It is the fact of the dispute itself that requires explanation. Why is there such "obscurity" at one of the crucial conjunctures of the *Phenomenology* that generations of scholars and philosophers can make this their point of departure? Why this intractable "silence" at the moment when we might have expected closure?

If we follow Buck-Morss in her argument that "Hegel knew" – as I think we should – the question remains: what is it that he knows? Or, more precisely, what status does this knowledge have in his own mind? His silence indicates, I think, that his is a knowledge that cannot be recognized as such, a knowledge caught in the structures of disavowal, outside the temporality of error and correction, invoked, but not integrated in the great narrative of the *Phenomenology.* Does Hegel believe both that the slaves did, and did not, carry the victory over their masters? Did he think their military victory was purely contingent, and that it behooved him, the philosopher, to produce a rational (and that is, for Hegel, "real") alternative? Or was it that he had to avert his eyes, as if in the face of castration? What seems most plausible is that precisely *because* Hegel knew, in some sense of the word, he fell silent at the end of the master-slave dialectic, at the very moment when revolutionary slaves might have appeared on the scene.

When Hegel picks up the narrative strands again, we are within a historical process that managed to avoid the Haitian Revolution. Masters and slaves have vanished. Slaves have become free through service, discipline, and labor. Did they also engage in a second struggle for life and death in order to gain recognition? Was there a slave revolution in Saint Domingue? Can this be known or even thinkable for Hegel? If we interpret Hegel's silence along the lines I propose, the answer is: yes, it can be known, but it cannot be affirmed or desired. In the end, this is a story of deep ambivalence, probably fascination, probably fear, and, ultimately, disavowal. Whatever happened in that dark moment, whatever got lost, or won, let us move on, from revolutionary France to philosophical Germany; let us pick up the story where it returns to Europe, now without slaves, or, at the very least, without slavery.

Peripheral Modernity in the Age of Revolution

What happened in the Age of Revolution was also, among other things, a struggle over what it means to be modern, who can claim modernity, and on what grounds. The suppression and disavowal of revolutionary antislavery and attendant cultures in the Caribbean was at least in part a struggle over what would count as "progress," what was meant by "liberty," and how the two should relate.

Although Hegel could not have known this, the founders of the revolutionary state in the Caribbean were, in fact, grappling with some of the same issues he was concerned with, most notably how to realize truly liberty. No documents dating back to the heyday of revolution speak more eloquently to the extraordinary refiguring of Enlightenment ideas than the early Haitian Constitutions. As most of the revolutionaries were unable to read and write – in fact, writing was available only through and in French, a foreign language for most Creole speakers – these political texts become highly significant and unique manifestations of a political vision that remains to this day difficult to reconstruct.[15] Taking as their point of departure the French Constitutions of 1791 and, especially, the Jacobin Constitution of 1793, the Haitian Constitutions are unique rewritings that show the intellectual labor that was necessary in order to place the issue of racial equality at the center of the revolutionary agenda. More than any literary or fictional text of the period, these constitutions allow us to trace the radically syncretic modernity of Haiti's ideological origins, and the extraordinary challenges the new state was facing in a world where slaveholding was the rule and where colonialist designs were just beginning to extend into Africa and Asia.

In the first 12 years of the new states' life, six constitutions were issued. They differ radically in respect of the state form they adopt[16] and details of institutional design, but share a number of features that set them apart from all other constitutions of the revolutionary age. They all have an unequivocal ban on slavery and racial subordination, generous asylum clauses for victims of slavery and colonial genocide, and an explicit non-interference clause *vis-à-vis* neighboring territories. Two aspects in particular deserve our attention: the reconceptualization of notions of race and skin color, and the traces of transnationalism we can discern in the texts.

One might have expected these constitutional texts to be well known in contemporary debates about and against "race." But nothing could be further from the truth. The only edition of the early constitutions is Louis Joseph Janvier's *Les Constitutions d'Haïti* of 1886, an edition that has never been corrected or republished. The few commentators that address the early constitutional texts usually limit themselves to pointing out, rightly, that we can see from the beginning of the Haitian state the seeds of an authoritarianism that came to haunt Haiti throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in that they lay the foundation for what is commonly referred to as *caporalisme agraire* (agrarian

militarism), and that in any event the constitutional provisions had little impact on the political reality in Haiti.[17]

Rather than reading these texts as binding legal codes, then, it seems more appropriate to analyze them as an expression of aspirations and desires akin to declarations of independence. Seizing the language of the colonizer and submitting it to radical resignification, Dessalines' Constitution of 1805 proclaims that "all Haitians will henceforth be known by the generic denomination of blacks." From the taxonomical lunacy of a colony that had over a hundred different terms to refer to different degrees of racial mixture and color, we have moved to a generic name: "black." A further, even more remarkable implication of the provision is that in light of the immediately preceding article, which regulates the naturalization of white women, Germans, and Poles, they too would count as black.[18]

Just as the French revolutionaries renamed the signposts of traditional Western culture, from the months of the year to the main churches in Paris and even God, revolutionaries in the former French colony renamed the territory by restoring the native name and, even more remarkably, renaming skin color. Disrupting any biologistic or racialist expectations, they make "black" a mere implication of being Haitian and thus a political rather than a biological category. In both cases, liberation from oppression is imagined through a complete break with the inherited past. At a time when eighteenth-century racial taxonomies were beginning to mutate into racist biology and scientific racism, the Haitian Constitutions take the opposite direction and infuse distinctions of skin color with political meaning.

Through the act of renaming, the Constitution of 1805 performs one of the most troubling paradoxes of modern universalist politics: the paradox that the universal typically is derived through a generalization of only one of the particulars. Calling all Haitians, regardless of skin color, black, is a gesture like calling all people, regardless of their sex, women: it both asserts egalitarian and universalist intuitions and puts them to the test by using the previously subordinated term of the opposition as the universal term. In doing so, they enter into a difficult realm where universalist ideas of the equality of the races and identity-based claims of past injustices and future redemption need to be negotiated. As Hobsbawm said, words sometimes speak louder than documents. But a lot depends on which words we admit to our vocabulary and whether or not we think that meanings are politically constituted and thus subject to contestation.

A second, equally important issue that documents the contestatory modernity of the Haitian Revolution relates to the idea of nationhood, nationality, and national sovereignty. At least half of the slaves in Saint Domingue at the time of the revolution had been born in Africa. Some of the leaders came from other Caribbean islands, and slaves were customarily shipped from one island to the next without much ado. Finally, there were the abolitionists of various stripes who played a significant role in Haitian political debates in the years after the Revolution. Add to this the fact that the revolutionary leaders were for the most

part illiterate, spoke French imperfectly, if at all, and that the local lingua franca was not a written language. Clearly, the political and cultural landscape that surrounded the plantation slaves in the Caribbean was not one destined to produce what Benedict Anderson (1983: 50–61) called "Creole nationalism," which he linked closely to the rise of print capitalism. Like the slave trade, radical antislavery transcended geographical and political boundaries as well as linguistic identity.

The constitutional provisions governing issues of racial equality are connected, through the provisions regulating citizenship, to the transnational aspects of the emancipatory project of revolutionary antislavery. Just as the universalism of racial equality has to confront the particularisms of an inherited system of racial distinctions and a geopolitics built on racial hierarchies, the transnationalism of antislavery runs up against strictures against transnational politics imposed by the colonial powers at the time. The Constitution of 1805 states in some detail the restrictions placed on whites and their right to own property in Haiti. But if we wonder what the general rules governing citizenship are, we find nothing. Are the children of Haitians given automatic citizenship or do they need to be born in Haiti? What about non-white immigrants to Haiti? Article 1 simply states: "The people who live on the island formerly known as Saint Domingue convene to organize themselves in a free, sovereign and independent State." The only specification in relation to citizenship we find is a list of offenses that lead to the loss of citizenship.[19]

The republican Constitution of 1806 drops the provision that declares all citizens to be black, but gives very precise and narrow criteria according to which whites can acquire citizenship (Article 28). Like the Constitution of 1805, it does not specify criteria of citizenship in general, nor rules for the naturalization of non-whites. What we do find in the 1806 Constitution, however, is a provision according to which "The Republic of Haiti will abstain from engaging in any wars of conquest, and never disturb the peace and internal regime of foreign islands" (Article 2).[20] A similar provision can be found in Henri Christophe's first Constitution of 1807 (Article 36) and Pétion's Constitution of 1816 (Article 5). In the latter, we also find, for the first time, a provision that regulates the status of non-whites who take up residence in Haiti: "Art. 44 – All Africans and Indians, and those of their blood, born in the colonies or in foreign countries, who come to reside in the Republic will be recognized as Haitians, but will not enjoy the right of citizenship until after one year of residence." The Constitution that contains the most restrictive regulations on citizenship for whites thus replaces the deliberately vague citizenship regulations for non-whites with a provision that explicitly gives the right of residence to anyone with African or native American blood. But as the racial component of the "asylum provisions" becomes more explicit, so are the provisions that declare that Haiti will not engage in wars of conquest and will not interfere in the internal affairs of other colonies.

The most obvious issue in this connection would have been neighboring Santo Domingo, which had been invaded by Toussaint L'Ouverture and Dessalines on the grounds that slavery continued to be practiced and that the territory might serve as a beachhead for an invasion of Haiti. But the issue goes much beyond Santo Domingo. First of all, there were the fears of the slaveholders in the plantation zone from Louisiana to Bahia that Haiti might instigate and support uprisings. Ever since the early days of the revolution, rumors of "Haitian ships" and "Haitian soldiers" and of Toussaint planning to conquer other islands had terrified the elites in the Caribbean. Indeed, Bolívar's stay in Haiti and Pétion's military and material assistance in exchange for a promise that slavery would be abolished in liberated territories speaks to the persistence of revolutionary antislavery despite constitutional assurances to the contrary. As Haiti was forced to respond to international pressure to provide assurances that it would not try to "export its revolution" (remember that the "Girondin wars" of revolutionary France would have been on everybody's mind), it compensated by introducing constitutional clauses that would offer a right of residency to all people who had escaped slavery or genocide.

The constitutional provisions should also be read against the backdrop of a variety of strategies that replaced direct revolutionary action with, for example, various immigration schemes. In 1818 Henri Christophe issued an edict that specified that a white man who had married a black woman anywhere in the world had a right to settle in his kingdom and would even have his fare paid.[21] In 1804 Dessalines issued a decree to the effect that his government would pay $40 for each slave that was brought to Haiti rather than sold in the slaveholding areas.[22]

The provisions regulating residency and citizenship in Haiti thus must be seen as directly linked to those provisions that regulate Haiti's relation to neighboring countries or colonies. We might say that the vagueness of the former was intentional as even asylum provisions could have been interpreted as interference in other countries' affairs. Apparently Henri Christophe, whose 1807 Constitution features one of the most decidedly vague residence clauses as its first article, was strongly opposed to Pétion's 1816 provision on precisely those grounds. The fact that the early constitutions do not give criteria for citizenship should thus not be seen as an omission or oversight that is later amended. Rather, it is evidence that the revolutionaries did not think of the new state along the lines of a new nation finally liberated from the fetters of colonialism. The vagueness on citizenship in the early constitutions is a trace of the transnational nature of radical antislavery. In any event, these clauses clearly point to the fact that Haiti's radical antislavery stance is not easily limited by state borders. Indeed, we may even go so far as to argue that the later specifications of citizenship are a measure of how far subsequent politicians had been pushed away from the original transnationalism of antislavery by both internal and external pressures that forced them to build a polity on the model of the Western nation-state.

Conclusion

Perhaps revolutionary slaves and the notion of racial equality were unthinkable for some. Others, like Hegel, might have found them important, even fascinating, but ultimately undesirable and difficult to affirm . . . so why insist? Others still, like the men of color who, with their French education and first-hand experience of revolutionary debate, sat down to write the first constitutions of Haiti, thought very hard about all of this, and affirmed it in the strongest terms possible. And then acted otherwise: racial antagonisms certainly did not vanish in Haiti.

As for us, who write about the events some two hundred years later from within the metropolitan academy: unless we revise our critical vocabulary so that we can think about and beyond the limitations imposed on our political sensibility and historical imagination by entrenched geopolitical and disciplinary provincialisms, we will continue to reproduce the silences Trouillot traced through the records of Western civilization. Even more importantly, we need to think what might have been lost when culture and emancipatory politics were finally forced into the mold of the nation-state, and what might have happened if the struggle against racial subordination had carried the same prestige and had received the same attention from posterity as did the struggle against colonialism and other forms of political subordination. Perhaps it is only from the perspective of possible futures of a past we know all too little about that the unthinkable becomes thinkable.

Notes

1 One of the most gripping and analytical accounts of the Haitian Revolution is, to this day, C. L. R. James's *Black Jacobins* (1989). Even if some specific claims need to be revised in light of more recent research, the book is by no means obsolete. For an account of the revolution "from below", see C. Fick (1990). For Haiti's history from the revolution to the Duvalier regime, see D. Nicholls (1996). For a more analytic account of the impact of the revolution on the Haitian state, see M.-R. Trouillot (1990). For an account of the Age of Revolution in the Caribbean, see Gaspar and Geggus (1997).

2 For the historical impact of the Haitian Revolution, see Geggus (2001). For a study of the cultural effects and the political significance, see S. Fischer (2004).

3 It needs to be acknowledged, however, that some of those observers whose interests were not directly threatened by the events were often far less tongue-tied about the events and sometimes offered more nuanced accounts. See, most notably, M. Rainsford (1805). For the discussion in nineteenth-century Germany, see K. Schüller (1992).

4 In the United States, Haiti and the events of the revolution regained some of their importance during the Harlem Renaissance, when Jacob Lawrence, Langston Hughes, and many others conceived works that took up the events in the Caribbean.

5 For accounts of the sixteenth to early nineteenth-century Atlantic, see Linebaugh and Rediker (2000) and J. Scott (1986).

6 See D. Davis (1984: 107–16). Davis sums up the prevalent view among nineteenth-century thinkers, from Benjamin Franklin to Friedrich Engels, as maintaining that modern slavery "was less of a moral evil than a senseless anachronism, an affront to social sciences" (p. 113);

similarly, late nineteenth-century historians like Ettore Ciccotti, J. K. Ingram, and many others considered slavery a "discrete and fundamentally premodern institution" (p. 9).

7 This tendency toward fragmentation has been counteracted in recent years by a new research agenda centering on the Atlantic, with "Atlanticist" study groups springing up in many research universities and the first faculty positions being offered for "Atlantic Studies." This is still a very new phenomenon which has not yet generated a sufficient body of scholarship for us to speculate which direction it will take, and how the difficult interdisciplinarity between historians of various stripes, literary critics, anthropologists, etc. might play out. One of the most important works in this new field is Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* (1993).

8 In recent years an enormous literature has accrued about the event that has become the paradigmatic case of historical trauma, namely the Holocaust. Some of these studies are informed by specific psychoanalytic schools, but others operate with a less specific account of what constitutes trauma. In either case, the claim that the Holocaust is, in some deep sense, "unrepresentable" on account of its traumatic nature seems ubiquitous. For a trenchant critique of certain versions of these arguments, see D. La Capra (1994).

9 Cuba received a total of 20,000 to 30,000 refugees from Saint Domingue (R. Blackburn 1988: 387). For the effect on Louisiana, see A. Hunt (1988).

10 Most Hegel scholars agree that even though Hegel uses the terms *Herr* (master) and *Knecht* (knave, bondsman) in the *Phenomenology*, he uses these terms interchangeably with the vocabulary of slavery. In support of this view we might point to earlier instantiations of Hegel's idea of a master-slave dialectic, for instance in Rousseau – or to parallel texts, for example in Hegel's *Encyclopedia* (for a discussion of the relevant passages, see M. Forster 1998: 320).

11 See R. Blackburn (1988: 530); F. Fanon (1967b: 220); P. Gilroy (1993: 54–5); O. Patterson (1982: 99–101). While Patterson is highly critical of Hegel's account, D. Davis (1999) goes so far as to claim that the core of his celebrated *Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* is "a problem of dominance and submission," which he tried to "illuminate in the concluding pages with a partly imaginary struggle, against a Hegelian backdrop, between Napoleon and Toussaint L'Ouverture" (p. 12). A. Baraka's poem "Hegel" is quoted in P. Gilroy (1993: 54).

12 Compare also J. Hyppolite's (1974: 178) more esoteric account of the problematic transition, which seems to agree with Taylor's summary in substance, if not language.

13 Based on lectures given in Paris between 1933 and 1939, but published in 1947.

14 As Hegel puts it in a succinct restatement in the *Encyclopedia*: ". . . all peoples in order to become free . . . have had first to go through the strict discipline of subjection to a lord . . . Bondage and tyranny are therefore a necessary step in the history of peoples and therefore something *relatively* justified" (quoted in M. Forster 1998: 254). Bondage and unfree labor, far from being an aberration or an accident in the history of the unfolding of freedom, are a necessary part of it. This is incidentally also true in Rousseau, who thought that the process of subjugation is necessary for a true community or general will, and thus freedom.

15 For the importance of popular practices in the events that led to the overthrow of slavery in Saint Domingue, see C. Fick (1990). She rightly insists that the absence of extensive written records about what moved slaves to act, what principles guided them, etc., does not justify a wholesale import of European "revolutionary" motivations for explanatory purposes. Instead, she focuses on the formation of political and military groups, structures of authority and command, the role of maronnage, and the influence of vodu on the revolutionary ideology. See also J. Dayan (1995) for an interpretation of vodu practices in light of the revolutionary events.

16 One of the reasons for the institutional instability and the sheer number of vastly different constitutions is, I think, that the revolutionary struggle did not initially aim at any particular state form. As conflicts emerged between the leaders of the insurgency after independence, Haiti fell into civil war. By 1810 there were three states in the territory of the former Saint

Domingue: Henri Christophe's state in the north (transformed into a monarchy in 1811), a republic under the leadership of Pétion in the West, and a republic under Rigaud in the South. Rigaud's state did not survive his death in 1812, but Christophe ruled in the North until his suicide in 1820.

17 See M.-R. Trouillot (1990: 46). Claude Moïse (1988) accounts for some of the more unusual provisions relating to race and skin color as "juridical fictions." Fédéric Marcelin goes so far as to speak of a "comic clash between reality and dream" (*Questions haïtiennes*, quoted in Moïse 1988: 14).

18 Some, though not very many, white women had married men of color during the colonial period. The Germans and Poles the constitutions refer to were mercenaries from Leclerc's army who had switched sides to join the insurgents.

19 Compare the French Constitution of 1793, one of the models for the Haitian Constitution: under the title of *Acte Constitutionnel* it devotes three articles to citizenship issues and contains a long list of criteria that allow someone to claim French citizenship.

20 Again, a comparison with the French Constitution helps to bring out the peculiarities of the Haitian code. In the debates preceding the adoption of the Jacobin Constitution of 1793, Robespierre had proposed the inclusion of four articles with a clear internationalist intention: "Men of all countries are brothers and their different people must assist each other according to their abilities like the citizens of the same State. He who oppresses one nation declares himself the enemy of all. Those who make war against a people in order to stop the progress of liberty and to annihilate the rights of men must be prosecuted by all, not like ordinary enemies, but like assassins and rebellious bandits" (J. Godechot 1995: 72). Robespierre's proposal was not accepted. The final compromise of 1793 contains a "non-interference" clause, which is nevertheless framed in a very telling way: "Art. 118. – The French people are the natural friends and allies of all free people. Art. 119. – They will not interfere in the government of other nations; they will not tolerate that other nations interfere with theirs. Art. 120. – They will give asylum to foreigners banned from their fatherland for the cause of liberty. They will deny it to tyrants." Read in the context of the political situation of 1793, when the fear of counter-revolutionaries invading from Koblenz and elsewhere was the crucial concern of French policy, the clause according to which France will not tolerate interference from other countries is weakened considerably by the clause that it will not tolerate interference from other nations, as it could be interpreted as possibly justifying a preventive war. Obviously, the Haitians felt that they needed to give stronger assurances.

21 This edict would deserve a close reading in itself. Is it an expression of true racial egalitarianism, in the sense that the chosen spouse of a black woman should be embraced by black Haitians no matter what his color, or is it, rather, an example of a supremely patriarchal logic according to which all those who "have" black women are brothers? Or perhaps even an expression of the idea of whitening as progress of sorts, an idea prevalent among elites in most Caribbean areas?

22 Reprinted in M. Rainsford (1805). Although some argued that this amounted to engaging in the slave trade (Haiti was suffering from an acute labor shortage and thus had an active desire to replenish the population), Dessalines insisted that those Africans on the ships were to be sold into slavery, while in Haiti they would be free. That this freedom may well have included some forced labor is of course a different matter.

CHAPTER **TWENTY-THREE**

Historical Consciousness in the Relation of African-American Studies to Modernity

Stefan M. Wheelock

African-American Studies has been concerned primarily with its relationship to Western modernity and the critical insights the relationship yields. The result has been much metadisciplinary reflection in the field, on what exactly is African-American Studies, and the subsequent issue is whether or not African-American Studies (in its persistent intellectual preoccupation with its sources and tasks) delimits an adequate understanding of the value of black intellectual creativity within Western epistemic development from the so-called Age of Discovery to the present. This concern is made difficult by the challenge of the field's *subject*, one complicated not only by the place of Africa in modern Western epistemological practices, but also by the stultifying effect of negative symbolic blackness, whose grounding congeals into the infamous shadow, *le nègre* (F. Fanon 1967b: chs 5, 6; R. Judy 1996). Anxieties occasioned by *le nègre* leads to a conflict, as Fanon observes, with the question of reason itself, which makes African-American Studies akin to the troubled environment raised by *le nègre*'s attempt to join the conversation of human study; *le nègre*, ever an object of study, realizes the provocative force of asserting his or her history as also an intellectual one. Taking my cue from Sybille Fischer, if persistent words and phrases are an important clue toward understanding themes that orient a history of thought, the term "relation," wherein subject–object formations situate meaning, represents a perpetual crisis at the level of critical approach/investigation and assessment.[1] It seems that the whole of the relation is implied in most or all variant parts of African-American critical reflection, and it is this fact that makes an investigation into guidelines for African-American criticism and scholarship all the more difficult.

Henry L. Gates's *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the "Racial" Self*, is an important example of this phenomenon in African-American literary criticism.

In his introduction to the work, Gates announces what guides his thinking. *Figures* is intended to be a book of "hypothesis and experimentation" in which the "reading of black literature" "is refracted through the prism of one of the many contemporary critical methods of analyzing literature" (H. Gates 1987: xviii). He explores what he views as a useful and insightful encounter between literary theory and the "black text," and in so doing he makes clear the political investments that influence his approach to literature.

> While one result of this book's organization is to demonstrate the *relationship* of literary theory to Afro-American literature, another result is to address, in different ways, a question of fundamental importance to those of us whose professional activity is devoted to explicating *noncanonical* literatures. (Ibid: xviii; emphasis added)

For Gates, the clue toward understanding the mode of thought that sets terms and limits for African-American literary interrogation is in how one thinks through the varied possibilities of black literature *in relation to* (Euro-) intellectual and literary traditions in modernity. In the first portion of his statement, he uses the term "relationship" to characterize his polemical approach; in the latter portion of the statement, he alludes to the conceptual necessity of understanding black texts in relation to modernity by emphasizing the intellectual labor of explaining "non-canonical literatures." The relation, as a guideline for critical reflection, presents itself here as Gates's insistence upon the study of texts at the periphery of canonical literary and intellectual traditions. For Gates, the relationship of non-canonical work to literary theory is a springboard into his argument for African-American literature as a proper field of study. In the following pages of the introduction, he shows how the relationship between literary theory and black literature is useful in explaining the idiomatic and/or encoded language of the "black" text. And he argues that in theorizing the language of the black text, one is able to provide a competent basis for disclosing the uniqueness and complexity of African-American literature in distinction from other literatures in modernity. Behind his argument is a sincere investment in what he refers to as the "pluralistic" understanding of the institution of literature. But at what cost? One might read Gates's introduction as an attempt to cordon off African-American literature from its significant status in Western literary influence. His pluralism (which is relational in its form and character) places African-American literary history in juxtaposition with European literary heritages that constitute the core of modern reflection. Given his discussion, how then does one imagine African-American literary history as a constitutive basis for Western modern reflection as a whole?

The same thing could be said about relational interpretive practices that influence the study of black intellectual production in Western history and political economy. If the concept of the relation is the prism through which all forms of the historical significance of *le negre* are refracted, then has African-American

scholarship done sufficient justice to refiguring the horizon of Western thought and its *sense of material history*? This is not simply the question of verifying the role of black labor in Western modernity: C. L. R. James, Eric Williams, Robin Blackburn, Eugene D. Genovese, Marcus Rediker, and Peter Linebaugh have articulated, forcefully, the critical role of African slave labor in instituting the Atlantic conglomeration of Western capital and the nation-state. Blackburn states the circumstances plainly:

> Around the year 1770 there were nearly two and a half million slaves toiling in the fields, mills, mines, workshops and households of the New World colonies. Slave labour supplied the most coveted and important items in Atlantic and European commerce: the sugar, coffee, cotton and cacao of the Caribbean; the tobacco, rice and indigo of North America; the gold and sugar of Portuguese and Spanish South America. These commodities comprised about a third of the value of European commerce, a figure inflated by regulations that obliged colonial products to be brought to the metropolis prior to their re-export to other destinations. (R. Blackburn 1988: 3)

How tremendous are these facts as an attestation to African slave labor and its contribution? How sublime is the recount of African slave labor in the socioeconomic emergence of Western modernity? The statistics are incredible. However, one still wonders about the subtle nuances that demarcate categories of labor in historical action. Because black slaves are critical to the successes of the modern Western economy it does not mean that they were regarded as significant contributors to Western civilization, its political and social legacy. We see this phenomenon most clearly in Western philosophies of history that recount (in idealist terms) the basis and trajectory of modern civilization. Take Hegel for example. He argues that the blacks of Africa do not have "subjectivity"; rather, blacks are *subjects* who lawlessly destroy one another.[2] While their slave labor does not count as historical action (given that African slaves are not rational), slavery is the Africans' introduction to reason. What is at stake (in Hegel's philosophy of history and other modern philosophies of history) is the way in which politico-philosophic accounts of labor, history, and political representation are brought to bear as critical motivating forces in the prognostication of Western historical fulfillment. In the case of the laboring creativity of African people, Hegel's conclusions are clear. The African's relationship to the historical fulfillment of World Spirit is his or her laboring toil under antagonistic economies of Western colonialism and empire. Whether or not Africans become agents in historical knowledge and its self-conscious development in freedom remains to be seen.

From the vantage point of philosophical idealism, labor is inextricably linked to historical power and influence. For example, the phrase "sense of history" suggests something quite different from an extended account of labor, even if historical assessments are absolutely critical toward involving blacks in the course of Western historiography. Furthermore, the sense of history alludes to a problem

at the basis of a philosophy of history in Voltaire, finding its crisis pitch in Hegel. The central question is whether or not blacks are *historical* in the sense that they are conscious actors in a narrative of historical power culminating in the production of civil polity.[3] In the relation of blacks to early modern political thought, the phrase "the sense of history" alludes to problems that betray the coextensive nature of the subject in labor and the process of labor in historical fulfillment. Do slaves participate in a narrative of historical action (or better yet, a narrative of historical value that presupposes a viable future for the state) when they (in Lockean fashion) "mix" their labor with nature to produce property? Of course, the answer is "no" if one follows eighteenth-century political/philosophical traditions coming from John Locke – for Locke argued that the slave has forfeited his or her rights through a supposed act of war. But finally the concept of a sense of history attests to the durability of philosophical pronouncements concerning human nature beyond that of historical fact. David Hume, for instance, suggests that there is a relationship of sorts between the intellectual creativity of the Negro and a narrative of proscriptive historical knowledge: in sum, Negroes are in mimetic relation with genius, the arts, and a history of manufacturing.[4] Furthermore, Negroes, in their perceptions of experience and translations of impressions into ideas, are without an extended sense of what Hume refers to as "custom" that is realized as corporate historical knowledge and insight. Hence, Negroes simply imitate creative developments that constitute the basis and destiny of the Western nation-state. In a now famous footnote on blacks, Hume cites the example of Francis Williams, the controversial colonial Negro poet to whom (or perhaps, properly, "which") Hume refers as a "parrot," "speaking only a few words plainly," fabricating, through poetry, only a paltry representation of the neoclassical spirit. For Hume, Francis Williams is indicative of the greater failure of Negro creativity which is the Negro's inability to establish historical and political contexts out of which true intellectual innovation emerges.

In both the domains of literary history and political thought, we witness the corrosive effects of relational hermeneutics as they juxtapose black creativity with Western creative innovation and promise. The pressing concern is how one might conceptualize black intellectual labor as a constitutive feature of the modern historical sense. But in order to accomplish this, critics must be willing to view the status of African-American Studies in historical consciousness differently – in a way that radically reassesses relational hermeneutics as an adequate approach to scholarship on peoples of African descent. To be sure, modern political thought assesses the range of creative endeavor (from physical exertion to intellectual intervention) in terms of labor and its influence on progress and civilization. I would argue that the relational interpretive practices that guide African-American critical reflection are the political consequence of establishing black intellectual labor *in proximity to* bourgeois labor in the larger historical domain. Hence, it is possible to trace the origins of relational hermeneutics in African-American Studies back to the question of black slave labor as it is jux-

taposed with bourgeois labor and political action in eighteenth-century European and colonial American philosophical discourses.

It is difficult, however, to establish a genealogy that imagines the relational hermeneutics of African-American Studies as an heir-apparent to the colonial black writing tradition, especially when the tradition's principal figures critique (at the outset) the relationship of African slave labor to modernity. Quobna Ottobah Cugoano – political philosopher, biblical exegete, and colonial ex-slave – viewed as urgent the contemporary debates concerning black slaves and sought to challenge the existing political terrain on how it conceives of the connection between labor, humanity, and political destiny. While it is an abolitionist polemic, Cugoano's *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (hereafter referred to as *Thoughts and Sentiments*) represents a unique break with conventional formulations of colonial abolitionism. In the *Thoughts and Sentiments*, he rethinks the history of political thought by challenging the terms that inform the shape and character of historical consciousness and sense. In turn, Cugoano establishes a philosophy of history that situates racial slavery at the center of the contemporary political situation in the West. The *Thoughts and Sentiments*, which some scholars suggest is a collaboration of Cugoano, Equiano, and an abolitionist ghostwriter, borrows liberally in content from Anthony Benezet's *Account of Guinea* and Thomas Clarkson's *Essay on the Commerce of the Human Species*. Published in 1787 with a shorter version published in 1791, *Thoughts and Sentiments* appears in "at least three issues and was sold through several booksellers, including James Phillips, the Quakers' principal printer and bookseller in London" (V. Carretta in O. Cugoano 1999: xix). Despite its subsequent publications, it "apparently went unreviewed in Britain" (ibid). The work is a part of the political culture of the Enlightenment, and Cugoano is indebted to the Quakers who, in the spirit of radical egalitarianism, proclaimed the antislavery cause.

What is interesting is how *Thoughts and Sentiments* significantly departs from standard approaches in eighteenth-century political philosophy that juxtapose labor with its less than auspicious counterpart – slavery. In Cugoano's work, slavery is reintroduced (as a political concept) to the historical domain in radical fashion and placed as a governing motif in the relationship among Divine Law, historical consciousness, and the political and theological heresies of the British nation-state. I argue that in *Thoughts and Sentiments* slavery is the principal force of historical action in Western nation-states that are in heresy with God and his laws. Hence, narratives of Western progress (as they occur in tandem with slavery and colonialism) are damned as European civilization progressively refuses to align itself with God's edicts. I begin with Hannah Arendt's reading (and rethinking) of the standard paradigms that inform the history of political reflection on labor, and then I turn to Cugoano, as he offers a unique perspective on labor and slavery in narratives of political freedom.

Hannah Arendt's *Human Condition* is useful in its refiguration of the standard conflation of labor with work in historical knowledge. Arendt criticizes a political

genealogy (from Plato) that misreads the privilege of *animal laborans* in the *vita activa* and subsequently misunderstands the role of *homo faber* in human activity.[5] On the underside of Arendt's concern is the significance of the human artifice produced and made durable by *homo faber* in history. She states: "Men are conditioned beings because everything they come in contact with turns immediately into a condition of existence. The world in which the *vita activa* spends itself consists of things produced by human activities" (H. Arendt 1958: 9). The human condition "is impossible without things, and things would be a heap of unrelated articles, a non-world, if they were not the conditioners of human existence" (ibid). If taken slightly further, the artifact is the clue toward understanding how history and historical action are brought to bear upon human being in the world. The pressing concern here is modern slave labor unlawfully divided from its status as *homo faber*: one whose labor is reified into artifacts that condition what Hannah Arendt refers to as the "thing-character" of the world. This then means that the reified work of *le negre* in historical consciousness potentially reinscribes, through artifacts of thought and creativity, the character of history. One way to do this is to refract political thinking through the prism of African slave labor. The implied paradox of this claim is evident given Arendt's discussion of the political modality of slavery in Greek antiquity. "The institution of slavery in antiquity, though not in later times, was not a device for cheap labor or an instrument of exploitation for profit but rather the attempt to exclude labor from the conditions of man's life" (ibid: 84). If labor as necessity is utterly removed, so that man achieves the absolute quiet of contemplation, man has indeed achieved the "good life." But one should not view Arendt's assessment here of slavery in Greek antiquity as her rejection of the pulse of slavery in political action. The question of slavery can be posed as tangible thought in history and power. While slavery cannot be thought of as "action" (Arendt insists that action emerges as a consequence of "human plurality . . . [having] the twofold character of equality and distinction") (ibid: 175), the status of slavery is nonetheless an artifact that conditions historical consciousness as such. This idea assumes that historical consciousness and its trajectory stake their vitality on the multiplicity and exchange value of fabricated "products" that make their way to the public space of appearance. To presume the status of *homo faber* as the constitutive basis of historical action runs the risk of perpetuating a very old problem in the political genealogy from Locke to Karl Marx – that is, the concept of labor and production as the engendering coda of the varieties of *all* political life. Nevertheless, Arendt sees promise in the rehabilitation of *homo faber* and its possibility in the *vita activa* in contradistinction to *animal laborans* as it presumes all forms of historical activity.

> The modern age in general and Karl Marx in particular, overwhelmed, as it were, by the unprecedented actual productivity of Western mankind, had an almost irresistible tendency to look upon all labor as work and to speak of the *animal labo-*

> *rans* in terms more fitting for *homo faber*, hoping all the time that only one more step was needed to eliminate labor and necessity altogether. (Ibid: 87)

Elsewhere, she mentions that in Marx's stress on labor power (*Arbeitskraft*) there is no distinction drawn between "intellectual and manual work." The rubric of *animal laborans* seems ill-equipped to attend to the reification of artifacts that remain durable in history and its legacy. This is precisely because the labor of *animal laborans* is fleeting, without a "trace" of its production left in the human condition. Marx conflates the distinction between labor and work, privileging labor in production. However, Arendt is quick to show that the significance of thought in historical power and action belongs to the durability of thought (in the form of work) in historical consciousness. While work and thought

> never quite coincide[,] the thinker who wants the world to know the "content" of his thoughts must first of all stop thinking and remember his thoughts. Remembrance in this, as in all other cases, prepares the intangible and futile for their eventual materialization; it is the beginning of the work process, and like the craftsman's consideration of the model which will guide his work, its most immaterial stage. (Ibid: 90)

Through remembrance, the artifact of intellectual production materializes its significance in historical narrative. Furthermore, the coda of labor in modern political philosophy (particularly in Marx) misses the necessity of speech, thought, and their durability in politics and the public realm. If *animal laborans* was all that was required to represent political status, then what sense could one make of the category of slavery other than from the periphery of political representation? While Locke and Marx insist upon the reach and stretch of *animal laborans* in political representation, it is within the purview of *homo faber* to render tangible speech and thought into durable "word and deed." Arendt understands this to be our missed heritage from Greek antiquity. The work of *homo faber* in history is durable thinking in directing the course of politics and action. "The whole factual world of human affairs depends for [the] reality [of action, speech, and thought] and its continued existence, first, upon the presence of others who have seen and heard and will remember, and second, on the transformation of the intangible into the tangibility of things" (ibid: 95). In this sense, the work of *homo faber* is critical to the form and character of the historical sense. However, how does one make durable thinking about slavery in history and its consequences?

The problem is directly connected with the persistence of a "peculiar name" in the modern political genealogy of labor. Marx indicates that in a life of labor, "nature's material [is] adapted by a change of form to the wants of man. Labour has incorporated itself with its subject: the former is materialized, the latter transformed." In the subject's encounter with nature the very circumstance of

the subject's life is contingent upon the creative exertions employed toward a transformation of raw material into product. The biology of life hinges upon the labor of life. This concept of "man's metabolism with nature" is the reach and stretch of all exertions that in turn affect the state of man's physical and political condition. But a history of the categorization of labor complicates this claim. We may turn to Locke's joining labor to property rights. "The labour of [man's] body, and the *Work* of his hands, we may say, are properly his"; in this sense, labor is the "unquestionable" property of the laborer. Furthermore, this property of labor is conjoined with "the common state of nature" ("mixed" is the term Locke uses) to produce property. Hence, the double function of the acquisition of property is "fixed" in the laboring process. Labor is the property of exertion to claim property. In Locke, categorizing labor and its result in proprietary right is intimately connected with political representation, to the degree that his understanding of labor emerges in contradistinction to other forms of exertion. The stark example of Locke's categorical imperative for labor is the relation of labor to slavery. In the "state of slavery," men "forfeit their lives . . . and los[e] their estates"; but most of all, men, in slavery, are "not capable of any *property*" (ibid: 323; my emphasis). In slavery, the double relation of man's labor as property mixing itself with nature to produce property is absurd. The slave's property of labor and its subsequent production of property are categorically subsumed by the slave's status as property. Hence, the property of the slave preempts any form of exertion that would necessarily present itself as proprietary right. If, according to Locke, the "chief end" of political society is the preservation of property, then how does a slave achieve political status, let alone entrée into the domain of historical power and political destiny? The slave's primary mode of political representation is his or her status as an object; the slave is Aristotle's "living tool" whose significance is bound up with the question of use value. On the other hand, the proprietor is lord and master and his property affords him the status of conscious actor in political transformation and historical action. It is Locke who provides us with some indication of the various problems incurred when definitions of labor emerge from curious nuances in a political genealogy of labor.

The colonial slave or living tool, by distinction, maintains his or her *economic* significance in the durable action and speech of various eighteenth-century public forums. After all, colonial slaves are a major resource in the first attempts by eighteenth-century Europe and the Americas to consolidate and "globalize" capital. But this is no indication of the slave's contribution to narratives of historical power. Herein lies the sublime paradox: tangible thought as speech and action, in the strict sense of Lockean property right, do not belong to the slave. The slave's creative exertion is the slaveholder's property. Remember that in Locke, the slave's status as property occludes the possibility of the double relation of the laborer to nature. Hence, the question of the slave's would-be contribution to narratives of rational labor in history is preempted by the impending problem of proprietary right and its manifestation as political representation.

The question of proprietary right as political representation is the mitigating factor of the slave's would-be contribution to the historical sense. African slaves and their labor are, in the final analysis, in economic relation to historical consciousness but never coextensive with narratives of historical destination and fulfillment.

The task then in African-American Studies is to feature the racialized slave's status (as "living tool") as tangible and durable thought in historical knowledge – as the durable work of *homo faber* considering the implications of labor in history. In doing so, slavery weighs in as a durable artifact in the public forum of power and its historical value. In Arendtian terms, power has the "potential," so to speak, to "disclose realities" and "establish relations." The durability of speech, action, and thought in power are not the driving forces of history as it strives toward destiny. Rather, history discloses its character, actualizes itself as power, speech, and action in the public realm. Conversely, power, in the form of tangible action and speech, is the "lifeblood" of the artifact. The artifact then conditions existence while maintaining its significance in the swells of a dynamic political landscape. Hence, slavery must be fashioned as a significant artifact that discloses the reality of history and its trajectory as such in the public forum.

To leave African/Negro slaves and their creative production at the threshold of historical consciousness (relating to historical consciousness, but never part of it) is insufficient. There are new insights into the category of the understanding if the thread of historical consciousness (the sense of history) is unraveled and rewoven into thinking that postulates slavery as a mode of knowing and being – that is, as a point of departure in modes of progress and fulfillment. If one imagines the category of the colonial slave as a ground for the historical sense, then we imply something about the modern nation-state and its prognostication of fate: slavery can be viewed as a critique of the sense of history and its *eschaton* – namely, the concrete realization of freedom! Slavery could be as imagined coextensive with historical consciousness. But how does this happen? In attending to the historical sense, slavery is featured as key insight in Western statecraft and political logic as they wean themselves from the mists of primeval barbarism and legend and this is so, if, and only if, there is an appeal to republican government or enlightenment as the realization of freedom. Thus, political and social destinies (as imagined through the intertwined categories of slavery and the modern condition) are phenomena that must reconcile the political machinations of the nation-state with its chattelizing of labor. Slavery is a conceptual basis for the nation-state, its critical sense of history, and its thinking about a projected future. Cugoano's work is perhaps the most compelling example of this phenomenon in colonial black writing.

Cugoano's belongs to the *Zeitgeist* of eighteenth-century political culture. However, there are reasons to resist relegating the work to tertiary status in a tradition of prophetic British abolitionism. *Thoughts and Sentiments* and its link to late eighteenth-century abolitionist traditions need not absolutely mediate the *thinking* within the text. The intellectual, in posing knowledge as a radical event

in a history of understanding and interrogation, must do so in active contra-distinction to tradition. In this sense, thinking, as a kind of present activity, resists historical imperatives to paradoxically presume its own politico-historical value.[6] Cugoano, for example, draws from much of the meticulous history of slavery featured in both Clarkson's and Benezet's polemics. Clarkson, Benezet, and Cugoano share an interest in the question of slavery from antiquity until the present, and the three writers count on the historical profundity of slavery to bear out claims of its evil in the modern world. But what if thinking about slavery was brought to bear upon questions concerning historical consciousness? *Thoughts and Sentiments* takes the question of historical sense to be a very present problem in misguided politico-theological reflection, and Cugoano's project is certainly preoccupied with the question of how one should view history. History is not simply a tool for the verification of the moral ineptitude of slavery. Rather, history is the site where knowledge is reassessed in terms that place equity and justice in tension with the persistence of global bondage and servitude. In this sense, *Thoughts and Sentiments* is greater than the more narrow forms of categorization that restrict the work to its political contribution in a tradition of abolitionism. Cugoano, in distinction to his intellectual predecessors, makes his polemical intentions quite clear:

> But it would be needless to arrange an history of all the base treatment which the African Slaves are subjected to . . . What I intend to advance against that evil, criminal and wicked traffic of enslaving men, are only some Thoughts and Sentiments which occur to me, as being obvious from the Scriptures of Divine Truth, or such arguments as are chiefly deduced from thence, with other such observations as I have been able to collect. Some of these observations may lead into a larger field of consideration, than that of the African Slave Trade alone. (O. Cugoano 1999:11)

Elsewhere, he speaks of the scriptures (God's divine law) as a "blessing to understand." The "larger field of consideration" may just be his concern with political discontents that force to light the historical significance of slavery in the institution of the nation-state. At base, he attempts (in his revisionist interpretation of scripture) to free blacks from an interpretive circle of perpetual damnation and toil. African slavery, for Cugoano, cannot remain in relation to a narrative of historical consciousness, but must be intertwined with the foibles of historical progress and destination in the nation-state. To do so, African slave labor must be wrested from a sense of filial damnation coming from the Bible and made to be a durable political critique of the nation-state and its politico-economic hubris. But more than this, historical knowledge must be channeled through the perennial event of slavery in the emergence of civilization and the institution of statecraft. Furthermore, slavery must be made an important marker of the historical sense that leads from nation-state activity to insidious forms of global imperialism. In order to achieve this feat, Cugoano suggests that British colonial

slavery (Western colonial slavery) has emerged in counterintuitive fashion to the historical sense grounded in biblical precedents.

The laws of Western civilization have gone away from an eternal and indefatigable word of God. Slavery is then an important clue of the relation of history to destiny. Karl Löwith in *Meaning in History* explains that when one speaks of "meaning" in history, he or she inquires about its purpose (*telos*). Without the sense of purpose, the meaning of history is detached from its presupposition of historical trajectory. Löwith also states that philosophies of history are categorically "eschatological" (that is future-oriented and purposed) in scope. This phenomenon is due to the fact that "the temporal horizon for a final goal is . . . an eschatological future, and the future exists [for the philosopher] only by expectation and hope" (K. Löwith 1949: 6). Nevertheless, despite intentions, philosophies of history seldom bear out the infinite permutation of possibility brought about by desire and will, despite the scope and trajectory of reason in governing political and social practice. The plan that suggests a certain direction for civil society is suffused with a latent form of cynicism, given that the philosophy of history must relinquish its prognostication of the future to human responsibility in the present. Hence, all eschatological narratives reckon themselves with the question of human agency and its varied possibility. Löwith argues that it is for this reason that systems that tend to envision a plan for purposive history (history and teleology) must do so through the lenses of faith and hope. His suggestion here is an important one, especially if prognostications imply the clearing away of forms of injustice. Cugoano, for example, relinquishes his exegeses of biblical precedents on slavery and its subsequent refiguration of historical knowledge and conscience to the desire and will of the British public whom he trusts to obey God's edicts. He is sure that "God will certainly avenge himself of such heinous transgressors of his law . . . [planters, merchants and all others] . . . who are authors of the African graves, severities, and cruel punishments" (O. Cugoano 1999: 84). Further down, he admonishes the British nation "to consider these things . . . [so that] . . . they may be sensible of their own [scriptural] error and danger, lest they provoke the vengeance of the Almighty against them" (ibid).

Cugoano's prophetic admonition to the British is clear; Britain risks collective damnation given her misreading of the historical sense concerning servitude ultimately derived from God's law. What British citizens choose to do with Cugoano's admonition is another concern. He states elsewhere that he is "aware that some of [his] arguments will weigh nothing against such men as do not believe the scriptures themselves, nor care to *understand*" (ibid: 45; my emphasis). Many slaveholders simply flout the category of servitude in historical knowledge by twisting the historical sense of servitude in scripture toward their exploitative purpose. If slaveholders attempt to use scripture to justify their claims for colonial slavery, "let [the slaveholders] be aware not to make use of [scriptures] against [Negro slaves] which they do not believe, or whatever they may have for the committing violence against [them]" (ibid). What he suggests here is that

the historical sense is bound to the moral fallibility of the British nation-state and its misreading of theological precedents that ground categories of servitude.

Cugoano's major preoccupation is the political discontents that belie responsibility in scriptural understanding; for Cugoano, it is the responsible kind of biblical hermeneutics that casts a new light on theological reflection in colonial slavery. The "end," so to speak, of categorizations of labor in statecraft is God and his law. In fact, the end of the historical sense and of understanding in state logic is Divine order. Of course, the notion of "end" here is imprecise, given that it suggests a linear, temporal sequence of Divine purpose in history. Cugoano, more precisely, takes God to be the ground and actualization of Universal History. We deal with this point below. The Divine law of God is transcendental in that its glory and majesty persist beyond the tumult and "torrent" of "the robbery and ensnaring of men" in Western colonialism. Furthermore, the revelation of God is politically preeminent in the nation-state and its understanding of the historical trajectory of labor and statecraft. God is the "sovereign" of the princes of all nations, and "nothing but heavenly wisdom, and heavenly grace, can teach men to understand" (ibid: 42). Hence, the historical enterprise of colonial labor and statecraft either follows scripture or is heretical with scripture. Let me be clear here. When speaking of the political preeminence of Divine revelation in colonial praxis, Cugoano makes no pretence to establish Divine revelation as *a priori* to reason. Cugoano is too much a part of the *eschaton* of eighteenth-century political ideology to attempt this. Reason is an ethical and epistemological anchor in responsible biblical exegesis. He argues that the perversion of reason in biblical hermeneutics is an important clue toward understanding misguided justifications of colonial slavery in the British imperial effort.

> The pretenses that some men make use of for holding of slaves, must be evidently the grossest perversion of reason, as well as an inconsistent and diabolical use of the sacred writings. For it must be a strange perversion of reason, and a wrong use of disbelief of the sacred writings, when any thing found there is so perverted by them, and set up as a precedent and rule for men to commit wickedness. (Ibid: 29)

Slaveholders appropriate scripture to justify the practice of slavery. Hence, slavery is supported by, what they see as, appropriate politico-theological reflection coming from scripture. In contradistinction to their claims, Cugoano suggests that reason coincides with responsible biblical exegesis to rightly understand Divine revelation concerning labor; hence, reason and its coupling with the understanding are twisted and deformed in irresponsible biblical exegesis toward the perpetuation of colonial slavery. Nevertheless, if reason is too much bound with perverse forms of historical consciousness – if reason is bound to colonial slavery and its perversion of the historical sense coming from scripture – then reason, in its search for the truth of labor in history, turns to the transcendental law of Divine truth.

But why should God be the referent for the historical sense? Why not classical antiquity and its guidelines for labor? To be sure, slavery in Greco-Roman antiquity is featured prominently in writings on slavery and the historical sense from Aristotle, through Denis Diderot, Voltaire, and Thomas Jefferson. Why risk reading slavery in counterintuitive fashion to well-established models of interrogating slavery in eighteenth-century polemic? And where do God and his status as referent for the truth of history get us? First, Christianity, for Cugoano, is more than a mere religious, institutional exercise; Christianity is epochal – it represents the historical sense and destination of the British nation-state. The term "epoch" is imprecise in that it suggests that he views historical possibility beyond the guidelines of Christian ethics. For Cugoano, the horizon beyond epochal Christianity is apocalypse. Of course, this poses a problem at the very base of theorizing about the history of the nation-state: if the category of slavery is at the foundation of civilization, its translation into statecraft, and its troubled enterprise of establishing justice and equity, then why should civilization and statecraft in a "Christian aera" be any different in its incorporation of chattel slavery? For Cugoano, all political modalities approach historical fulfillment in the advent of the Christian worldview. "Wherever a Christian government is extended, and the true religion is embraced, that the blessings of liberty should be extended likewise, and that it should diffuse its influences first to fertilize the mind, and then the effects of its benignity would extend, and arise with exuberant blessings and advantages from all its operations" (ibid: 92). Christian ethics represent the terminus for all forms of statecraft that tolerate oppression. Furthermore, God, unlike other referents for the historical sense, remains transcendental and politically preeminent: that is to say that God and his governance over statecraft efface a kind of temporality that mediates the relation of political action to other models and standards in history. God is forever the "righteous judge," always present, so to speak, to condemn inequity and injustice, and the Divine Law of God is above a "torrent" of what Cugoano refers to as the "robbery" of men.

Cugoano is aware of Britain's sense of itself as it joins Christian exceptionalism to colonial slavery. The trick, so to speak, is to exploit the apparent political disconnects between the epochal significance of Christianity in the British nation-state and its barbaric practice of slavery. Note Cugoano's easy sarcasm:

> In a Christian aera, in a land where Christianity is planted, where every one might expect to behold the flourishing growth of every virtue, extending their harmonious branches with universal philanthropy wherever they came; but, on the contrary, almost nothing else is to be seen abroad but the bramble of ruffians, barbarians and slaveholders, grown up to a powerful luxuriance in wickedness. (Ibid: 24–5)

Christianity and its love ethic represent the historical actualization of God's sacred plan in history, and in this Christian epoch, the various permutations of desire and will represent a political crisis of British citizens, who in the historical

present, must be brought in line with the New Testament law of God – "Thou shalt love the lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul; *and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*" (Matthew 22: 37, 39; my emphasis). The "luxuriance" of wicked slaveholders tests God's loving forbearance of the nation-state, and the epochal heresy of slaveholding remains unreconciled to God's destiny and sublime historical purpose for Britain.

Secondly, if God's divine grace is situated as the ground and purpose of Universal History, then reason, labor, and the global historical sense are unified under providence. Furthermore, he imagines God to be the line of demarcation that cordons off the enterprise of civilization from barbarity. In this juxtaposition of barbarism and civilization, the practice of slavery is representative of barbarism and its historical importance in contemporary contexts. When God is absent, barbarism reigns. In an "enlightened aera," where God's law is preeminent, slaves and their black children are not marked by God's displeasure and are not condemned to perpetual servitude. If God's grace is equitable in all versions of the historical sense – if God equitably sanctions the varieties of racial and historical development – then freedom in history should be egalitarian and just. If God's grace is equitable and just, either universal freedom or universal bondage is the prevailing characteristic of *all* versions of historical activity. For Cugoano, the struggle for freedom is in tension with prevailing universal bondage. In the end, we are left with God's provision for freedom in the varieties of historical action that presuppose suffering and toil. Thus, the manipulation and revision of scriptural interpretations on servitude carry political implications. What remains are outlining these political implications as they contest well marked boundaries of the sense of history and destiny.

The major move is to make slavery a durable concept in contradistinction to other forms of historical action. With this move, we come to understand Cugoano's extended preoccupation with James Tobin. Tobin's *Cursory Remarks upon the Reverend Mr. Ramsay's Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the Sugar Colonies* is intended to be a sincere response and reproof of James Ramsay's milestone attempt to expose the injustices and violence of plantation life in the West Indies. Cugoano views the text as a thinly veiled attempt to justify the practice of colonial slavery. Tobin argues that while slavery is a mode of injustice, it is not distinct from other categories of laboring toil that characterize eighteenth-century culture. Slavery is but one more manifestation of an unfortunate circumstance that prioritizes consumption and production over proletarian life in the eighteenth century. Tobin's crude understanding of slavery as connected to other forms of proletarian labor attempts to diminish its peculiar status as a unique form of labor in history. Furthermore, he fails to deal with the fact that this is *racialized slavery*, a form that did not exist until modernity. Cugoano contravenes Tobin's claim by suggesting that slavery, as a "peculiar name," is undiminished in its particularity to other forms of creative exertion and historical activity. Cugoano concedes that while "it may be true, in part, that some [British and Irish laborers] suffer greater hardship than many of the slaves"

(O. Cugoano 1999: 19), this misses the more profound point. "No freeman, however poor and distressing his situation may be, would resign his liberty for that of a slave, in the situation of a horse or a dog" (ibid: 20). Slavery, as chattel existence, is antithetical to the most fundamental form of agency and being in the world: freedom. Furthermore, Cugoano argues that slaves (in the most profound sense) are "robbed" of themselves.[7] Labor and its "metabolism" with nature are divested of their consequence: property. In the case of the slave, proprietary right and its dynamic role in historical action and transformation belong to the slaveholder. Hence, Cugoano's preservation of the distinctiveness of slavery in contrast to other forms of labor is not haphazard. This distinctiveness of slavery can hardly resist being subsumed under the category of labor. After all, slaves are laborers in the sense of the *animal laborans* whose biological cycle coincides with creative exertions into nature. Nevertheless, the paradox is that slavery is labor without the benefit of political representation, and slavery cannot follow more traditional understandings of labor and its connection to rights. Thus, slavery might be described as man's metabolism with nature that does not follow the standard conventions set forth by political philosophy.

Cugoano attends to this apparent paradox by pointing to the status of the modern slave in exchange and use value.

> For the slaves, like animals, are bought and sold, and dealt with as their capricious owners may think fit, even in torturing and tearing them to pieces, and wearing them out with hard labour, hunger and oppression. (Ibid: 20)

Slaves are durable instruments of production that are "negotiated" by slave masters. They are "bought and sold" in a violent colonial logic of production and consumption which in turn conditions the economic basis of globalizing capital. Exchange and use are the limits of the slave's historical value in a narrative of civil polity, and slaves' would-be participation in historical power is mediated by their status as expendable commodities. Cugoano seems to point to what has been a perennial politico-philosophical problem in rightly dividing historical action from other forms of labor and creative exertion. If Cugoano anticipates Arendt, slaves are part of the thing-character of the world that conditions colonial existence; but they are hardly free actors of power in the public forum, given that their speech, action, and thought are assessed in terms of their utility (or lack thereof). In this sense, slaves are inconsequential to the trajectory of political action in which speech, action, and thought negotiate destiny. "And should the death of a slave ensue by some other more violent way than that which is commonly the death of thousands, and tens of thousands in the end, the haughty tyrant, in that case, has only to pay a small fine for the murder and death of his slave" (ibid). Slaves are living tools to be dispensed with arbitrarily and are assessed in terms of use value. Marx is useful here in that he argues "use-values are only produced by capitalists, because, and in so far as, they are the material substratum, the depositories of exchange-value" (Marx and Engels 1978: 351).

Slaves, as depositories for politico-economic negotiations of power and capital, are in the most literal sense utilized to promote destiny in conscious political action and statecraft. Hence, "whatever circumstances poor freemen may be in, their situation is much superior, beyond any proportion, to that of the hardships and cruelty of modern slavery" (O. Cugoano 1999: 20).

I may have belabored the point for far too long here. But it is important to understand Cugoano's insistence upon the difference between wage labor and slavery: the category of slavery, "as a peculiar name," is undiminished by competing forms of historical action. Furthermore, while slaves are denied participation in historical power, the category of slavery itself is not. Slavery may be posed as a perennial concern of perversions of freedom in the varieties of historical consciousness. But more than this, slavery is wed to the machinations of statecraft to delineate justice and equity in civilization. Cugoano certainly suggests this. The question of slavery is an important link in the relation of biblical edict (in the Mosaic Law) to modern political praxis. For Cugoano, the condition of the modern slave enables slavery to be an analogue of suffering in historical action. The particularity of slavery is undiminished from a narrative of reason in history, and it is the misinterpretation of slavery in historical knowledge that has the British nation-state dangerously close to epochal barbarism.

Slavery may very well be the marker of colonialism's heresy against God. As has been stated, Cugoano suggests that this heresy assumes its most egregious form in the misinterpretation of scripture.

> But the supporters and favourers of slavery make other things a pretence and an excuse in their own defence; such as, that they find that it was admitted under the Divine institution by Moses, as well as the long continued practice of different nations for ages; and that the Africans are peculiarly *marked* out by some signal prediction in nature and complexion for that purpose. (Ibid: 28; my emphasis)

The clue here is the term "mark," and Cugoano takes his cue from the infamous biblical stories of Cain and Abel and Noah. Cain, in a fit of jealousy, murders his brother Abel, and as a consequence is singled out by God to be a perpetual shame and disgrace to all the nations of the earth. According to Cugoano, slaveholders have traditionally imagined the mark to be an overabundance of melanin in the epidermis. Hence, the mark is black skin. Furthermore, the mark stands as *the* instantiation of ontogenetic damnation. God has designated black skin to be a sign of reproach for all time. The mark, as shame and disgrace, lends hermeneutic credence to the profound, historical shame and reproach of *le negre* in anti-black history. Contravening such claims, Cugoano writes "but [to] allow the mark set upon Cain to have consisted in a black skin, still no conclusion can be drawn at all, that any of the black people are of that descent, as the whole posterity in Cain were destroyed in the universal deluge" (ibid: 31). The mark, in Cugoano's interpretation, is divorced from the skin and made to be an ambiguous, free-floating sign that cannot be verified by historical fact. The history of the mark

is forever lost in the deluge. However, the mark and its possibility can be appropriated as a ground for the historical sense, as we shall soon see.

In the case of the story of Noah, we see scriptural exegesis and biblical hermeneutics used to attenuate the historical sense, and Cugoano's rethinking of the biblical narrative yields surprising results. One thing to keep in mind is the continuity of historical understanding as it is situated in political proximity to biblical themes. The question to ask in Cugoano's explanation of the biblical story of Noah is whether or not (through exegesis) the historical continuity of shame and reproach can be directed away from the Negro. If so, we have a new understanding of archetypal, biblical knowledge and its restriction on African slave production. Cugoano succeeds in the task by closely attending to biblical narrative. I briefly recount the story of Noah here. Noah, a man who "finds grace in the eyesight of the Lord," is chosen to build an ark that would house his family and two of each of the beasts of the earth to protect them from the great flood (or Deluge) that lasts for forty days and forty nights. After the waters recede from the earth, Noah and his sons find land and are instructed by God to replenish the earth with humankind. One day while in a tent, Noah becomes inebriated and falls asleep "uncovered." "And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of [Noah], and told his two brethren [Shem and Japheth] without" (Genesis 9: 22). According to slaveholders, Noah supposedly curses Ham for his shameful act by making his descendants black and destined to perpetual social damnation in the form of servitude. Cugoano refutes the claim by pointing to the fact that Noah does not curse Ham, he curses Ham's son Canaan. "And [Noah] said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren" (Genesis 9: 25).

The underlying concern for Cugoano is that God's edict for labor and history is channeled through Noah and his pronouncements to his sons, Shem, Japheth, and Ham. The unfolding of labor and historical narrative are wed to the filial sense in this critical moment in biblical history. Noah's sons (especially their progeny) are representative of a way in which history is enacted and the historical sense is grounded. Shem and his issue are the progenitors of God's chosen people, the Israelites; on the other hand, the sons and daughters of Ham are condemned to a perpetual toil and labor throughout history. If the presumption of damnation in historical knowledge is rechanneled through Ham's son, Canaan, there is a radically different consequence for modern political praxis.

Cugoano notes that in addition to the Divine judgments of fire and brimstone set upon Canaan's kingdoms of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, the land of Canaan had been subjected to numerous conquests, in which many Canaanites were reduced to "subjection and vassalage" (O. Cugoano 1999: 32). Canaan was invaded by the Chaldeans, Assyrians, Greeks, Romans, Saracens, and the Turks. Cugoano explains further that the Phoenicians, who were the descendants of the Canaanites, eventually fled from the total ruin of their land.

> Many of the Canaanites who fled away in the Time of [the Israelite Judge] Joshua, became mingled with the different nations, and some historians think that some

> of them came to England, and settled about Cornwall, as far back as that time; so that, for anything that can be known to the contrary, there may be some of the descendants of that wicked generation still subsisting among the slaveholders in the West Indies. (Ibid: 32–3)

In an important moment of patient biblical exegesis, Cugoano severs the genetic relation of shame and reproach from African ancestry in order to redirect genetic shame and reproach to British ancestry. However, this genetic shame and reproach does not find its historical actualization in modern British servitude even if the history of England attests to the consequences of invasion. Rather, genetic shame and reproach assume the form of slaveholding in a Christian nation-state. In this revisionist form of biblical hermeneutics, the racial specificity of damnation (in this case knowledge coming from God and preserved in history) is made to be rather arbitrary. Noah's condemnation of Canaan is not to be recovered from an already complicated gene pool of heredity and ancestry. Cugoano acknowledges that there can be only speculation concerning the terminus of Canaan's legacy in modern nations. Further down, he writes "that, for anything that can be known to the contrary, there *may* be some of the descendants of the [Canaanites] still subsisting among the slaveholders in the West Indies" (ibid).

Add to the revision of biblical genealogy, Cugoano's sincere emphasis of God's Divine grace over all humankind. Cugoano writes "that all mankind did spring from one original, and that there are no different species among men. For God who made the world, hath made of one blood all the nations of men that dwell on all the face of the earth" (ibid: 29). Apparently Cugoano, thinking that he quotes a scripture, imagines one.[8] However, his misquotation of the Bible does not diminish the force of his point here. He states elsewhere: "According, as we find that the difference of colour among men is only incidental, and equally natural to all, and agreeable to the place of their habitation; and that of features and complexion, in that respect, they are all equally alike entitled to the enjoyment of every mercy and blessing of God" (ibid: 30). Of course, Cugoano's statement raises the concern of his engagement with eighteenth-century natural histories (from Linnaeus and Montesquieu to Beattie and Buffon) that take as their task explanations of the conjunctive event of color and climate in racial stratification. He espouses the idea that climates do seem to have an influence on extended racial development. But this eco-biological thesis seems ancillary to Cugoano's major preoccupation with history, exegesis, and political praxis. His concern is not necessarily the serendipity of racial stratification across time; rather, his concern is God's equitable sanction or "blessing" of the "incidents" of racial variety. Racially stratified questions of right, freedom, and historical enactment are brought under the unity of God's eternal grace. Under the unifying blood that God created, world history and destiny are one and the racial presumption of ontogenetic damnation is not permissible, much less retrievable from the mists of historical fact.

Cugoano's revisionist history makes the pathway straight for the far more important project that occupies much of his work: the uses and abuses of servitude and bondage in the sense of history. The problem is this: there seems to be (as Cugoano views things) a profoundly historic, yet profoundly insidious move from the *figural* conceptualization of bondage and servitude to literal/economic conceptualizations of the same. Reason and the sense of history (originating in God's law and terminating in the laws of civilization) are made perverse by the translation of spiritual bondage to politico-economic bondage.

> Another form of instruction . . . may be taken from slavery and oppression which men have committed upon one another, as well as that kind of bondage and servitude which was admitted under the sanction of the Divine law . . . Now the great thing imported by [the law], and what is chiefly to be deduced from it in this respect, is, that so far as the law concerning bond-servants, and that establishment of servitude, as admitted in the Mosaical institution, was set forth, it was thereby intended to prefigure and point out, that spiritual subjection and bondage to sin, that all mankind, by their original transgression, were fallen into. (Ibid: 41)

Slavery is "emblematic" of humankind's fallenness from the grace of God into the bondage of sin. Thus, slavery is *the* precondition of human freedom as it marches into history away from God's grace. As the law becomes the substitute for what was once man's obedience to God, so must the law now provide strictures for the infinite permutations that bondage and servitude assume. But this does not mean that the law condones slavery. The law simply governs the deplorable state of affairs that sin has produced. Furthermore, the strictures for bondage and servitude under the Law of Moses hardly compare to the practices of modern slavery. "Now, in respect to that kind of servitude which was admitted into the law of Moses, that was not contrary to the natural liberties of men, but a state of equity and justice, according as the nature and circumstances of the times required" (ibid: 35). In this state of equity and justice, bond servants were not unlike "the poor" who redeemed their debt through a contracted time of labor and service. In some cases, bond servants were the "stewards" of a house and sometimes the sole heirs of a person's property. In this sense, bondage and servitude remained as equitable and just as was permissible in the historical context of fallenness and sin. While bondage and servitude were emblems of a delimited form of human creative exertion and freedom, the Mosaic Law maintained bondage and servitude in a state of justice and equity. "Wherefore it was necessary that something of that bondage and servitude should be admitted into the ritual law [of the Mosaical institution] for a figurative use, which, in all other respects and circumstances, was, in itself, contrary to the whole tenure of the law, and naturally itself unlawful for men to practice" (ibid: 42). Hence, the actual practice of slavery represents the sense of history gone away from its subsistence under God's law.

In *Thoughts and Sentiments*, the semantics of slavery in relation to bondage and servitude would remain unclear and ambiguous were it not for Cugoano's emphasis of an unlawful move from the figurative sense of bondage to the literal sense. Slavery is the grave consequence of a bondage translated from its emblematic representation into politico-economic practice. The robbery of a person's creative exertions, proprietary right, and participation in historical action occur within the grand move from a spiritual bondage (that serves as the precondition for human freedom) to the politico-economic practice of bondage in the form of slavery. But we have only scratched the surface of a much more profound problem. The translation of figurative bondage to politico-economic slavery represents both the barbaric impulse (wedged at the foundation of emergent nation-states) and a preeminent epochal barbarism at the threshold of colonial reason in statecraft. The passage is lengthy here, but deserves full quotation:

> In answer to another part of the pretence which the favourers of slavery make use of in their defence, that slavery was an ancient custom, and that it became the prevalent and universal practice of many different barbarous nations for ages: This must be granted; but not because it was right, or any thing like right and equity. A lawful servitude was always necessary, and became contingent with the very nature of human society. But when the laws of civilization were broken through, and when the rights and properties of others were invaded, that brought the oppressed into a kind of compulsive servitude, though not compelled to it by those whom they were obliged to serve. This arose from the different depredations and robberies which were committed upon one another; the helpless were obliged to seek protection from such as could support them, and to give unto them their service, in order to preserve themselves from want, and to deliver them from the injury either of men and beasts. For while society continued in a rude state, even among the establishers of kingdoms, when they became powerful and proud, as they wanted to enlarge their territories, they drove and expelled others from their peaceable habitations, who were not so powerful as themselves. This made those who were robbed of their substance, and drove from the place of their abode, make their escape to such as could and would help them; but when such a relief could not be found, they were obliged to submit to the yoke of their oppressors, who, in many cases, would not yield them any protection upon any terms. (Ibid: 34–5)

The nation-state is conceived in a torrent of robbery. There is a move from the justice and equity of civilization to barbaric statecraft in the establishment of kingdoms that wish to extend their dominion over the varieties of labor. Robbery is the recourse of statecraft and its hubris in regulating justice and equity. Furthermore, justice and equity are subsumed under the greater premise of power and wealth. Cugoano states further down that even "ancient times, in whatever degree slavery was admitted, and whatever hardships they were, in general, subjected to, it is not nearly so bad as the modern barbarous and cruel West-India slavery" (ibid: 35). He shows how history "anticipates" an uneasy shoring up of modern statecraft, its press for power, and its obliteration of the possibility of universal egalitarianism.

Cugoano's version of the birth of the state contravenes what Thomas Hobbes envisions as the state being the necessary solution to the "state of war" whereby all are against each. Cugoano departs from Hobbes in insisting that barbarism accompanies both political praxis and power as the nation-state establishes its models for progress. States in heresy with God's law perpetually risk condemnation in the form of barbarism. This claim casts new light on the birth of modern political theory and its emphasis upon categorization in labor. It is important to note that under the figural presumption of universal bondage to sin and fallenness, the line of demarcation between slavery and labor (culminating in proprietary right and political representation) is blurred. One cannot help but wonder if the presumptive bifurcation of labor and slavery in modern political theory had been born out of a need to lend credence to an endemic barbarism in modern statecraft. This issue, in its full implication, is well beyond our discussion.

What then is Cugoano's prognostication of the fate of the British nation-state? The destiny of Britain is imagined as an impending crisis of progressive damnation. In this case, the mark of shame and reproach are affixed to the excesses of British regulation of colonial capital and the state's concerted move toward a global future. That arbitrary "mark" (as discussed above) has found its resting place. "It may be feared if these unconstitutional laws, reaching from Great-Britain to her colonies, be long continued in and supported, to the carrying on that horrible and wicked traffic of slavery, must at last mark out the whole of the British constitution with ruin and destruction" (ibid: 70). Elsewhere, Cugoano imagines blackness as a durable political symbol of the fallenness to which all are subjected. If it is affixed with the mark of shame and reproach, can the state be imagined as politically damned blackness in heresy to God? Maybe. Suffice it to say that Britain, at an axial point in history, must choose its destiny. The choice is difficult, given that "The laws as reaching from Great-Britain to the West-Indies, do not detect them, but protect the opulent slaveholders" (ibid: 71). And these slaveholders are careful to maintain "power and interest in their favour" (ibid: 70).

The eschatological trajectory of Britain depends on its choice of either radical Christian egalitarianism or a nominal Christianity that masks nation-state hubris and portends a barbarism based upon slave labor. At the heart of this choice in historical fulfillment is the resituating of African labor and production beyond the domain of robbery. The Negro must be removed from the shame and reproach of robbery and placed within the domain of labor power.

> It is certain, that the produce of the labour of slaves, together with all the advantages of the West-India traffic, bring in an immense revenue to government; but let that amount be what it will, there might be as much or more expected from the labour of an equal increase of free people, and without the implication of guilt attending it, and which, otherwise, must be a greater burden to bear, and more ruinous consequences to be feared from it, than if the whole national debt was to sink at once, and to rest upon the heads of all that might suffer by it. (Ibid: 92)

Cugoano suggests here that African people should be allowed entrée onto the world historical stage as *homo faber* whose artifacts condition the historical destination of the state. Arendt reminds us that "*Homo faber* is indeed lord and master, not only because he is the master or has set himself up as the master of all nature but because he is master of himself and his doing" (H. Arendt 1958: 144). The Negro and his labor are imagined to be coextensive with knowledge through the fabricated durability of his word and deed. The Negro, in his fabrication of artifacts that remain durable within historical narrative, hence contributes to the future-orientation of civilization and in the case of the colonies, to their production, wealth, and progress.

> Whereas, if a generous encouragement were to be given to a free people, peaceable among themselves, intelligent and industrious, who by art and labour would improve the most barren situations, and make the most of that which is fruitful; the free and voluntary labour of many, would soon yield to any government, many greater advantages than slavery can produce. (Cugoano 1999: 92)

However, if the politico-economic practice of slavery persists as the sense of history in global conquest, then barbarism is preeminent. In historical consciousness, slavery must be turned from its politico-economic mode in statecraft to its figurative function in theological proscription for fallen man such that redemption is afforded the nation-state under God. For Cugoano, the course of European discovery (from Pizzaro's conquest of the Incas through the institution of the Royal African Company until the late eighteenth century) has been one of barbarism given that "men" are not "easily prevailed" with the "rules and history of Divine Providence." Furthermore, Cugoano is quick to note that barbarism eschews historical categorization, lest one argues that epochal barbarism is antecedent to European civilization. Where slavery as robbery persists, there is barbarism also. Barbarism and eventual destruction are the *eschaton* (or fate) of European and British global traffic. "But the several nations of Europe that have joined in that iniquitous traffic of buying, selling and enslaving men, must in course have left their own laws of civilization to adopt those of barbarians and robbers" (ibid: 87).

There can be nothing like a history of black slave labor and production in relation to historical consciousness if slavery (as an artifact) is recognized at the root of modern Western reason and its destiny. We have seen in Cugoano how the consequence of thinking about slavery can be useful in reinterpreting the relation of historical consciousness to slave labor. In Cugoano, slavery is not just marked by the historical sense. Rather, slavery is a mark of the sense of history. But my discussion of Cugoano is only introductory. I have done cursory justice to the possibility and complexity of his work. His account of the institution of British factories (holding forts for slaves on the West African coast) and his subsequent failure to vindicate world destiny from the British worldview only add to the complexity and richness of a text that attempts to join history and destiny

to philosophical and theological purpose. Nevertheless, my hope is that with Cugoano, we see the first attempts at the coextension of the Negro with historical knowledge. At least in Cugoano, slavery, as a durable artifact in the history of thought and power, is critical toward understanding state-sanctioned global conquest and the horizon of Western historical activity and its always evocative and provocative underside. Furthermore, if Cugoano is acknowledged as an origin (and he is) in the history of Africana thought, then his work requires us to think differently about how African-American Studies presents itself in modernity and its possibility.

Notes

1 See chapter 22, this volume, by Sibylle Fischer.
2 For his discussion of Africa, see Hegel (1975: 176).
3 I use the terms "historical consciousness" and "historical sense" interchangeably. One sense of the term "historical consciousness" has to do with one's consciousness of history as it influences political destiny. My use of the term is different: by historical consciousness I mean the sense of history that marks one's contemporary historical circumstances. I argue that in Cugoano's *Thoughts and Sentiments* slavery marks the sense of history as a whole. As for my use of the terms "historical power" and "historical action," the former implies agency in history; the latter is a description of that agency.
4 What is interesting is Hume's understanding of the Negro as a national identity without a history of manufactures. It would lead one to ask about intellectual creativity and its dependency upon state or cultural contexts. Suffice it to say, his ideas about "custom" are absolutely critical toward understanding the possibility of genius in society. The Negro lacks custom. See D. Hume (1985: 208 n. 10).
5 Arendt is not absolutely clear about the etymology of *animal laborans*. She simply states that Marx uses the Latin phrase in juxtaposition with *animal rationale* which, in turn, is derived from Aristotle's conceptualization of the rational animal (see H. Arendt 1958: 86 n. 14). On the other hand, she explains the etymology of *homo faber* better. She writes: "The Latin word *faber*, probably related to *facere* ('to make something' in the sense of production), originally designated the fabricator and artist who works upon hard material, such as stone or wood; it also was used as translation for the Greek *tekton*, which has the same connotation." See also Arendt (1958: 136 n. 1).
6 I wish to thank Ronald Judy, Lewis Gordon, and Jane Anna Gordon for their critical insights here.
7 This is Cugoano's adaptation of Deuteronomy 24: 7.
8 As Carretta explains, Cugoano "embraces the theologically orthodox belief in the monogenetic development of the human race from a single source: Adam and Eve." See "Explanatory Notes" in Cugoano (1999: 157).

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

An Emerging Mosaic: Rewriting Postwar African-American History

Peniel E. Joseph

The publication of recent works on the Black Power Movement has opened up new fields of inquiry in the historical study of the Civil Rights Movement and African-American history.[1] This recent scholarship significantly contributes to the developing field of Black Power Studies.[2] While Pulitzer Prize-winning studies have been written about Civil Rights during the last two decades, Black Power has been conspicuously absent from such public or literary accolades.[3] This new scholarship both builds upon and challenges standard conceptualization and chronology of the Civil Rights era. For example, while acknowledging the watershed significance of events such as 1954's *Brown* Supreme Court decision and the subsequent Montgomery Bus Boycott, Black Power Studies is equally concerned with the significance of international events such as 1955's Bandung Conference and the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Thus, we have witnessed the emergence of new histories of the movement's racial militancy, internationalism, and advocacy of self-defense that have begun to transform postwar African-American history. More importantly, these works attempt to highlight connections and fluidity between events, characterizing the Civil Rights and Black Power era as a complex mosaic rather than mutually exclusive and antagonistic periods. While the individual subject matter, organizations, and approach of these recent works vary, they converge in at least four important ways. First, they effectively reperiodize the Civil Rights–Black Power era by pushing the chronology of black radicalism back to the 1950s.[4] Arguing that the "origins" of Black Power rhetoric, ideology, and militancy are to be found by taking a new look at domestic and international events during the "golden age" of Civil Rights, Black Power scholarship transforms Civil Rights studies by placing militant organizers side by side with non-violent moderates (T. Tyson 1999). In locating threads of Black Power radicalism in the political activities of students and activists of the 1950s and

early 1960s, these works revise contemporary historical understanding of the Southern Civil Rights Movement and what Clayborne Carson has referred to as the "black freedom struggle" as a whole.

Second, they internationalize the Civil Rights Movement. Recently, black awareness of and intimate involvement in the larger world has been reflected through scholarship on black expatriates in Ghana, black tours of Cuba, and the larger contours of African-American internationalism (see K. Gaines 1999; P. Joseph 2001–2; Kelley and Esch 1999). Through examination of black communication, interaction, and involvement in foreign affairs, these works reveal that Civil Rights struggles were in fact waged on "multiple fronts" that were global in nature and that would play an even greater role during the Black Power era.

Third, much of this recent work focuses on persons, organizations, and movements that have existed on the fringes of history. Inspired by social history's focus on "common people," much of this scholarship takes an unusual approach to the Civil Rights era. Rather than focusing on icons and well-known organizations and events, many of these new works focus on relatively obscure persons, organizations, and events that had a lasting influence on the black freedom struggle.

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, they extend the historical gaze beyond the Civil Rights activities of the 1950s and 1960s by highlighting the importance of little-known black activists, organizations, and events that stretched into the 1970s. Rigorous historical study of the Civil Rights era diminishes dramatically once the movement "shifts" north and enters a more explicitly radical phase. However, as recent historical case studies indicate, there is rich historical information and insight to be gained from the substantive examination of organizations that stretch the borders of standard studies of the Civil Rights era. Indeed, black organizing, protests, conferences, and activism at the local, national, and international level increased during the first half of the 1970s, a phenomenon that refutes standard depictions of Black Power, New Left, and other radical social and political movements associated with the era.[5] In short, new scholarship has begun to examine assorted individuals, groups, and perspectives not regularly included in conventional narratives of the Civil Rights–Black Power era.[6]

Substantively, these works chronicle the rise of the Black Power Movement through an examination of the political, social, and cultural development of several converging groups: Civil Rights era radicals such as Robert F. Williams; cultural organizations such as Umbra whose members, including Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Askia Muhammad Toure (Roland Snellings), would merge their struggles around African-American identity and art with politics in what became known as the Black Arts Movement; student radicals, influenced by the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and mentored by veteran activists, who, through groups such as the Afro-American Association, Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), and UHURU (Swahili for "freedom"), would play major roles in Black Power activism; scholar-activists of the Institute of the Black World (IBW); students and faculty committed to the establishment

of Black Studies programs across the nation; and, finally, organizations such as the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC), which were increasingly attracted to international and Pan-African perspectives. Drawing from social, political, cultural, and intellectual history, these works examine the wide-ranging implications of postwar black activism by shedding light on the deep connections between black activists and grassroots communities, black radicals and the Third World, the Black Arts and the international arena, and black urban politics and black nationalism. Ultimately, the Black Power Movement left a legacy that altered black political discourses, culture, and consciousness. More specifically, the Black Power Movement was institutionalized through the creation of Black Studies departments and programs at American universities and through the rise of black elected officials.

Taken together, these works reconceptualize the contours of African-American history in general, and, more specifically, the parameters of the Civil Rights Movement. This essay examines new scholarship that is contributing to the development of a historiography of the Black Power Movement. In many instances, histories of one period influence and bleed into the next. This is to say that narratives of Civil Rights at times will be related to Black Power and the reverse will be true as well. Rather than viewing the Black Power era as separate and distinct from Civil Rights, Black Power historiography has highlighted rupture and continuity, tensions and cooperation, distinctiveness and interrelationships. Indeed, many of the strengths, failures, strategies, and tactics of Black Power activists and organizations were based on active participation within, and alongside of, Civil Rights activism. Even when advocating different goals, Civil Rights activists and organizations, most notably SNCC, immensely influenced black radicals. Charles Payne has characterized the "rough draft of history" in describing the innuendo and false assumptions regarding a specific historical era that too often substitutes for historical evidence and analysis (C. Payne 1995: 391–405). In many regards, Black Power narratives have fallen into this category. Michel-Rolph Trouillot has argued that "silencing" is a constitutive part of the production of history (M. Trouillot 1995: 47–50). Trouillot argues that all historical events are artificially delineated by events, activities, and persons that are knowingly or accidentally left out. In a similar vein, Robin Kelley has argued that Civil Rights-era radicalism "confound our narrative of the black freedom movement, for they were independent of both the white Left and the mainstream Civil Rights movement" (R. Kelley 2002: 69).

Timothy Tyson's (1999) impressive study of black radicalism in the South during the 1950s has transformed historical conceptions of the southern Civil Rights Movement and the origins of Black Power styled racial militancy. *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* has rightfully received attention for resurrecting the important and provocative political activism of NAACP leader Robert F. Williams. More importantly, Tyson's case study of black protest in Monroe, North Carolina enriches Civil Rights narratives by focusing on the intersection between the Cold War, Jim Crow, and black mili-

tancy. Prefiguring Malcolm X's rise to national prominence, Williams's defiant resistance against white terror in the South crossed borders and boundaries not typically associated with Civil Rights struggles of the 1950s. For example, Williams toured Cuba in 1960, bringing along a contingent of black intellectuals, activists, and cultural workers. Williams's advocacy of armed self-defense would make him a hero to scores of blacks living in and outside of the South during the 1950s and 1960s. Yet this portrait of racial assertiveness was only one layer of Williams's multifaceted approach to the black freedom struggle. Arguing that Williams's militancy influenced Black Power activists including Black Panther co-founder Huey P. Newton, *Radio Free Dixie* stretches the contours of conventional historiography by locating the origins of Black Power radicalism in the hotbed of black Southern racial militancy. Both a case study and political biography, *Radio Free Dixie* documents Williams's profound impact on domestic and international anti-racist struggles during the height of the Cold War era, and in the process reveals layers of history that have previously gone unexplored. By illuminating the strong connections that existed between Civil Rights activists, black radicals, and the Third World, *Radio Free Dixie* stands out as a major historical study that reveals the fluidity, and historical breadth and depth, of the Civil Rights–Black Power era. Indeed, as suggested by the book's subtitle, the immediate roots of the Black Power Movement reside in the domestic and international Civil Rights struggles of the 1950s and early 1960s. While Robert Williams was a key figure whose ideas, activism, and internationalism foreshadowed Black Power radicalism, he was not alone. Tyson's work also forces historians to reexamine the intersection between the Cold War, black radicalism, and the Civil Rights Movement. While this has already begun to take place, with a notable emphasis on the State Department's efforts to ease Jim Crow's impact on American diplomatic efforts in Africa, historians need a better understanding of the ways in which Cold War-era black activists militantly pursued racial justice.[7] Usually regarded as an era that ushered in midnight for radical politics, African-American support, at home and abroad, for the non-aligned movement simultaneously marked the end of one period of black radical engagement and the beginning of another.[8]

The notion that "proto-Black Power" organizations existed alongside the nonviolent Civil Rights Movement is the subject of Robin Kelley and Betsey Esch's essay "Black Like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution." Kelley and Esch build upon Tyson's work in asserting the importance of Robert Williams to black radicals during the early 1960s, stating that Williams was "a hero to the new wave of black internationalists whose importance rivaled that of Malcolm X" (Kelley and Esch 1999: 14). However, Kelley and Esch's primary concern is in exploring the groups of young black student activists and cultural workers who were influenced by (in addition to Williams) Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam (NOI), the political writings of Harold Cruse, the courage of the SNCC, and Third World independence movements. Documenting a landscape filled with assorted characters and organizations not routinely associated with Civil Rights struggles,

Kelley and Esch place the Black Power era as a direct result of black radical activism during the "heroic period" of Civil Rights. Such a picture of eclectic influences resists clichés over "integration" versus "separation," crafting a mosaic of black activity that defies standard narratives of the period.

Two organizations that typify the pitfalls of "neat" characterizations are the Afro-American Association (AAA) and the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM). The former grew out of a study group formed by black students at the University of California at Berkeley. The AAA was primarily a study group whose consciousness-raising sessions touched hundreds of black students throughout northern (and later) southern California. Among its members were socialists, black nationalists, and Marxists. Embodying a style of radical black intellectual culture and proselytizing that would come into vogue during the late 1960s, the AAA left lasting imprints on the black Bay Area community. Its focus on black pride, history, and the cultural politics of race impacted the political thinking of Ron Everett (later Maulana Karenga) and Huey P. Newton, who would go on to found *US* and the Black Panthers, two influential Black Power organizations (Kelley and Esch 1999: 16).

RAM grew out of the dissatisfaction with the Civil Rights Movement felt by militant young nationalists. Impressed by the direct action methods of SNCC, but advocating a more radical ideological orientation, RAM "represented the first serious and sustained attempt in the postwar period to wed Marxism, black nationalism, and Third World internationalism into a coherent revolutionary program" (ibid: 14). RAM underscores the connections between black radicals and Civil Rights organizations during the early 1960s, as several of the group's members – such as Roland Snellings (Askia Muhammad Toure) – were SNCC activists as well.[9] Both the AAA and RAM anticipate and prefigure the arrival of Black Power. As Kelley and Esch's essay illustrates, they also offer fresh fields of inquiry for studies of the Civil Rights–Black Power Movement.

Scholarship focusing on the internationalization of the Civil Rights–Black Power era has primarily examined the ways in which African Americans in the domestic context reached outward for a way forward at home (T. Tyson 1999; K. Woodard 1999). While such perspectives are immensely important, they should not be utilized at the expense of examining the small, but significant, numbers of black expatriates who waged a parallel movement for black liberation abroad. Kevin Gaines's work on black expatriates in Ghana expansively internationalizes studies of Civil Rights and black radicalism by examining the African-Americans who returned to Ghana under the auspices of Kwame Nkrumah. Educated in the United States and advised by radical Caribbean, African-American, and African intellectuals, Nkrumah's Ghana offered a welcome relief for black radicals engaged in anti-racist struggles. Perhaps the most famous black American to reside in Ghana during the 1960s was W. E. B. Du Bois, but he was far from the only one.

In 1957 Ghanaian independence captured the imagination of leading black figures, including A. Philip Randolph, Ralph Bunche, Shirley Graham Du Bois,

and Martin Luther King, Jr.[10] Gaines argues that Ghana represented "an inspirational symbol of black power" for African Americans, especially those increasingly identifying with Third World independence movements (K. Gaines 1999: 66). Ghana attracted a wide range of influential black Americans, including the writer and actor Julian Mayfield, trade unionist Vicki Garvin, scholar St. Claire Drake, and the poet Maya Angelou (see M. Angelou 1986). Buoyed by the support of the Ghanaian government and the momentum of historical forces during an age of revolution, African-American expatriates connected domestic Civil Rights struggles with international decolonization movements. Far from being isolated by their relocation in Africa, black radicals in Ghana were in the middle of pivotal events that included the assassination of the Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba and Malcolm X's 1964 tours of Africa. According to Gaines, the impact of black Americans' active participation in Ghana between 1957 and 1966 "reflected an important trend in black politics, however foreclosed or forgotten" (K. Gaines 1999: 66). While dimmed by Cold War political repression, the flame of black internationalism did not go out despite monumental domestic and international pressure from the West.[11] Gaines's work raises important questions regarding the influence and impact of black protest during the early years of the Cold War. In the aftermath of Nkrumah's overthrow in 1966, many black radicals, including Robert Williams and SNCC leader Bob Moses, would relocate to Tanzania (ibid: 69). More work is needed on this and other Third World expatriate communities during the Civil Rights–Black Power era. Historians need to know where black Americans went abroad during this era, how long they stayed there, what their accomplishments were, and why they decided to stay or leave. All of the above works exemplify the growing emergence of a global vision of the era of black liberation (e.g., see Kelley and Esch 1999; T. Tyson 1999; C. Young 2001; P. Joseph 2001–2). Indeed, once more fully documented, such narratives will stretch from Greensboro, North Carolina to Accra, Ghana to Cuba's Sierra Maestre Mountains. All attest to the growing realization that the Civil Rights Movement's landscape was one that was worldwide in its scope. Recovering this global vision also necessitates revising standard time frames and depiction of this era. More specifically, notions regarding the emergence of the Black Power Movement will have to be refashioned.

Breaking free from the straitjacket of domesticated Civil Rights narratives has led several scholars to focus on the pivotal role of the Cuban Revolution on African Americans during the 1960s. The active support by African Americans for the Cuban Revolution and admiration for Cuban leader Fidel Castro, although recently chronicled with increasing frequency, has remained on the fringes of Civil Rights history. Given the tense relationship between the US and Cuba in the aftermath of independence, and Cuba's willingness to support exiled black Americans ranging from Robert F. Williams to Assata Shakur, this silencing is not surprising. However, African-Americans' intense identification and support for the Cuban Revolution in the early 1960s is a pivotal example of events that held major implications for domestic Civil Rights struggles and the coming Black Power revolt.

In the early 1960s, influential black periodicals such as *Muhammad Speaks*, *Baltimore Afro-American*, *Freedomways*, and *Liberator* became vital conduits of information within the international anti-colonial movement. Simultaneously inspiring and regaling African Americans with bold declarations of African independence and denunciations of black American ignorance, these periodicals deepened black knowledge of the outside world. Additionally, international publications such as *Revolucien* and *Presence Africaine* served a similar purpose.[12] *Freedomways Reader: Prophets in Their Own Country* is a rare collection of some of the pivotal journal writing from the era (E. Jackson 2000). Featuring essays by some of the leading black radical activists and intellectuals of the era, this anthology represents a valuable resource for the study of the intellectual history and cultural and political criticism of the era.

Cuba became a repository of black American support for the Third World during the age of Civil Rights. *The Rise and Decline of An Alliance: Black Leaders and the Cuban Revolution* (R. Reitan 1999) is the only book-length treatment of black–Cuban solidarity during the Civil Rights–Black Power era. Although providing a useful overview of the ways in which key black activists related to the Cuban Revolution, this brief study only scratches the surface of the potential of this topic. Two years before the American embargo that would end diplomatic relations between the US and Cuba, blacks were among the groups of American radicals who founded the Fair Play for Cuba Committee (FPCC). Among the African Americans who founded the FPCC were novelist James Baldwin, writer John Henrik Clarke, and journalist William Worthy. While 1960 was officially designated as the "year of Africa" by the United Nations, that same year – which featured a Cuban tour of black writers and activists sponsored by the FPCC – might well be described as the summer of revolutionary Afro-Cuban solidarity. This trip would have lasting consequences for most who attended. Among those touring the island were Sonia Sanchez, Harold Cruse, Julian Mayfield, Tom Feelings, Robert Williams, LeRoi Jones, and John Henrik Clarke (P. Joseph 2001–2: 114). At least five of these would write lengthy essays about their trip once they returned to the US, with Williams making pro-Cuban speeches on dozens of college campuses across the country (see R. Williams 1962; J. Mayfield 1961; J. Clarke 1961; L. Jones 1960; H. Cruse 2002). For poet LeRoi Jones, the Cuban trip marked an epiphany that would lead to forty years of radical political activism. Cuba provided this group of black intellectuals and activists with an example of revolutionary politics. Juxtaposed against the spectacle of anti-black violence associated with domestic Civil Rights struggles, Cuba provided an alternative for African-American radicals during the early 1960s. At times the island provided safe harbor, perhaps most famously when Robert Williams fled there after being pursued by local and federal authorities. In short, black Americans' tour of Cuba in 1960 set the stage for the increasing identification of Afro-Americans with colonized peoples all over the world. Impressed by the political, cultural, and economic restructuring taking place on the island, black radicals became some of Cuba's biggest American advocates (C. Young 2001: 31–6).

Despite increased scholarship related to this pivotal tour, there is still no case study detailing the specifics that went on and their aftermath.

Narratives of the Civil Rights Movement have rightfully underscored the founding of the sit-in movement and the subsequent organization of SNCC as a watershed event (C. Carson 1981). However, this "black awakening" did not take place in a vacuum. The same year that sit-ins ignited the direct action phase of the Civil Rights era, Fidel Castro captivated thousands of African Americans in Harlem, meeting with Malcolm X and defying the Cold War's racial and ideological boundaries (see B. Plummer 1996). That year also witnessed increasing numbers of African nations enjoying the bittersweet realities of independence, none more poignantly than the Congo. Led for two months by the radical Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, the Congo Crisis of 1960–1 resulted in the murder of Lumumba and increased awareness and outrage on the part of black Americans, thousands of whom protested in and outside the United Nations in February 1961.[13] Thus many of the same students influenced by SNCC's courageous organizing in the South were equally impacted by events taking place around the world (S. Drake 1984). The impact of these events on specific Civil Rights activists and the movement in general is found in memoirs and ancillary nuggets of information in works whose main focus is not documenting the interconnections between the Civil Rights and Black Power eras.[14] The anthology *Sisters in Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement* breaks new ground in this regard. Edited by historians Bettye Collier-Thomas and V. P. Franklin (2001), the collection of essays does more than simply highlight the importance of black women to the struggle for Civil Rights. The collected works focus on the distinct, yet overlapping, phases of the black freedom struggle from the 1950s through the 1980s. An outstanding example in this regard is Sharon Harley's essay on Gloria Richardson. Harley argues that Richardson's leadership in the Cambridge, Maryland desegregation battles of the early 1960s has been ignored by historians because it defies conventional periodization of the Civil Rights–Black Power era. According to Harley, the Cambridge movement's willingness to utilize self-defense prefigured the demise of the Southern movement's dominance in the public sphere (S. Harley 2001). In truth, Richardson's struggle in Cambridge is just an important example of numerous instances that have received inadequate attention, or been relegated to history's dustbin, for defying standard chronology and understanding of the Civil Rights era.

Recent works on iconic figures have examined the political activities of a variety of organizations and activists that illuminate the contours of the era. William Sales, Jr.'s *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation: Malcolm X and the Organization of Afro-American Unity* (1994) highlights little-known, but important, aspects of the black nationalist leader. Historians Komozi Woodard and William Van Deburg emphasize Malcolm X's singular importance to the Black Power era, respectively arguing that Malcolm represented a "bridge" between two generations of black nationalists and a "paradigm" for the Black Power Movement (Woodard 1999; Van Deburg 1992). Sales's excellent study provides

ample evidence to back both claims. Specifically, Sales documents Malcolm X's close ties with, and active mentoring of, militant black students associated with the RAM (W. Sales 1994: 99). Organized by a group of black students with close ties to Monroe leader Robert F. Williams and radical activists in Cleveland, Detroit, the Bay Area, and Philadelphia, RAM represents a "proto Black Power" organization that influenced the development of the Black Panthers. Examining the last frenetic year of Malcolm's life, Sales pays particular attention to the impact of Malcolm's trips to Africa and the Middle East and the development of the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU). Usually considered a "paper organization" that folded after Malcolm's untimely death, Sales argues that the OAAU represented a significant effort at establishing a black united front that would provide a radical alternative to the Civil Rights establishment.

Some time ago, Stephen Lawson eloquently discussed the convergences between Civil Rights and Black Power activists, especially with regard to issues related to internationalism and the connections between racial injustice and poverty (S. Lawson 1991: 463). Recent works have begun to address Lawson's call to arms. Woodard (1999) provides the most in-depth examination to date of the impact of Black Power on the local, national, and international levels. Woodard's case study of the rise of black political power in Newark, New Jersey during the 1960s and 1970s illustrates the rich insights and potential that is emerging from the historiography of the Black Power Movement. Indeed, after reading Woodard's study, it becomes evident that Newark stood at the nexus of black nationalism, consciousness-raising, and municipal elections that comprised major strains of Black Power activism. Utilizing Amiri Baraka as a guidepost, Woodard simultaneously documents the impact of grassroots activists on local elections, the pivotal role of black nationalism and the Black Arts in building and sustaining the local and national political momentum, and efforts to turn this newfound power toward the international arena through support for anti-colonial efforts in Southern and West Africa. Woodard challenges standard Civil Rights historiography by highlighting the importance of international anti-colonial efforts (in addition to the assassination of Malcolm X) in the radicalization of large segments of African Americans during the 1960s and 1970s. More importantly, he provides clear and substantive details regarding the successes and failures of Black Power activists in a major city. Organizing the Committee for a Unified Newark (CFUN) on the heels of his influential, although shortlived, Black Arts Repertory Theater and School (BARTS), Baraka utilized black cultural nationalism as a tool of community building and cultural awareness. Newark's Black Power Movement, one started in the aftermath of the city's 1967 riots, became the pivotal force behind the election of the city's first black mayor, Kenneth Gibson, in 1970. Perhaps the study's most important contribution is in its detailed depiction of 1972's National Black Political Convention. This important gathering has been neglected in most accounts of the era. Attended by a cross-section of the African-American community, the convention illustrated the shortlived unity between black radicals, politicians, and cultural workers during

this period and its final declaration included support for African liberation struggles, guaranteed income for the poor, and the restructuring of black urban communities (ibid: 159–218). For students of the Civil Rights–Black Power era unfamiliar with this story, it will come as a monumental departure from the usual Black Power narrative that inevitably reduces the era to a series of montages featuring angry militants brandishing rifles. Reducing the Black Power era to a single issue (self-defense) and organization (i.e., the Black Panthers) has done a disservice both to the wider Black Power Movement and the Panthers.

The Black Panther Party (BPP), despite being the focus of a variety of published writing, has yet to be the subject of a systematic organizational history (see B. Seale 1970; H. Newton 1972, 1973; E. Brown 1992). An important exception in this regard is Yohuru Williams's *Black Politics/White Power: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Black Panthers in New Haven* (2000), which examines the emergence of the Panthers in New England during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The demise of both moderate and militant Civil Rights organizations during the late 1950s and throughout most of the 1960s set the stage for the entrance of New Haven's Black Panther Party in 1969. By this time the Panthers were attempting to make sense of the group's growing expansion, and corresponding repression, throughout the US during the previous year. The New Haven chapter was founded as a result of the murder of Panthers John Huggins and Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter in 1969. Ericka Huggins arrived in New Haven to bury her husband and ended up starting one of the BPP's most dynamic and innovative chapters. Concentrating on "service to the people," the New Haven chapter reflected the organization's growing shift toward community programs that would "tide over" the black community until liberation was achieved. The success of the party's programs, its revolutionary rhetoric, and independence from black leadership tied to city hall was immediately viewed as a threat. Green-lighted by FBI director J. Edgar Hoover's anti-radical directives, the New Haven police illegally wire-tapped Panther headquarters and harassed party members. Under constant surveillance, suspicious, distrustful, and naive, the New Haven chapter reflected the strengths and weaknesses of the national organization. Planning for Panther Chairman Bobby Seale's speech at Yale University, the chapter fell victim to the FBI's campaign of disinformation that resulted in the murder of suspected informer Alex Rackley. The subsequent trial made the "New Haven Nine" international celebrities and Yale University became a hot bed of support for both the Panthers and a variety of left-wing efforts including anti-war demonstrations. Williams convincingly argues that the Panthers' major strength was in providing a model of community engagement that focused around servicing the needs of poor blacks at the local level.

Two other anthologies on the Panthers have also deepened historical understanding of both the Black Panther and the Black Power phenomena. The strength of each of these anthologies is the substantive nature of historical inquiry and rigor that marks the analysis. *The Black Panther Party (Reconsidered)* (C. Jones 1998) contains essays by political scientists, historians, and ex-Panthers

that explore the group's enduring significance. Taken together, the essays offer up powerful evidence regarding the group's internal structure and dynamics, eclectic fusion of black nationalism and Marxism, gender dynamics, relationship with the New Left, and internationalism. *Liberation, Imagination and the Black Panther Party* (Cleaver and Katsiaficas 2001) features essays by former Panthers Kathleen Cleaver, Geronimo Pratt, and Mumia Abu Jamal. This anthology stresses the global impact of the group during the 1960s as well as the contemporary era. Despite the strengths of these works, without a definitive organizational history and with few studies of local chapters, much about the Panthers and their legacy remains to be seen and analyzed in the future.[15]

Historian William Van Deburg's *New Day in Babylon* examined the Black Power Movement's impact on American culture. Examining the era's impact on folkways, aesthetics, and style, it remains one of the few surveys of the movement. Van Deburg examined the cultural implications of the era through a thematic overview of a variety of Black Power organizations. *New Day in Babylon* is noteworthy for its focus on Black Power's impact on political, intellectual, and popular culture (Van Deburg 1992: 192–291). The study's major strengths – its focus on culture – illustrate its shortcomings as well. The political dimensions, especially its international components, of the era are not fully developed in Van Deburg's study. Moreover, the ambitious number of organizations that are surveyed are not given the in-depth attention that they deserve. The study is also hampered by a lack of primary source material.[16] Finally, the movement's decline is documented in a perfunctory manner that does no justice to the era's historical import and contemporary legacy. Despite these problems, *New Day in Babylon*'s overview of the era stands out as a major contribution to Black Power historiography and stands virtually alone in providing a survey of the era.

While there is no oral history collection exclusively devoted to the Black Power era, several chapters of the anthology *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* are devoted to the era (Hampton and Fayer 1991). A companion to the highly praised documentary series *Eyes On the Prize II*, the anthology includes first-hand oral accounts of the Meredith March Against Fear, the Detroit Riots, the Howard University Black Student Movement, the Attica Prison Uprising, the National Black Political Convention, and the Boston School Crisis of the early 1970s (ibid: 283–619).[17] Each of these chapters offers researchers valuable information regarding specific threads of Black Power-era activism that deserve both detailed case studies and examination within a survey of the Black Power Movement.

Oral histories of Black Power activists, at times, will be found in unusual sources. For example, Grace Lee Boggs, the Chinese American wife and comrade of labor activist James Boggs, published a memoir, *Living For Change*, which sheds new light on black militancy during the early 1960s (G. Boggs 1998). Boggs's memoir is noteworthy for highlighting the intersections between militant students, black labor radicals, the black church, and international affairs during the 1960s. More importantly, *Living For Change* illuminates the impact of Grace

Lee and James Boggs on Black Power politics. From their political base in Detroit, Michigan the Boggs were political allies of Malcolm X, the Reverend Albert Cleage, Jr., and Richard and Milton Henry. Cleage would emerge as a major Black Power figure during the late 1960s and the Henrys would found the Republic of New Africa (RNA). Their activities included organizing the 1963 Walk for Freedom that predated the March on Washington and featured 125,000 demonstrators, the Freedom Now Party (FNP), an effort at independent black electoral power, and the influential Northern Grassroots Leadership Conference featuring Malcolm X's famous "message to the grassroots." Additionally, the Boggs's home served as a way station for young militants who would go on to organize the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW) in Detroit.

Interdisciplinary scholars and journalists have written a significant portion of the new works related to the Black Power Movement (e.g., M. Marqusee 1999; J. Olsen 2000). Additionally, some scholars have utilized the Black Power Movement as a backdrop for a theoretical exploration of the relationship between gender and race consciousness (P. Brush 2001; see also M. Perkins 2000). While all of these efforts have contributed to our understanding of the Black Power era, they are not without risks. Interdisciplinary efforts will be aided by historical scholarship that details the era's organizations, activists, and contemporary resonance.

Much of the recent historiography on the Black Power Movement fits squarely within a larger historiography that has been devoted to rethinking the impact of the social and political upheavals related to the 1960s.[18] This historiography initially set out to reexamine the social and political movements broadly associated with the New Left, Black Power, Women's, Native American, and Chicano Movements. In the case of the Black Power Movement this has meant documenting the existence and importance of scores of individuals, organizations, events, and intellectual and cultural production. Furthermore, it has entailed the reassessment of both seminal and quotidian struggles and events assumed to exist "outside" the era's purview. For example, in an examination of Boston's school desegregation crisis during the early 1970s, Jeanne Theoharris (2001) argues that "struggles for education in Boston eschew the prevalent dichotomy made between integrationist and Black Power strategies." Although waging a campaign to "integrate" the city's public schools, Theoharris asserts that black activists were influenced by Black Power militancy in their struggle. Similarly, Jane Anna Gordon's *Why They Couldn't Wait* (2001) offers a critique of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville controversy over community control of schools, arguing that Black Power offered up a "theory of social action" that spurred parents to envisage a multiracial, community-controlled school system. Historian Robert Self's award-winning essay "To Plan Our Liberation" (2000) argues that the Black Panthers and other Bay Area activists utilized Black Power politics to exact considerable local control in Oakland during the 1960s and 1970s. Self's study is particularly noteworthy for its creative illustration of the ways in which the politics of space within a deindustrializing, predominantly black urban terrain impacted Black

Power organizing efforts and strategies. Finally, Michael Eric Dyson's *I May Not Get There With You* argues that King, usually portrayed as out of step with Black Power activists – especially those advocating black nationalism – embraced aspects of black racial pride and nationalism in speeches shortly before his death. All of these works offer revised glimpses of specific events and individuals whose meanings are altered when placed against the backdrop of the Black Power era's social, political, and cultural transformations.

Black Power's gender politics, while the subject of polemics (M. Wallace 1979), has only recently begun to receive sustained historical inquiry (see T. Matthews 1998; A. LeBlanc-Ernest 1998; K. Anderson-Bricker 1999; B. Roth 1999; P. Giddings 1984; C. Fleming 2001). A key component of the historiography of the Black Power Movement will depend on works that focus on black women's participation in Black Power organizations, their increasing radicalization on issues related to class and gender, their growing participation and organization in second-wave feminism, and the broader implication for the black freedom struggle. Tracey Matthews provides the most detailed study to date of the role of black women in the Black Panthers.[19] Matthews argues that within the organization's first five years, black women's roles were transformed. While documenting the organization's sexism, Matthews argues that black women carved a space of genuine agency and political power, albeit one that was constantly under threat (T. Matthews 2001). Recent scholarship has expanded the focus of black women during the era beyond the Panthers to include black feminist organizations. Kimberly Springer (1999) has written the first case study of black feminist organization of the era, while Kristen Anderson-Bricker (1999) has documented the importance of SNCC to radical black feminist organizations, most notably the Third World Women's Alliance (TWWA). An outgrowth of SNCC's Black Women's Alliance, TWWA defies conventions associated with black women during this era. Comprised of black and Latina activists who were militant nationalists, feminists, and socialists, TWWA's grassroots activism and consciousness-raising provides an example of the breadth of the politics of the Black Power era. The group's publication "Triple Jeopardy" was a forerunner to "race, class, and gender" studies that have transformed a variety of contemporary academic disciplines, including history. Benita Roth (1999) has argued that black feminism "is at the center of the story of second-wave feminism" rather than a marginal development. Roth focuses on black study groups and the watershed publication of Toni Cade's edited anthology *The Black Woman* in 1970. For Roth, activists such as Cade, Frances Beal, and Barbara Smith comprised the core of a group of black feminists whose writings and political activism transformed the feminist movement. Finally, Duchess Harris's (2001) examination of the late 1970s group of radical black feminists known as the Combahee River Collective (CRC) is one of the first to examine the group's legacy within the context of Black Power-era activism. All of these studies point to the importance of reassessing the legacy of Black Power-era politics and black women's roles in the transformations, struggles, and successes that subsequently took shape.

One of the most understudied aspects of Black Power has revolved around its intellectual makeup. Black Power intellectuals, students, workers, and activists attempted to apply the systematic study of history, theory, and politics to their political activism and cultural production. Recent scholars have taken steps to fill this scholarly lacuna. Stephen Ward (2001) has provided the first historical examination of the Institute of the Black World (IBW), the era's leading radical black think tank. Ward argues that the Atlanta-based IBW provided a dynamic resource for the implementation of Black Studies curricular and activism for students and a variety of Third World activist-intellectuals, including C. L. R. James and Walter Rodney. In short, IBW attempted to merge academic inquiry with the struggle for racial justice, both domestically and abroad. The publication of *The Essential Harold Cruse Reader* (Cobb 2002) has placed the spotlight on one of the era's most widely read and controversial critics. This is a valuable resource, especially for readers only familiar with Cruse's most famous work, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (1967). Michael Dawson's *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies* (2001) examines aspects of both black nationalism and Marxism during the Black Power era. Dawson's study remains one of the few critical examinations of black political thought that highlights the importance of black nationalism and Marxism as expressed by Black Power organizations such as the Congress of African Peoples (CAP), the Black Panthers, and Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM). Rod Bush's *We are Not What We Seem: Black Nationalism and the American Century* (1999) places aspects of radical black political thought in a broad historical context, spending a considerable amount of time on the Black Power era. Taken together, these works provide a good starting point for the development of intellectual history and analysis of the Black Power Movement.

In certain instances black radical disillusionment with domestic affairs centered on their involvement with party building and electoral participation. As early as 1963 through the Freedom Now Party, in 1964 through the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, and in 1966 through the Lowndes County Black Panther Party, black activists had sought political power as a tool for racial justice and economic empowerment. The mayoral victories of Carl Stokes and Richard Hatcher in 1967 and Kenneth Gibson in 1970 promised a new level of black political power in urban areas. The 1972 black political convention, a highpoint of Black Power-era politics, attempted to coalesce a wide range of ideological and organizational participants into a national political force (R. Smith 1997). As Komozi Woodard's (1999) case study of Newark has illustrated, the heady days of victory soon gave way to recriminations and harsh attacks. Black activists were unable to maintain the political leverage that made them vital constituents in new emerging black urban political machines in Newark, Atlanta, and Los Angeles. Yet, in many instances, black mayors continued to enjoy the fruit of black nationalism's rhetoric of black political power long after it became obvious that "black faces in higher places" would not qualitatively transform urban ghettos. The rise of black mayors in cities is too often disconnected from the Black Power era.

Although not the case in every city, specific localities including Gary, Detroit, Atlanta, and Newark utilized black nationalism to build urban political machines (Colburn and Adler 2001). Despite these setbacks, Black Power remained a formidable presence during the mid 1970s.[20] Black Power activists were instrumental in the organization of the Sixth Pan-African Congress (Sixth-PAC) held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. In many ways this conference and its resolutions represented the high point of Black Power internationalism.

A natural source of study for Black Power historiography will be the external pressures on the movement by the federal government, most notably the FBI. K. O'Reilly (1989), Churchill and Wall (2002), and C. Carson (1991) have all documented the illegal, violent, and criminal subversion of black activists and organizations during this era (see also D. Garrow 1986; A. Umoja 2001; W. Grady-Willis 1998). However, historians need more detailed information regarding the extent, focus, and consequences of these pressures. The failure of the Black Power Movement, while not solely attributable to federal subversion, was greatly accelerated by these forces. Black Power's relationship with the criminal justice system and prison activism requires further historical research. While certain cases involving Black Panthers and high-profile activists such as Angela Davis have received attention, many lesser known figures were targeted as well (see G. McNeil 2001). Historical case studies of Black Power's impact on the prison movement of the era will also be useful (see E. Cummins 1994).

The growing historiography of the Black Power Movement promises to be both a major contribution and challenge to the historiography of the Civil Rights Movement. Forthcoming works will provide a more comprehensive portrait of black nationalism, student activism, the Black Arts, and the black freedom struggle.[21] Although rapid and significant progress is being made, too little is known about the origins, significance, and legacy of the Black Power era. Rethinking this era represents a challenge to American historians. These challenges, however, are outweighed by the tremendous historical insight and interdisciplinary impact of this historiography. Uncovering the roots of Black Power radicalism complicates understanding of Cold War politics, the Southern Civil Rights Movement, and student activism, and most importantly provides the contextual material for a reassessment of postwar African-American history. Similarly, historical explorations into the Black Power era reveal a landscape populated by more than just Black Panthers and dashiki-wearing street speakers. While such figures played pivotal roles, the era was equally informed by the activities of radical black feminists, autoworkers, intellectuals, poets, students, elected officials, housing activists, and prisoners. The historiography of the Black Power Movement promises to shed new light on the interactions, conflicts, and cooperation between these disparate elements, and in the process provide a critical and historical reevaluation of the black freedom movement as a whole.

Utilized as a strawman, demonized, and often ignored, Black Power remains Civil Rights historiography's "invisible man." Yet as Ralph Ellison observed, the

"lower frequencies" inhabit richly detailed stories that are rarely the beneficiaries of literary or historical narratives. Fortunately, this is slowly beginning to change. Historians, who seem naturally suited to take on this task, have lagged behind journalists and scholars in a variety of disciplines. Yet given the quality of recent historical and interdisciplinary scholarship, and the prospect of scores of as yet unpublished work, historians' progress in this regard promises to increase considerably. As evidenced from the works discussed above, some areas of the Black Power Movement have attracted more scholars than others. Interest in the Black Panthers, Black Studies, and the Black Arts Movement will likely lead to a proliferation of works related to these topics. Equally important will be studies that focus on Black Power's influence on labor, urban riots, black feminism, prisoner rights, and community control movements.

In closing, some brief comments are required on the international, or perhaps more appropriately transnational, dimensions of this story. The study of US history has recently been marked by efforts to broaden its horizons – to leave behind the parochialism that has too often plagued narratives of American history.[22] African-American history, while not suffering from this same isolation (R. Kelley 2000), has taken on the ambitious task of "diasporan studies" that seek to fashion a truly global narrative of the black experience in its infinite dimensions (see Patterson and Kelly 2000). It is not an exaggeration to state that Black Power's reach was global in scope. Black Power's rhetoric, strategies, and tactics enthralled activists from the Caribbean, Africa, Europe, and other parts of the world.[23] Conversely, African-Americans were deeply impacted by this interaction as well. Black Power's effects on "the making and unmaking" of diaspora is part of a larger transnational narrative of the influence of blacks in the shaping of the modern world (see Clemons and Jones 2001). The emerging historical scholarship on the Black Power era provides important and exciting challenges and opportunities to scholars of African-American history.

Notes

1. There is a substantial secondary literature comprised of memoirs, poetry, anthologies, autobiography, and cultural and political analyses of the Black Power era. However, there is still no comprehensive historical overview of the era. Some representative examples of this literature are Carmichael and Hamilton (1967), Bracey, Meyer, and Rudwick (1970), H. Cruse (1967), E. Cleaver (1968), R. Allen (1992), J. Boggs (1970), R. Brisbane (1974), A. Baraka (1997), T. Bambara (1987), J. Forman (1972), S. Sanchez (1970), A. Gayle (1971), G. Jackson (1970), A. Davis (1988).
2. See the essays in the "Black Power Studies: A New Scholarship" special issue of *Black Scholar* (fall/winter 2001). See also "Radicalism in Black America" special issue of *Souls* (fall 1999) and "Dossier on Black Radicalism" special issue of *Social Text* (summer 2001).
3. Perhaps the best-known narrative of the Civil Rights Movement is Taylor Branch's (1987, 1998) two published volumes (the first of which was the recipient of the Pulitzer Prize) of a projected trilogy. See also D. Garrow (1986).

4 See T. Tyson (1999) and P. Joseph (2000). Other examples will be cited throughout this essay.
5 Here, I am specifically referring to the alleged decline of New Left politics after 1968. Black political activity increased after 1968 in the face of external pressures and internal political struggles.
6 See the *Black Scholar* (fall/winter 2001) special issue of articles on Black Power: S. Brown (21–30), R. Williams (31–41), S. Ward (42–53), and Y. Williams (54–66).
7 See M. Dudziak (2000) and R. Romano (2000). See also P. Von Eschen (1997), which offers fresh insights into black radical activism during the Cold War and highlights the importance of 1955's Bandung Conference.
8 By this, I am referring to the fact that the Cold War produced well-documented political casualties, including Paul Robeson, C. L. R. James, and W. E. B. Du Bois. However, their political difficulties did not extinguish the flame of black anti-colonial activity. See P. Von Eschen (1997).
9 Author's interview with Askia Muhammad Toure, February 8, 2001.
10 For the impact of African independence movements on African Americans, see J. Meriweather (2002).
11 For black Americans and the Cold War, see P. Von Eschen (1997) and B. Plummer (1996).
12 For discussion of *Presence Africaine*, see B. Jules-Rosette (1998).
13 For the death of Lumumba, see L. De Witte (2001). For an autobiographical account of the African-American response, see M. Angelou (1997).
14 See M. Angelou (1997) for a detailed reflection on black protests at the United Nations in the aftermath of the Lumumba assassination.
15 For the BPP's local legacy, see Y. Williams (2000), C. Jones (1988), and J. Jeffries (2002).
16 To its credit, *New Day in Babylon* utilizes material from the dozens of radical journals and periodicals of the era. However, the study (which contains no bibliography) apparently utilized no archival materials.
17 See also *Eyes on the Prize II*, an ambitious eight-part documentary that covers the black freedom struggle from 1965 to 1983, devoting six episodes to Black Power-era politics.
18 See, for example, D. Cluster (1979), S. Sayres et al. (1984), A. Reed (1986), P. Joseph (2000), E. Escobar (1993), C. Muñoz (1989), E. Vigil (1999), M. Elbaum (2002a, b), C. Jones (1998), Cleaver and Katsiaficas (2001).
19 This article grows out of her larger study of the same title on Black Panther women (T. Matthews 2001).
20 A major weakness of *New Day in Babylon* is its brief and dismissive conclusion regarding the era (W. Van Deburg 1992: 292–308).
21 Historians John H. Bracey, Jr. and Ernest Allen, Jr.'s (forthcoming) edited anthology will offer six volumes of writings by black nationalists, feminists, and radicals that will significantly alter historical conceptualization of this period. See also Edwards, Singh, and Von Eschen (forthcoming); Theoharris, Countryman, and Woodard (forthcoming).
22 See, for example, all of the essays in "The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History" special issue of the *Journal of American History* (December 1999).
23 The importance of these connections requires space that goes beyond the scope of this essay. Black Power activists were immensely impacted by the work of a variety of Caribbean and African activists and intellectuals, who were in turn influenced by African-American politics. The long list of individuals includes Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, Samora Machel, Walter Rodney, Sylvia Wynter, Fidel Castro, and Che Guevara.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Reflections on African-American Political Thought: The Many Rivers of Freedom

B. Anthony Bogues

> No more auction block for me
> No more, No more,
> No more auction block for me
> Many thousands gone.
>
> Negro Spiritual

> The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil and gifted with a second-sight in this American world.
>
> W. E. B. Du Bois

> Nevertheless Negroes have illuminated imperfections in the democratic structure that were formerly only dimly perceived and have forced a concerned reexamination of the true meaning of American democracy
>
> Martin Luther King, Jr.

Introduction

At first blush, to think about radical African-American political thought is to think about slave revolts, the underground railway, the Civil Rights Movement, the various streams of black nationalism, Pan-Africanism, and black Marxism. It is to muse over the ideas of Black Abolitionism and David Walker's *Appeal* and to be engaged with Frederick Douglass's 1852 speech, "The meaning of

July Fourth for the Negro." It is to recall how the clarion call of Black Power reverberated throughout American society in the mid-twentieth century and then spread globally, striking chords in the lives of many people of African descent throughout the world. It is to think about the revolutionary nationalism of the Black Panthers and how it became a model for young radicals from Oakland to Tokyo. It is to recollect the passion of the prison intellectual George Jackson as he faced death and the magnificent spirit of Malcolm X crafting political ideas about the African-American struggle as a struggle for the humanity of the human being. Finally, it is to remember the extraordinary courage and dignity of ordinary black women, men, and children facing down the evil of Jim Crow. At first blush, then, to think about radical African-American political thought is to grasp quickly that it is political thought that has been *engaged thought*, that it is thought which has been rooted in an existential life or death context. It is thought which has had to affirm life, the humanity of the black, to vindicate history, and to negate "social death."[1]

Such thought is layered and complex. Its discursive practices engage three critical things: the hegemonic narratives of American political thought, the lived-experiences of the black population, and the myriad ways in which these experiences challenge and then offer alternative meanings to the story of America as the unbroken triumph of liberalism.[2] As a consequence, what is important in the study of African-American political thought is not so much what models and typologies we can establish (as useful as these may be), but instead to pursue a line of inquiry which examines the *ways* African-American political thought changed some of the foundational concepts in political thought or added new categories and values.[3] Thus, for example, when we think and write about black nationalism, can it be done adequately in the terms of our conventional understandings of nations and nationalism? Can the mainstream meanings of political values like freedom and equality be applied loosely to characterize elements of African-American political thought? Here one is not so much arguing about the dependency of political language on symbolic and linguistic contexts as paying attention to the ways in which the meanings of political languages are shaped by the nature of the questions posed within particular historical and social contexts. Language and speech are essential ingredients for politics as a form of life activity. Both create the conditions and means for modern political activity and thought. Therefore, the political labor of human beings is not limited to bringing to the fore only issues of power in the Weberian sense or the desire for rulers because in Hobbes's words we live in a state of "war of all against all." Rather, our political labors can also tell us various narratives about communities and their history. Consequently, a reflection on radical African-American political thought may give us both another narrative about the meaning of America as well as signposts which might be important for constructing a radical political theory about the contemporary world.

Black Political Thought

I agree with Michael Dawson (2001: 15–23) that there are six core features of black political thought. These he describes as: radical egalitarianism, disillusioned liberalism, black Marxism, black conservatism, black feminism, and black nationalism. Dawson's useful typology pays some attention to the differences between the ways in which categories of black political thought are different from the conventional ones of mainstream American political thought. However, Dawson does not probe the foundational meanings of these differences, nor how some categories of black political thought collide not only with conventional American expressions of political values but also their general conceptual history. I wish to offer another possible productive line of inquiry. The first leg of this is a complex genealogical one drawing from a methodological procedure of epistemic ruptures.[4] Secondly, I utilize the writings of radical black intellectuals in two ways. The first builds upon the insights of Du Bois about "second sight" and "double consciousness." In the second, I follow the lead of Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and Sylvia Wynter, who all argued that the core of black radical political thought is a quest for a new definition of the human being. Because I am paying attention to the radical dimensions of black political thought, I will focus in this essay on three specific areas: Black Marxism, black nationalism, and radical egalitarianism.

In discussing African-American political thought one obviously needs to recognize both the intellectual and political contexts in which this thought was shaped and how it created its own distinctive visions while creating new meanings in political language. One such context is obviously American political thought. Although many commentators have pointed out the influence of Locke and classical liberalism on early American thinkers, the story of American political thought is not one of unfettered liberalism with a steady march to human equality. There were many political ideas that formed the matrix of early American political thought. One was republicanism, with its heavy reliance on Roman notions of liberty.[5] The Roman conception of freedom was that of *civitas libera*, focused primarily on the nature of the free state. This kind of republicanism, as Gordon Wood points out, meant that the highest virtue of the individual was his ability to participate in the self-government of the republic and that liberty, revolving around issues of a community's self-government, was limited to political liberty (G. Wood 1991: 104). However, Roman republicanism accommodated slavery. The establishment of the different political conclaves for Roman citizens excluded slaves, who were regarded as property and objects rather than subjects of rights. As classical republicanism became reworked in early America it retained this feature. It was this element that in part enabled the early American republic to accommodate racial slavery and other kinds of servitude.

One question which has often been posed in American political thought is how constitutional republicanism and liberalism could both accommodate racial

slavery. Perhaps a more appropriate question might be – in what ways did racial slavery impact and therefore shape both the meanings and practices of liberalism in America? The American republic was a slave society for many years and like all slave societies had to grapple with the shape of freedom. As we have just pointed out, early American republicanism drew from Rome, an earlier slave society. Secondly, within the early American republic's version of liberalism, the right of property quickly became central and the slave became the fulcrum of this right. This form of property right incorporated human bondage, placing the African slave outside the frames of American civil and political society. The slave therefore could, in Sylvia Wynter's words, be "deselected." Under these conditions, ideas about the state of nature in American political thought were quickly replaced by the notions of political and civil society. William O. Goode makes it clear when he argues:

> We go out of society, to render certain our personal liberty, our personal security and the right to acquire and enjoy private property . . . the right of property exists before society . . . the Legislature cannot deprive a citizen of his property in his slave. It cannot abolish slavery in a state. (Cited in J. Oakes 1990: 73)

From its inception, then, American political thought was a complex reworking of Lockean notions of property and civil liberty rooted in conceptions of a racialized social contract and integrated with republican conceptions of liberty. In this reworking, slavery was also used as a metaphor for the ways in which the British colonial power treated the white American colonists. Thus the origins of American political thought and society were constitutionally undemocratic, and the ideology of white supremacy was an integral part of the slave republic's self-conception.[6] The "imperial" republican conception of liberty meant that the slaves and African Americans conceived a counter-ground of freedom. Two moments in the late eighteenth century illustrate this point. The first was the way in which the political language of slavery was deployed by the anti-colonial revolutionaries. Listen to the language of one of the resolutions presented to the Massachusetts General Court: "That a People should be taxed at the Will of another whether one man or many, without their Consent is Rank Slavery."[7] On the other hand, we find a different conception of slavery in the language of black slaves from the period. Listen to parts of the petition presented by African slaves to the Massachusetts Bay Legislature in 1777:

> The petition of a Great Number of Blacks detained in a state of slavery in the Bowels of a free & Christian country humbly showeth that your Petitioners apprehend that they have in Common with all other men a Natural and Unaliable [*sic*] right to that freedom which the Grat [*sic*] Parent of the Unavers [*sic*] hath bewtowed equalley [*sic*] on all menkind [*sic*] and which they have Never forfeited by and [*sic*] Compact or agreement whatever. (Cited in C. Robinson 1997: 29)

From the initial republican conception of slavery, mainstream Anglo-American political thought would over time fold liberty *only* into conceptions of individual rights accompanied by a creed of private individualism.[8] Judith Shklar argues that Anglo-American political thought is "focused on the idea of rights" (J. Shklar 1998: 111). These rights, I wish to argue, constitute the meanings of American freedom and frame the power of the American state. The current mainstream American conceptions of freedom revolve around the values of "free speech," electoral democracy, religious freedom of worship, and property rights, values that express a conception of the human as a rights-bearing individual with the capacity to own property. As a consequence, the American value of freedom circles around primarily juridical rights and political equality. This notion of freedom has been strongly challenged by radical African-American political thought. What is therefore central to our argument is how one segment of black political thought, proceeding from this question of rights and their lack in the African-American community, produces alternative conceptions of rights which then transform the content of freedom. It is an important historical and constitutional fact that the American founding fathers were slave masters and that they held normative political assumptions which became part of the conditions for the emergence in American politics of a particular conception of freedom – a freedom which I think can be called "imperial freedom." This conception would collide with the political and social practices of the African-American population and their demands for dignity, citizenship, and freedom. In the end, this collision became constitutive of American society and one template that shaped the different elements and categories of black thought.

Black Nationalism

By all accounts, some form of black nationalism is the most pervasive dimension of black political thought. Studies on the subject have suggested that there were three periods in which the influence of black nationalism has been central to African-American thought. These were: classical black nationalism (from the American Revolution to the mid-nineteenth century), the golden age of black nationalism (mid-nineteenth century to 1920s), and modern black nationalism (twentieth century to the present).[9] The general definitions of black nationalism have circled around the desire of black people to be independent and free from white supremacy. This desire had many manifestations. Sometimes it took the form of a desire for an independent homeland, and the development of a national culture. Other times it expressed itself in the desire and demand for black control of community resources, as it did in the political phrase, "Black Power."[10] But no matter what were its complex forms, at its core black nationalism was the desire of the African-American population to be independent and free of white supremacy and to forge a human identity in the face of anti-black racial

oppression. Given its complex expressions, Black nationalism was and is a rich ideological system with many streams.

There is a peculiar feature of this ideological system that complicates how we should think of it as a major current in African-American political thought. In conventional political and historical thought, nationalism is the story of political modernity, nation-building, and state-making.[11] While in many streams of black nationalism there exists a strong desire for national self-government and statehood, there is a twist to this desire. In black nationalism, the desire for nationhood and state formation is oftentimes geographically located outside of America. From Paul Cuffe's efforts in the early 1800s for commercial involvement and resettlement on continental Africa, to Marcus Garvey's anti-colonial proclamation of "Africa for Africans, at Home and Abroad," there has been a current in black thought that seeks redemption and nationhood through an African homeland. In other words, political modernity in black nationalist thought is cast in the language of separateness rather than commonality with the American nation. Oftentimes the political ideas of this current were influenced by an understanding of nations and races in which separate continents of the world were inhabited by the people whom it was thought originally populated that zone. Some black nationalist currents also drew from myths about the origins of nations and migratory narratives about the movement (voluntary and involuntary) of different "races" to various parts of the planet. One may argue that all forms of nationalism require degrees of separation in order for the "imagined community" to construct itself. What is unique about many strains of black nationalism, however, is their ability to mutate into forms of *black internationalism* or *black transnationalism*. When this happens black nationalism connects itself to anti-colonial or anti-imperial African and Caribbean projects. However, strains of black nationalism can also connect the African American to civilization projects, in which they stood as the vanguard that brings knowledge and light to the African natives.[12]

In the early twentieth century, the political manifesto of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) embodied in the 1920 Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World was an explicit example of the anti-colonial and black internationalist content of one current of black nationalism with an internationalist dimension. So, too, was the Black Power Movement, which included the idea that the political condition of black Americans was similar to that of "internal colonialism" (see, for example, Carmichael and Hamilton 1967; H. Newton 1973). The perspective of the "internal colonialism" was influenced by the radical anti-colonial thought of thinkers like Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral. One of its central points was that African Americans were a vanguard in the heart of the American empire. Another important example of the ways in which black nationalism can move into a radical direction is demonstrated by Robin D. G. Kelley's historical revisionist essay on the writings and political practices of Robert Williams and the history of the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM). Kelley makes the point that RAM represented an ideological amalgam of "Black internationalism, and Marxism and Third World interna-

tionalism" (R. Kelley 2002). What Kelley's essay points us to is the zone where the logic of racial oppression in the USA creates the conditions for individuals to begin at one point on the spectrum of black nationalism and quickly move to more radical positions while all the time stretching the meaning of the category. At the same time, the opposite can occur and in many instances did. When this happened, black nationalism became the cloak for a form of nationalism which focused narrowly on questions of identity, and sidestepping the relations of power and oppression.

In the colonial countries of the Caribbean and Africa, the anti-colonial movements developed many forms of nationalisms. One form has been called "modular" because it mimics the colonial power both in its political forms as well as more importantly its political horizons – its episteme.[13] In the USA, black nationalism, which develops this "modular" form of nationalism, does not, given the nature of racial oppression, normatively mimic white supremacy. What it typically does is to establish a set of mythologies about the nature of Africa, and then seek to create a black identity based on the adaptation of these mythologies to the American context. In the end, this kind of black nationalism is both culturally and politically conservative and does not engage in efforts to transform American society in a fundamental way.

The other stream of black nationalism that is close to black transnationalism operates explicitly around a notion of Pan-Africanism. This form of black nationalism recognizes that slavery and colonialism created a "black world." Its twentieth-century historical trajectory is rooted in the political praxis of Henry Sylvester Williams and W. E. B. Du Bois, who understood politically that the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles of the twentieth century were integral to the struggle for freedom of African Americans. Its main focus is to link the "black world" in a movement against racism and neocolonialism. Some of the sharpest modern expressions of this stream were the activities of the various groups that formulated programs and activities around African liberation day, which was first held in Washington, DC in 1972. Another was the work of the Center for Black Education. The persons in this group, along with C. L. R. James, laid the foundations for the sixth Pan-African congress, which was held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in 1974.[14] Important segments of the black nationalist current were also involved in the Civil Rights Movement. In Atlanta, one such current led to the creation of the Institute of the Black World under the leadership of Vincent Harding. This organization exercised profound influences on black revolutionary thought in America and the Caribbean.[15]

One might call the final, major current of black nationalism to which we should pay some attention *black religious nationalism*. Again, here many streams exist, ranging from the writings about Black Theology and the Nation of Islam to the proliferation of independent black churches. James Cone makes the point that Black Theology is a liberation theology and should be "initially understood as the theological arm of Black Power, [that] enabled us to express our theological imagination in the struggle for freedom independently of white theologians"

(J. Cone 1997: 306). Black Theology is a radical expression of black nationalism, and its logic is independent of Eurocentric normativity. It should also be observed that there is a long history of different practices of black religious nationalism in the various independent branches of African-American religious thought. These range from the notion that African Americans were a chosen people, to conceptions of providential design, and the readaptation of biblical tropes such as Exodus as a narrative to explain the condition of slavery.[16] Glaude makes the point that the notion of a black nation in the nineteenth century was imagined along the lines of the Exodus story. This imaginary was significantly different from the ways in which the Anglo-American story of a chosen people, of Manifest Destiny, was constructed. On the one hand, the Exodus theme stood for African Americans as a critique of American society; on the other hand, Manifest Destiny was the ideology of American imperial interventions in the nineteenth century. These multiple dimensions of black nationalism in black political thought clearly suggest that we should not study these phenomena within the frame of conventional theories about nationalism.

Commentators on black political thought often suggest that within the "internal" history of African-American thought there exist profound tensions between those who wish to integrate and those who wish to separate. Within this paradigm the separatist is nearly always perceived as black nationalist and the inclusionist as an integrationist who is hostile to black nationalism. While these characterizations focus on political and social objectives, they ignore the wider frame of African-American political thought. Separation may be the strategic objective of a form of black nationalism, but a desire for equality and pessimism about the possibilities of achieving that equality in America lay at its foundations. It is not simply racial solidarity. On the other hand, those labeled integrationist often operate inside political terms which, because of their demand for equality, challenge the social foundations of America. All this suggests that perhaps another way to think about these two currents in black political thought is to ground them in the different historical quests for citizenship and equality waged by the African-American population.

Equality, Citizenship, and Freedom

From its earliest times the white American republic favored political equality and political freedom as essential parts of its narrative about itself. Limited white male suffrage was the order of the day of the early republic. Citizenship was granted to African Americans with the passing of the fourteenth amendment in 1866. However, citizenship and its rights were withdrawn during the consolidation of Jim Crow after the defeat of the Reconstruction. Effective institutional racism in the North also made citizenship an elusive demand. Historically, it is again important to note that the political discourse about rights and equality after the overthrow of black male equality surrounded a political discourse which

deployed slavery as a metaphor. So when white women were finally granted suffrage, one of the main arguments they deployed was that they did not wish to be reduced to the level of slaves.

Equality in America revolves around two primary political goods: the right to vote and the forms of procedural equality before the law. In American political thought equality is not primarily about social equality, but rather a conception of supposed "meritocratic equality." The content of this form of equality resides in a mythical conception of equal opportunity.[17] In this sense, justice is a procedural notion, based on individual procedural rights, and becomes part of the bundle of the political goods for a human life in American society that is conferred by citizenship. To be a citizen is to have the potential to exercise the right of political equality and, in theory, to have the protection of property and individual rights under the rule of law. Non-citizenship status excludes one from these rights and because these rights and the rule of law are perceived as freedom, citizenship becomes an important item in American political thought.[18] How has this political good of citizenship impacted upon African-American political thought? Historically, the black population was excluded both from political equality and the origins of American civil and political society. There were and continue to be serious problems about the issues of equal procedures before the rule of law. Therefore, one element of the African-American struggle has always been to wrest the rights from which they were excluded and to be the beneficiaries of the formal rights of American citizenship. Because of their exclusion from formal rights the African-American struggle has also been conceived as one aimed at inclusion. I would argue, however, that the struggle for inclusion is a striving for equality and that this striving in turn impacts upon the character of the equality struggled for. There are two clear examples of this: the nineteenth-century praxis of black abolitionism and the twentieth-century political praxis of the Civil Rights Movement.

The Civil Rights Movement has been gutted in mainstream American political culture. There seem to be two dominant ways to study the movement. One tendency is to examine it only in terms of its leadership, with focus on Martin Luther King, Jr. The other is to see the movement as part of African-American history that finally overcame racial prejudices, integrating the African-American population into mainstream America, thereby allowing the continued steady march of American liberalism to go unimpeded. Both these approaches have political consequences and constitute the contemporary grounds for claims of the supposed decline of structural racism. They are used in debates about affirmative action and are connected to the current claim that the real problem standing in the way of wholesale black economic and social improvement is the cultural behavior pattern of blacks, particularly young black males. This view is, of course, the most recent manifestation of a long history of social and political attacks on the black population as a pathological one.[19] Such attacks lead to silences in political thought that miss the richness of the political and social ideas generated from within the Civil Rights Movement.[20]

Some commentators focusing on the Civil Rights Movement's tactic of non-violence have argued that the movement "could not transcend political liberalism" (C. West 1982: 143). While it is accurate to say that the movement began with limited but important demands, this observation misses the internal logic of the movement and the complexities of the political ideas generated. It also misses the ways in which mass action radicalized the movement. Thus, in the end, such a stance studies the Civil Rights Movement as a homogeneous monolith. We know that the limited demands to end bus segregation and Jim Crow in general have a long history in the South. But in the Civil Rights moment, the movement drew upon a black community that deployed its religious experiences as a larger context for understanding that it was possible to change their social condition; a black preaching tradition in which concepts of healing moved beyond the spiritual to the temporal; and a conjunction of international forces that included the African and Indian subcontinental anti-colonial movements. Added to these ingredients were the firm desires of the African-American population for equality and for practices of freedom.

The demands for desegregation and then for voting rights were reformist demands. But to see it only in these terms would be to ignore the historical construction of American society as a white republic. This struggle for reform, for citizenship and rights, raised fundamental questions about American society. Ella Baker puts it well when she states: "Even though the sit-in movement started off primarily as a method of getting in, it led to the concept of questioning whether it was worth trying to get in" (cited in J. Grant 1998: 215). The litmus test for Baker's point can be found in three areas. First, there was the political journey that Martin Luther King, Jr. undertook. This journey deeply radicalized him, from the King of the Montgomery Bus Boycott to the King who became an antiwar advocate and argued in the last years of his life for the economic and social transformation of America. Second, if we see the Civil Rights struggle as a *movement* and discern its different currents, we would see that there emerged ideas about the practice of politics that were in conflict with traditional political precepts of American liberalism. The political ideas of Ella Baker were typically representative of this fact. Baker's ideas profoundly influenced the radical politics of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). This group developed a theory of participatory democratic practice and organizing that was radically in opposition to the politics of representative democracy.[21] Some writers have argued that this form of political praxis, as it developed in the Civil Rights Movement, was akin to Hannah Arendt's conception of political practice as "public happiness." Of course, we know that for Arendt "public happiness" was related to her conception of action and the public realm drawn from her study of the Greek *polis*.[22] Two significant features of the Civil Rights Movement were the ways in which politics were related to freedom and how that freedom pivoted upon conceptions that were not rooted in classical notions of the *polis*.

In practice, the movement arrived at a point whereby it began to grapple with the conventional separation in liberal political thought – the supposed incompat-

ibility between questions of freedom and equality.[23] As Rayford W. Logan argued in his extraordinary 1944 anthology, *What the Negro Wants*: ". . . first-class citizenship, equality of opportunity, equal pay for equal work, equal protection of the laws, equality of a suffrage, equal recognition of the dignity of the human being and the abolition of public segregation" (R. Logan 2001: 14). What is clear from these demands is the notion of inclusion. The issue here is not so much the movement's original demands but rather the political and social terrain the demands opened up. To put it another way, black demands for equality did not just request that America live up to its ideals, but also pushed the boundaries of equality. The matter is not as simple as Du Bois's argument that liberalism was a sham for the black population; instead, it is to understand that liberalism, as it unfolded in America, was and is also a part of white supremacy.[24] In other words, American liberalism is *racial liberalism*. Therefore, when radical African-American political thought engaged the issue of equality, it did so, breaking the strictures of the conventional political language and meanings in America.[25] The different conceptions of equality in American political thought have been eloquently stated by King, who said:

> There is not even a common language when the term equality is used. Negro and whites have a fundamentally different definition. Negroes have proceeded from the premise that equality means what it says . . . but most whites . . . proceed from the premise that equality is a loose expression for improvement. (M. King 1986: 560)

What is the essence of this difference? In the first place, the kind of equality argued for by the Civil Rights Movement went beyond formal political equality and intervened in the economic domain. Thus, the demand for equality could not be organized around only formal procedural legal rights but necessitated challenges to the structural relationships of the economic system. King puts it well when he says, "Now, when I say question the whole society, it means ultimately coming to see that racism, the problem of economic exploitation, and the problem of war are all tied together. These are the triple evils that are interrelated" (ibid: 250). What I want to suggest is that the different dimensions of equality, opportunity, outcome, welfare, and personhood are all collapsed in the radical demands for equality in the Civil Rights Movement, thus making the movement a radical egalitarian enterprise. Therefore, while we might discreetly box and periodize the movement as the precursor to the radicalism of Black Power, marking the period with the rupture of SNCC from the movement, in both periods we are looking at different forms of black radicalism working themselves out in attempts to transform American society.

Recall that a feature of American liberalism is its ability to translate political ideas into individual rights. While the Civil Rights Movement made demands that moved outside the bounds of liberal individual rights into the social and economic domains, we continue to classify the movement as a Civil Rights one.

This classification deradicalizes the movement as well as stabilizes and folds its victories into the narrative of American liberalism. This is not to say that the benefactors of the movement were not the members of the black middle class primarily based in the professional strata. But the rise of a new social grouping is nothing new after a movement of change has been defeated or mediated. In the postcolonial context of Africa and the Caribbean, the nationalist and sometimes revolutionary struggles often resulted in the creation of a new middle class.[26] Our preoccupation here is not about the rise of this middle class, but what the movement, at its deepest level, represented in its challenges to American society.

As we have seen thus far, the Civil Rights Movement challenged American liberal conceptions of freedom. In the liberal conception of freedom, "negative" liberty, and "freedom from" interference, is the apex of freedom. The debate about freedom is framed within the parameters of a conflict between what is called "positive" freedom and "negative" freedom.[27] Not only is the debate silent about the legacies of master–slave relationships, its aim is also to limit freedom by defining unfreedom primarily in forms of political coercion. On the other hand, the struggle for freedom has been a standard in the repertoire of radical black political culture. But this repertoire does not move along the axis of typical "negative" freedom. It is a freedom that combines all the elements of so-called "positive" and "negative" freedoms – that is, respectively, self-realization and the absence of coercion. At the same time, the conception of freedom in radical black political thought adds new qualities: social equality (thereby posing the economic question), the recognition of an organic relationship between the individual and the community, and a conception of the polity that is radically democratic rather than representatively democratic. Thus, freedom in the radical African-American tradition collapses conventional boundaries. This is not just a larger version of freedom, but a *different* one. Critics of this position might point to ways in which recent debates about communitarianism and its notion of the "politics of the common good" or the arguments of Philip Pettit about a republican conception of freedom as non-domination are, in many ways, similar to the themes that I have suggested can be described as radical black conceptions of freedom.[28] In answer to these critics, it would be worthwhile remembering that while communitarianism embraces a social thesis, the thesis does not raise questions of the political economy of economic life, focusing instead on ideas about the situatedness of freedom and the ways in which the liberal idea of the good life decontextualizes the individual. Contemporary political theorists of republicanism may very well desire to draw a theory of republicanism as a theory of non-domination, but they would have to decontaminate it from its ancient historical practices and its embodiment as a central element of the early white American slave republic. In this regard, political theorists might do well to recall Judith N. Shklar's words that the "history of freedom must always be understood with slavery as its background [and that in America] without a government one cannot enslave anyone. Slavery is forced labor under the coercion of laws"

(J. Shklar 1998: 112–18). Modern political theory would do well to consider these things and in turning its attention to the debates about freedom to consider a stance that appreciates that freedom is also about action. It is about "calling into being that which could not be known" (H. Arendt 1993: 151). For the African-American freedom struggle, in the words of the black slaves in New Hampshire, freedom was based upon the "the terms of the most perfect equality with other men . . . [and that] private and public tyranny and slavery are alike detestable." The well-springs of African-American freedom draw from the intellectual legacies of the struggles against racial slavery in the modern world. It is the real counter-ground to the "imperial freedom" of the American empire. This different version of freedom can be summed up as a *freedom in action and in relationship to other human beings*, not a freedom grounded solely in rights. It is a freedom in which the battle for the human transforms the conceptual ground for freedom.

Black Marxism

Marxism as a radical critique of liberalism and the capitalist order has been an attractive political theory for many black radicals. The relationship between Marxist politics and the question of black liberation has, however, always been a tumultuous one. The heart of this problematic is the relationship between the race and class questions. Certainly, from the founding of the Socialist Party in 1901, when the convention did not pass any resolutions on matters of concern to African Americans, to the early twentieth-century American Communist Party's adaptation of the political idea of black self-determination in what was then called the "black belt," to the 1940s' debate in the small Trotskyite movement about the nature of the independent black struggle, there has been a rich debate about the relationship between Marxism and black radicals and the primacy of race or class.

In the twentieth century, we may say that two figures represent this problematic. One was Richard Wright and the other was W. E. B. Du Bois.[29] But there were hosts of individuals profoundly shaped by Marxism, who engaged it and then attempted both in theory and practice to develop forms of radical politics that went beyond the traditional political theory of Marxism. In discussing some of these groups and individuals we could divide them in the following way. One group consisted of individuals who became Marxist and remained committed not only to Marxism but also to the Communist Party USA. Some of these individuals were Richard Moore, Harry Heywood, and Paul Robeson, as well as other diaspora radicals such as Claudia Jones.[30] The other group was attracted to Marxism, became very involved in the communist movement, and then departed from it. In this group other political persons are critical besides Richard Wright, and we should note two: George Padmore and Harold Cruse.[31] The next current consists of the small black Marxist organizations that were formed throughout the twentieth century. These range from the African Blood

Brotherhood formed by Cyril Briggs in the early 1900s, to the League of Revolutionary Workers formed in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement.[32] While there has been no large-scale African-American mass movement in the twentieth century led by a Marxist organization, Robin Kelley (1990: 93) tracks how "the meshing of an African-American culture of opposition" created a radical politics in the state of Alabama which then became an important moment in American history.[33] Finally, there were individuals like C. L. R. James who attempted to rethink the African-American struggle in Marxist terms, but gave that struggle an independent and primary position in his theory of social change in American society.

We can discern from all of this that the history of race and slavery complicated American society in such a manner that Marxism's political and social categories did not adequately take into account the concrete American racial context, even though it was attractive to black activists as a radical pole in many instances. What is also intriguing is that many studies of American Marxism excluded the attempts of black Marxists to develop Marxist theory rooted in their own American experiences. Black Marxists were, and continue to be viewed as, a sideline, an aberration to the American experience. So, for example, a reader on American radicalism, while registering the contributions of black radicalism, does not pay attention to the efforts of black radicals to engage with Marxism (McCarthy and McMillan 2003).

In the last part of these reflections, I want to explore how one person's engagement with Marxism produced a narrative that tells a different story about America and the world, and in doing so opens not only questions of historiography but also of radical political theory. I am here referring to W. E. B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction*. Like all seminal historical texts, it not only refashions a narrative about events, but also suggests their theoretical scaffolding. In this instance, we will focus on this scaffolding and the new categories that emerge. Du Bois begins the text by thinking about the relationship between two forms of labor and their relationship to democracy in America. Overturning the characterization of American democracy made by, for example, Alexis de Tocqueville, Du Bois writes in the summary of the first chapter: "How black men, coming to America in the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, became a central thread in the history of the United States, at once a challenge to its democracy and always an important part of its economic history and social development" (Du Bois 1962: 3). From this foundation, he proceeds to develop a revisionist-historical narrative not only about the Reconstruction period, but also about the ways in which we should think about three things: Who were the black slaves? What social category did they belong to? What was the nature of their struggles for freedom during this period and what did their defeat mean not only for America but also for the world? As regards the first, Du Bois enunciated that the black slaves were workers and as workers their radical activity was akin to a general strike. He makes the point: "This was not merely the desire to

stop work. It was a strike on a wide basis against the conditions of work. It was a general strike that involved directly in the end perhaps a half a million people. They wanted to stop the economy of the plantation system, and to do that they left the plantations" (ibid: 9). So the black slaves were modern workers. This has enormous social implications for any understanding of the nature of American capitalism. In such a context, racism was not an epiphenomenon, but deeply embedded in the social order. Regarding the second point, Du Bois argues that the struggles of the black population during the period of radical Reconstruction should be seen as a "great human experiment, which would have thrown a world of light on human development and democratic government" (ibid: 383). This "world of light," Du Bois argues, was about Reconstruction as an experiment in a radical form of democracy. Thus, it should be placed alongside other nineteenth-century forms of radical democracy, such as the Paris Commune. For Du Bois, the defeat of Reconstruction laid the foundations for the rise of modern imperialism, one in which race played an important role. He links the emergence of modern imperialism not only to the ensuing concentration of capital, but also to the ways in which Reconstruction was defeated. These three things suggest new ways for us to think about the nature of capitalism and its narrative of origins in the New World. As well, it makes us reconfigure ideas about the role of African Americans and the relationship of slavery to the making of American constitutionalist democracy. What is at stake here, as is in all radical political thought, is how we interpret the historical and conceptual foundations of society in order to effect transformative change. The Du Boisian "second sight" allows us to rewrite both the historical narrative of American society as well as to pose central questions for radical political theory.

Conclusion

Radical African-American political thought can be studied as a distinct category of ideas. Its distinctiveness is not marginal to wider issues of political thought, since it raises profound questions about freedom, an issue which has historically animated political thought. The study of African-American political thought also suggests that one productive way in which we can study political thought is to grapple with issues of historical praxis. In the final analysis, the struggle of African Americans against racial oppression is not a parochial one. While connecting with larger struggles globally, radical African-American thought enters into dialogical conversations with other elements of American thought. But it also challenges the categories of mainstream American thought, oftentimes creating something distinctive. Such is its richness that any study of the conceptual history of freedom will benefit from reflecting on the many African-American rivers of freedom and how that freedom ruptures our current understandings of American "imperial freedom."

Notes

1 In his seminal work *Slavery and Social Death* (1982), Orlando Patterson argues that one feature of slavery is "social death." By this he means a form of natal and social alienation which excludes the slave from all forms of social goods in the society (i.e., citizenship). It is a form of institutionalized liminality. Although Patterson does not deal adequately with racial slavery as a peculiar form of slavery, I want to suggest that racism creates forms of "social death" for the racially oppressed. One particular form of this is the way in which the American republic constructed and carried out the conceptions of citizenship certainly up until the last quarter of the twentieth century.

2 This story of American political thought canonized in 1955 with the publication of Louis Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America* (1955) still stands today as one central interpretation of American political thought. Major works in political theory, which attempt to grapple with a historical understanding of American thought and society, still battle with it. See, for example, R. Smith (1997).

3 For this kind of modeling work, see B. Boxill (1997). For a richer and probing examination of black ideologies in the contemporary world, see M. Dawson (2001).

4 "Episteme" is used here not as a descriptive term but in the sense of a "historical *a priori*" pattern which defines both the mode of being and the conditions and limits of discourse.

5 For a discussion of this, see in particular B. Bailyn (1967). For an account of the prevalence of neo-Roman conceptions of freedom in English political thought until the triumph of classical utilitarianism in the eighteenth century, see Q. Skinner (1998). For a treatment of republicanism in early American political thought, see the seminal work by J. Pocock (1975).

6 For a good examination of how this was reflected in the early laws of the republic, see L. Higginbotham (1978).

7 Cited in P. Bradley (1998: 4). This text is an excellent study of the various pamphlets and newspaper articles written and disseminated during the period of the American Revolution.

8 Much of the debate about a return to a refashioned civic engagement in American politics ignores this history of the nature of "imperial liberty" and therefore cannot fully explain what is nostalgically called the "loss of community." See, for example, M. Sandel (1996).

9 For discussions about the major ideas and personalities of the different periods, see W. Moses (1978, 1996) and W. Van Deburg (1997). For more recent debates and discussions about black nationalism, see D. Robinson (2001) and E. Glaude (2002).

10 There is a growing body of scholarship around the meaning of Black Power as a part of black radicalism (e.g., Joseph 2001a).

11 For a good synoptic discussion of nationalism, see C. Calhoun (1997).

12 Examples of the latter can be seen in the writings and work of Martin Delany, Alexander Crummell, and the early writings of Edward Blyden.

13 For a discussion of the different forms of anti-colonial nationalism, see P. Chatterjee (1986). For a specific discussion about the different forms of nationalism in the Caribbean and the differences between black nationalism and Creole nationalism, see A. Bogues (2002). For a discussion of different forms of African nationalism, see B. Davidson (1992).

14 For a sharp critique of the congress and of this current in general, see W. Rodney (1974).

15 For discussion of this institute, see S. Ward (2001).

16 For a study of black religion with specific reference to the nineteenth century, see E. Glaude (2000). There is a rich intellectual legacy in the study of black religion. For a good reader on the subject, see L. Murphy (2000).

17 For the concept of "meritocratic equality," see R. Dworkin (2000). I use the adjective "mythical" because of the nature of America's social structure. For a conservative view that bemoans the structural inequities in American society, see K. Phillips (2002).
18 A very good discussion of how citizenship related to issues of race and nationality and therefore how immigrants have been classified in American legal history can be found in Rogers Smith (1997).
19 One feature of racism is its ability to mutate into different expressions. As a social construction, which is real in the social world, racist arguments take many grounds. In the 1990s, with a shift to the study of culture and its meanings and role in economic developments, there began to appear a set of arguments about the regulative, culturally determined behavior of blacks. Central to the recent debate is, of course, the book by Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray, *The Bell Curve* (1994).
20 There have been attempts. See, for example, R. King (1996). Leonard Harris's anthology *Philosophy Born of Struggle* (2000) contains articles on the political ideas of the civil rights movement.
21 For a discussion of this kind of politics and organizing, see Moses and Cobb (2001: chs 1–3). See also C. Carson (1995).
22 Arendt, of course, developed ideas of domains in society. For her, there was a social realm which was different from the political. She argued in her essay "Reflections on Little Rock" that "to force parents to send their children to an integrated school against their will means to deprive them of rights which clearly belong to them in all free societies – the private right over their children and the social right to free association" (see H. Arendt 2000: 242).
23 For a clear discussion of this conflict, see S. Lukes (1991).
24 Many black theorists point this out even while arguing that liberalism can be recuperated. See, for example, C. Mills (1997).
25 This has a long history in America. For a discussion, see Condit and Lucaites (1993).
26 This is not to draw any parallels between the African-American situation and that of the colonial and postcolonial world. It is only to point to the historical experience of movements for change and the aftermath of their defeat or cooptation. The consolidation of a new social group does not necessarily mean that the movement which created the conditions for their ascendancy was completely representative of this new social group.
27 This debate is framed by Isaiah Berlin's famous 1958 lecture, "Two Concepts of Liberty." The lecture has been published in I. Berlin (1969).
28 For a discussion of the idea of a republican conception of freedom as non-domination, see P. Pettit (1997: ch. 2).
29 For a discussion of both of these individuals' relationship to Marxism, see the seminal text by Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism* (2000).
30 The life of Paul Robeson is fairly well known, but less well known are Heywood and Jones. For more biographical details and their ideas and work, see H. Heywood (1978), and for Claudia Jones, see B. Johnson (1985).
31 Padmore was known in the early twentieth century as the most important black communist. Trinidadian by birth, he had come to the US as a student. He joined the communist movement and became over time an important official of the Communist International. In the 1930s he broke with the communist movement, moved from the Soviet Union to London, and opened a new phase of his political activity, which by 1945 had led to joint work with Kwame Nkrumah and the Fifth Pan-African Congress. There is only one biography of Padmore in English – James Hooker's *Black Revolutionary* (1967). Padmore is one figure who is badly in need of an updated political/intellectual biography. Cruse is an important intellectual and political figure in African-American thought. His book *Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (1967) is of continued influence. For one of the earliest and most important critical engagements with Cruse's work, see Allen (1992). A more recent criticism of some of

Cruse's inaccuracies regarding West Indian radicalism in America can be found in W. James (1998).

32 For a discussion of the work of Briggs, see W. James (1998); for the League of Revolutionary Workers, see J. Geschwender (1977).

33 Some would argue that the mass campaign in support of the Scottsboro young adults was one such movement.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Politics of Knowledge: Black Policy Professionals in the Managerial Age

Floyd W. Hayes, III

A major feature of the evolving managerial society is the expanding roles of formal knowledge and professional experts in the public policy-making process. The increasing professionalized management of people accompanies this development. Theorists of managerialism do not agree, however, on the extent to which these roles have expanded. Hence, competing perspectives about the relationship between knowledge and power in the policy-making process appear in the literature. Some thinkers hold that in contemporary advanced technological society professional experts dominate the political decision-making process. Others contend that elected officials are still in control. The issue remains unclear.

This essay focuses on the roles Black policy specialists and their knowledge play in the public policy deliberation process of America's developing knowledge-intensive managerial society. With the coming of the conservative Reagan regime, the 1980s represented a major turning point in American public policy in the form of an assault on the welfare state, which was established during the 1930s New Deal policy agenda of the Roosevelt administration. The 1980s also witnessed the emergence of Black policy experts as major actors in the public debate about policies designed to handle the problem of poverty in contemporary American society. In the past, Black policy intellectuals were largely ignored in the national debate about public policy development. What is significant about the evolution of the contemporary debate is the ascendancy of a collection of conservative Black policy entrepreneurs and their challenge to liberal policy ideas. Because of their association with the Reagan regime, these conservative Black policy actors gained public visibility. My specific aim is to examine critically the debate between some conservative and liberal Black policy intellectuals regarding the complex problem of urban poverty within a changing American

social order. I will assert that in America's managerial society, Black professional experts and policy specialists – as members of a rising professional-managerial class – have come to play a major role in influencing the content and contours of the national policy deliberation process by means of their discursive power: argumentation and persuasion. In the developing managerial order, the importance of mental capacity and the ability to manage people are challenging the singular authority of money and finance. In what follows, I will discuss the ascendancy of managerial society, the growing convergence of knowledge and power in the policy-making process of that society, the debate between conservative and liberal Black policy specialists during the 1980s, and an alternative perspective to the politics of expertise and social management.

The Rise of the Managerial Class

In the United States, the professional-managerial class emerged during the Progressive era at the dawn of the twentieth century. The development of a core of social engineers devoted to helping and managing the working class and the urban poor served as the basis for the rise of the professions. Social engineers assumed that the fundamental organization of society was progressive and just, and they viewed education as the major form of human engineering. Social managers desired a smooth running, socially efficient, stable social order in which professional management would replace politics; science would replace tradition; and experts would adapt education to the conditions of modern corporate life (R. Callahan 1962; D. Tyack 1974; Tyack and Hansot 1982). With corporate America's sponsorship, this new cadre of social engineers sought specialized training and formal accreditation as professionals. Here is the genealogy of the professional-managerial class of salaried professionals, engineers, managers, administrators, and planners (see A. Abbott 1988; J. Erhenreich 1985; M. Larson 1977; R. Reich 1983). As Alvin Gouldner (1979) argues, the old moneyed class gave birth to a new cultural class whose capital was specialized knowledge.

As descendants of the old moneyed class, the new cadre of professional managers initially was dependent upon and subservient to its benefactors. Largely synonymous early on with the old or traditional middle class of independent farmers, small-business men, and self-employed professionals, the members of the emerging professional-managerial class, even those who were social engineers of the working class and the urban poor, maintained a certain attachment to the tradition of rugged individualism.

However, the Great Depression proved to be the definitive event that transformed this development. The middle classes underwent an ideological change from rugged individualism to New Dealism. The professional-managerial class embraced an ostensible "reform" of capitalism that was in fact a revolution. Of course, it was a revolution not in the interest of the working class, but on behalf

of the new middle classes themselves. Efficiency, expertise, and professionalism gained hegemonic ideological power as the professional-managerial class sought the rationalization and regulation of society.

This commences James Burnham's "managerial revolution" – in the crucible of unparalleled capitalist crisis (J. Burnham 1941). This is the historical setting for the development of the self-conscious commitment to large-scale national economic regulation and policy planning, buttressed by the systematic collection of information and the development of national income accounts. This set of historical forces and political-economic arrangements laid the foundation for the modern liberal welfare state, where the federal government *de facto* took a free hand in developing various policies and programs to manage the economy and the people.

Governing elites jettisoned Adam Smith's (1937) minimalist theory of the state and embraced the principle of unlimited state power. Federal government expansion meant that the welfare state cushioned both the members of the middle and working classes from the exigencies of the capitalist business cycle. In addition, however, the expansion of the state meant increased employment opportunities for the middle classes, giving them a dual benefit.

Thus, the growth of the public sector provided the professional-managerial class an opportunity to break free of corporate capital's control. World War II and, thereafter, the Great Society and Civil Rights Movement constituted further bases for still more dramatic expansion. The social programs of the 1960s, coupled with various Civil Rights acts, can be interpreted as a response to black rebellion; and black professionals and managers obtained disproportionately the new positions in the public sector welfare agencies. Here was the essential source of growth in the black middle class of professionals and managers reported by scholars and journalists in the 1970s (for example, see Brown and Erie 1981). As Robert Allen has argued:

> The black rebellions injected a new sense of urgency into the urban crisis and prompted the corporate elite to reassess its role in handling the problems of the cities. The strategy evolved by the corporatists calls for the establishment of a black elite that can administer the ghettos. Where possible, black workers will be reintegrated into the economy. Those blacks that can't be absorbed into the work force may be pensioned off on some type of income maintenance program. From the corporate viewpoint, this strategy is more efficient, less costly, and more profitable than either traditional welfare statism or massive repression. With the federal government (i.e., taxpayers) footing the bill, the corporations have all to gain and little to lose. (R. Allen 1969: 206)

The combination of the Great Society and Civil Rights Movement took the scope of government beyond the breakthrough achieved by the New Deal. The judiciary, in particular, took on an activist role in public policy making, including management of school systems and prison systems (A. Miller 1982; M. Shapiro

1979). The inherent limitlessness of the managerial state was manifest as the politics of expertise came to overtake the politics of money.

The Basis of Professional-Managerial Class Power in a Knowledge Society

During a 1968 Senate hearing on "The Nature of Revolution," an outline of the new political society was sketched when Senator Claiborne Pell sought confirmation of his interpretation of a paper delivered by Harvard University professor Louis Hartz:

> Another point that struck me was the progress of society as it moves along. Through your paper I think I detected that you moved from a feudal stage where power is based basically on land, to another stage which is the bourgeois or capitalistic stage, where power is based on the possession of machinery, or the capital with which to buy machinery. But you left it a little up in the air, because nothing is final, and nothing is permanent as to what the evolution of this trend is. Would you agree with Ken Galbraith's theory that the next stage would be where the possession of mere money per se or ownership is not as important as the mental capacity to provide the direction for the intellectual and managerial estate which is now coming to the fore in our country? Therefore, it is more and more the managerial and intellectual groups that are the ones that are becoming dominant. Do you see this trend going on, or do you disagree with this interpretation of your paper? (US Senate 1968: 36)

Hartz's response was direct: "I would not say that that trend is in my paper. However, that does not mean that I do not believe there is something in that. I believe that this is and has been a development in American economic life" (ibid: 36).

The managerial transformation of American society is distinguished by the transition from a capital-intensive economy based on physical resources, which dominated the first half of the twentieth century, to a knowledge-intensive economy based on human resources, which characterizes the last half of the twentieth century to the present. The principal resource of America's declining industrial-capitalist economy has been finance capital, invested in industrial plants, machinery, and technologies to increase the muscle power of human labor. In the evolving knowledge-intensive economy, the decisive resource is cultural capital: the nation's investment in and management of education, knowledge, science, computers, and other technologies that enhance the mental capacity of workers (Botkin, Dimancescu, and Stata 1984; P. Drucker 1969, 1993; R. Reich 1991; A. Toffler 1990). Important now are specialized knowledge, communication skills, the capacity to process and utilize collections of information in organizational decision-making arrangements, and increasingly professionalized approaches to managing people. With this expanding role for formal or special-

ized knowledge, professionals and experts – intellectuals and the technical intelligentsia – have become a "new class" in the public and private spheres, particularly with regard to public policy making (D. Bazelon 1971; Derber, Schwartz, and Magrass 1990; Erhenreich and Erhenreich 1979; J. Galbraith 1971).

Managerial society's new power wielders are located in such organizational arrangements as government, elite universities, major policy research institutions, influential policy-planning groups, the mass media, elite law firms, philanthropic foundations, or political action committees (Alford and Friedland 1985; G. Benveniste 1972; F. Fischer 1990; D. Lebedoff 1981; D. Ricci 1993; J. Smith 1991). The influence of the professional-managerial class comes from the capacity to conceptualize the character of social problems and to design strategies for handling them. Ensconced in knowledge-managing institutions and organizations, members of the new class also produce and shape ideas and images that direct the cultural, intellectual, and ideological development of the new society (see J. Smith 1991; D. Ricci 1993).

The emerging managerial class does not rise to power alone. To be effective, the new power wielders must be allied to a political, legal, or organizational base. Their power comes from their access to and their ability to influence policy makers in government and private organizations. They operate at many levels to influence the intellectual direction, content, and contours of public policy making. They may be policy specialists within the offices of political executives, intellectual activists who appear at local school board hearings, renowned university professors who consult with government officials on important policy matters, policy entrepreneurs whose research findings contribute to major court rulings, or more recently public intellectuals who gain attention through publishing their ideas in leading popular journals of opinion (W. Darity 1983, 1991; F. Fischer 1990; T. Luke 1989; G. Majone 1988, 1989).

The Convergence of Knowledge and Power: A Theory

There are competing perspectives about the relationship between knowledge and power in the policy-making process of the developing managerial society. One view argues that in the evolving age of advanced science and technology, knowledge, especially specialized knowledge, dominates the public decision-making process. This perspective can be summarized in terms of several key propositions:

1 Knowledge in managerial society is an instrument of power.
2 Social complexity and rapid rates of change have the effect of making preexisting forms of knowledge and information obsolete – particularly such things as practical experience, common sense, or intuitive judgment.
3 The problems of managerial society require specialized knowledge and information, which establish the primary roles of experts.

4 The problems of managerial society are thought to be amenable to solution through the application of specialized knowledge and technical expertise.
5 Because of the technical complexity of most policy decisions, professional experts increasingly are brought into the policy-making process in order to provide specialized information and technical advice.
6 The political power of professional experts increases due to this special role. Politicians, because they depend upon experts' knowledge and specialized information, experience an erosion of their political power.
7 In the evolving managerial order, policy experts are agents of change and responsible for societal management.
8 Policy experts dominate the policy process because they possess knowledge necessary for making difficult technical choices that are inherent in complex public policy issues of managerial or postindustrial society (D. Bell 1973; J. Ellul 1964; A. Gouldner 1979; D. Harvey 1989; R. Lapp 1965; J. Meynaud 1964; J. Straussman 1978).

An opposing formulation of the social roles of expert knowledge and policy professionals contends that they do not dominate the policy-making process. Rather, this view argues that the political roles of expertise and policy specialists are limited to the symbolic ratification of politicians' decisions. This perspective can be summarized in terms of the following major propositions:

1 The primary political role of experts is to legitimize policy decisions made by politicians and high-level appointed officials, the real power holders.
2 Major policy alternatives reflect the balance of power within the political system.
3 After making decisions, policy makers often look for ways to legitimize their decisions; hence, they use technical explanations and justifications in order to diffuse conflict.
4 The image of the professional expert who is "above politics" is a useful legitimizing tool. Moreover, since they are expendable, specialists serve as convenient scapegoats for policies that have failed (G. Benveniste 1972; M. Miliban 1980; T. Roszak 1972).

However, while both sets of propositions appear reasonable and persuasive, they suggest that the expert–politician connection is an all-or-none situation in which either experts or politicians rule. It may not be that these statements, taken separately, are necessarily incorrect; rather, they inadequately describe the complex nature of the interaction between expertise and politics in the policy deliberation process.

What is apparent is that in the evolving managerial society, a new professional–managerial class is gaining increasing authority because of a growing confluence of knowledge and power. Policy intellectuals provide ideas and concepts for public debate. They help put the issues in context. Policy experts make concrete

recommendations and affect specifics, but experts seldom are in agreement among themselves (F. Hayes 1985b; G. Majone 1988, 1989). What is clear is that in the policy-making process of managerial society, the power of the professional-managerial class is exhibited not by physical force or financial wealth but by rhetoric, persuasion, data analysis, and argumentation. The result is a politicization of specialized knowledge or expertise. This is the case because political leanings among new class members may be left, center, or right; what unites them is a belief in the centrality and utilization of specialized knowledge in the policy process. This development was exemplified by the growing significance of neoconservatives, especially a small group of Black neoconservative, policy entrepreneurs whom the ultra-conservative Reagan administration sponsored in the early 1980s (see Tannenbaum 1981; Faryna, Stetson, and Conti 1997; M. Megalli 1995).

Neoconservative Policy Discourse in Black

By the end of the 1970s, the liberal social agenda had reached a point of diminishing returns, at least for under-income Blacks. That is, the two decades of the Great Society's social welfare measures – specifically, public employment, public assistance, and job training programs – resulted in the growing economic polarization of Black people. Alongside a fledging middle-income group employed as professionals and managers within urban federal social service bureaucracies emerged an increasingly under-income and impoverished urban collectivity who were the clients of the social welfare system. Hence, strong evidence suggests that the Great Society's social service state provided economic advancement for a rising class of Black professional managers, while linking the historic practice of economic dependency to the contemporary era and applying it to the urban dispossessed (Brown and Erie 1981; W. Darity 1980; J. Jones 1992, 1998; M. Lipsky 1980; J. Prottas 1979; D. Westcott 1982).

The 1980 ascendancy of the Reagan regime with its ultra-conservative policy agenda set in motion a practical and ideological assault on social policies and programs associated with the liberal welfare state's burgeoning federal government (Piven and Cloward 1982). Utilizing the rhetoric of getting government off the people's backs, the Reagan forces sought to slash the budgets of the Medicaid, Medicare, and food stamp programs and to terminate the Comprehensive Employment Training Act (*America's New Beginning* 1981; F. Hayes 1982, 1994). It was perhaps the power of the Reagan leviathan's right-wing political rhetoric and symbolism – the media dubbed Reagan a great communicator – and an emerging budget crisis that helped to interrupt a fragmented and weakened liberal social policy agenda and effectively redirect the American public's social outlook to the far right with white supremacist overtones (D. Green 1987; Lashley and Jackson 1994; A. Reed 1999; S. Schram 1999; S. Steinberg 1995; J. Tullis 1987).

In addition, the persistent growth of urban economic impoverishment provided an opportunity for political elites and policy technocrats associated with the ascendancy of Reaganism to put forward conservative policy prescriptions for handling the worsening predicament of the urban dispossessed. Perhaps recalling the controversy surrounding the 1965 Moynihan Report, leading white liberal policy specialists during the 1970s largely ignored researching and discussing problems related to the urban dispossessed, fearing that their observations and findings might be considered as blaming under-income Blacks for being impoverished (see S. Steinberg 1995; W. Wilson 1987). Traditional liberal Black leaders and policy analysts remained largely wedded to the welfare capitalist state and, therefore, continued to ask for conventional Civil Rights policies and programs. In contrast, an emergent group of conservative Black policy rhetoricians, who embraced the Reaganite dream of recapturing the laissez-faire capitalist state, charged that the liberal welfare policies and programs of the 1960s and 1970s not only failed to solve the "underclass" predicament but also exacerbated it (on the contested term "underclass," see M. Katz 1993). Therefore, these Black neoconservatives argued that Blacks, not the federal government, should help the Black urban dispossessed escape from moral and economic desperation.

If the discourse of liberal political elites and policy entrepreneurs dominated the conception of the urban crisis and the federal government's supportive role in the 1960s, a new conservative discursive power came to dominate the 1980s with respect to these matters. Significantly, the neoconservative rhetoric about the urban dispossessed changed little, if any, from the traditional conservative perspective put forward in the 1960s. It is largely the culture-of-poverty thesis, which liberals sought to discredit in the late 1960s and 1970s, resurrected and applied to the contemporary urban poor (see E. Banfield 1970; W. Ryan 1970; C. Valentine 1968). Focusing basically on the interrelationship among cultural traditions, family history, and individual character and behavior, conservatives argue that the "underclass" predicament is self-perpetuating. That is, an impoverished "underclass" family, historically dependent on welfare and structurally unemployed, tends to produce children who lack ambition, a work ethic, and a sense of self-reliance, and who participate in antisocial behavior (K. Auletta 1982; L. Mead 1986, 1992). Some conservatives even maintain that the urban dispossessed must be culturally rehabilitated before they can function in civil society (E. Banfield 1970).

In light of the fact that the urban dispossessed are disproportionately Black and Latino, it should hardly surprise anyone that in the age of Reaganism, with its ultra-right political and ideological dominance, America witnessed the latest manifestation of Black neoconservative prominence within the ranks of the professional-managerial elite as a result of the Reagan regime's sponsorship. Representative of this rising nucleus of Black neoconservatives were economists Thomas Sowell and Glenn Loury, who challenged the orthodoxy of liberal policy ideas. In contrast, Black sociologist William J. Wilson, a self-described neoliberal,

sought to articulate a new liberal perspective about the urban dispossessed. Consistent with the managerial argument put forward earlier, it should be noted that what augmented the power and visibility of their pronouncements is the significant fact that each of these policy specialists was associated with elite knowledge-producing institutions. In what follows, I will examine critically the neoconservative analyses and prescriptions put forward by Sowell and Loury, as well as Wilson's self-styled neoliberal response.

Thomas Sowell, a prolific economist and scholar at Stanford University's conservative Hoover Institution, had longstanding conservative credentials that predated the coming of Reaganism. However, he remained a largely obscure policy intellectual until the 1980 election, when he emerged as a leading conservative figure in the national debate about social policy. Significantly, it is because Sowell and his ideas were ideologically compatible with the conservative power of the Reagan regime that he gained considerable attention among governing elites, other policy intellectuals, and highly knowledgeable sectors of the lay public (L. Van Dyne 1985).

Sowell argued that Blacks actually would fare better in the long run under the Reagan administration's socioeconomic policies and programs. To the problem of Black inequality, Sowell insisted that the most appropriate solution was a program of laissez-faire capitalism plus rugged individualist initiative. He asserted that racial discrimination does not explain adequately the substantial economic difference between Blacks and white Americans in particular, or between non-white American natives and the numerous American ethnic groups of European origin in general. Furthermore, according to Sowell, racism does not explain sufficiently why Black Caribbean groups are substantially more represented in the professional class than native Black Americans or why their education, income, and home ownership surpass those of native Black Americans. Consistent with my earlier characterization of the conservative thesis, Sowell argued that the cause of "underclass" development was associated with cultural patterns, family background, and individual norms and behavior. In his view, Blacks born into poor families with a long history of welfare dependency may, in the absence of strong personal qualities, fail to acquire ambition, a work ethic, and a sense of personal worth and independence (T. Sowell 1975, 1981).

Sowell subscribed to and recommended the view that the great multitude of poor Blacks "pull themselves up by their own bootstraps." Contradicting history, real or fictionalized, he emphasized supposed past similarities between native Black Americans and European immigrants, leaving aside the reality that the former originally were brought to America involuntarily and largely stripped of the essential factors that underlie positive human development. Sowell overlooked the dehumanizing process of enslavement, which sought systematically to construct captured Africans and their American descendants as a class of subhumanity; to destroy African families, nations, and societies; to deny enslaved Blacks literacy and education; exploit slave labor and make chattel slaves economically dependent; and deny Blacks all political and organizational rights (see

R. Blackburn 1997; J. Blassingame 1972; O. Patterson 1982, 1997; K. Stampp 1956; F. Tannenbaum 1946; E. Williams 1944). In contrast to Sowell's perspective, substantial scholarship evidences the fact that there has been a historic difference between the status of native Black Americans and European or other immigrants, even following the Civil Rights legislation of the 1960s (see W. Borrie et al. 1959; O. Cox 1959; J. Feagin 2000; R. Schermerhorn 1970; S. Steinberg 1981).

Therefore, and consistent with his free market philosophy, Sowell criticized anything that limited individual choice. His views can be briefly itemized. First, he opposed government intervention in economic affairs. Second, he attacked the minimum wage law, suggesting that it increased unemployment, particularly for Black youth. In addition, Sowell argued that the minimum wage degraded Blacks and prevented them from gaining important employment experience and advancement. Third, he attacked the policies and practices of affirmative action as ambiguous and ineffectual (T. Sowell 1980).

Thomas Sowell was a leading neoconservative Black policy entrepreneur just prior to and during the beginning of the Reagan presidency. Economics professor Glenn Loury (then of Harvard University, followed by Boston University and now Brown University) became the most vocal and visible right-wing Black policy specialist in the middle and last years of the Reagan regime. But for a series of personal indiscretions, Loury would have received an influential appointment in the Department of Education during the Reagan administration. Loury proved to be one of the most outspoken neoconservative Black policy rhetoricians in the discourse on the urban disenfranchised, the limits of the federal government to solve this complex problem, and the self-help responsibility of the Black middle class (see G. Loury 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987).

As with his neoconservative colleagues, Loury was concerned with the Black community's "underclass" predicament – the growing frequency of inner-city teenage pregnancy, out-of-wedlock births, single-parent households, welfare dependency, joblessness, and crime. What was required, according to Loury, was the transformation of a constellation of strongly held "underclass" attitudes, values, and beliefs about sexual relationships, pregnancy, and childbearing. He observed that peer group and community norms in the inner city played a significant role in the reproduction of "underclass" conditions. Loury challenged the Black middle class to interrupt and redirect the conditions that perpetuated the "underclass" dilemma. He declared: "The condition of values, attitudes, and beliefs of African-American youngsters who produce children for whom they cannot provide must be addressed; and, those aspects of government policy which reinforce, or reward, such values must be publicly questioned" (G. Loury 1986: 10).

A central theme in Loury's discourse was the need to redefine the agenda for Black social development, focusing squarely on improving the life chances for the Black poor. Loury asserted that liberal social welfare policies and programs worsened the problems within this sector of the Black population. Therefore, he

maintained that only the community itself could and should solve its own social difficulties. Severely criticizing traditional Black Civil Rights leaders and liberal political elites for avoiding public discussion of the need to change norms and values which he perceived as perpetuating urban poverty, Loury challenged Black leaders and professional-managerial elites to provide the moral leadership in the transformation of the Black community. After all, he asserted, they and not the Black masses benefited from the Great Society's welfare state policies and programs.

Loury advanced an agenda of Black self-help that focused on the moral and material redemption of the Black masses. He called for the complete emancipation from Black Civil Rights and political elites who continued to beg for government handouts that, according to Loury, doomed the Black masses to permanent dependency. Although Loury acknowledged that the federal government could play a role, he urged that to eradicate the worst aspects of Black urban impoverishment, Black business, academic, and political elites should play the major role. In Loury's view, they needed to provide the moral and institutional leadership and develop the requisite and realistic economic program of action necessary to foster a sense of self-confidence and optimism among poor Blacks (G. Loury 1985, 1987).

Managerial Neoliberalism in the Age of Reaganism

During the Reagan years, as previously described, dominant public discourse about urban poverty shifted considerably to the far right in order to focus on the behavior and attitudes of the urban dispossessed. In the view of neoconservative Black policy entrepreneurs, the "underclass" predicament resulted from a "culture of poverty" characterized by self-reproducing pathologies. To counter the mean-spirited assertions of Black neoconservatives, sociologist William J. Wilson (then of the University of Chicago and now of Harvard University), a self-styled neoliberal, attempted to shape an alternative social policy discourse that he hoped would be more humane. In his book *The Truly Disadvantaged*, Wilson sought to "address the problems of the ghetto underclass in a comprehensive analysis" and to "spell out, in considerable detail, the policy implications of that analysis" (1987: vii).

Wilson argued that historical discrimination and a migration to large metropolises that kept the underclass Black and Latino populations relatively young created a problem of weak labor force participation among them and, especially since 1970, made them particularly vulnerable to the industrial and geographical shifts in the American economy. The transition from the goods-producing economy of the industrial era to the service-producing economy of the postindustrial or managerial era, the increasing polarization of the labor market into low-wage and high-wage sectors, innovations in technology, the relocation of manufacturing industries out of central cities, and periodic recessions, drove up

the rate of Black and Latino unemployment, despite the passage of anti-discrimination legislation and the creation of affirmative action programs. According to Wilson, the rise of urban joblessness set in motion an increase in the concentrations of poor people, a growing number of poor female-headed families, a rise in teenage pregnancy, an increase in welfare dependency, and mounting crime. He noted that these problems have been especially evident in inner-city neighborhoods of large cities, not only because the most impoverished Blacks and Latinos live there but also because the neighborhoods have become less diversified in a way that has severely worsened the impact of the continuing transformation of the economy.

Wilson pointed out that especially since 1970, inner-city neighborhoods have experienced an out-migration of working- and middle-class families previously confined to them by the restrictive covenants of higher-status city neighborhoods and suburbs. Combined with the increase in the number of poor caused by rising joblessness, this out-migration has sharply concentrated the poverty in inner-city neighborhoods. The number of poverty rates that exceed 40 percent – a threshold definition of "extreme poverty" neighborhoods – has risen accordingly. The dwindling presence of middle- and working-class households also has removed an important social buffer that once deflected the full impact of the kind of prolonged high levels of joblessness in these neighborhoods that results from uneven economic growth and periodic recessions.

In earlier decades, Wilson wrote, not only were most of the adults in segregated communities employed, but Black and Latino working and middle classes also brought neighborhood stability. They invested economic and social resources in their communities, patronized the churches, stores, banks, and neighborhood organizations, sent their children to the local schools, reinforced societal norms and values, and made it meaningful for lower-class Blacks in these segregated enclaves to envision the possibility of some upward mobility.

However, Wilson argued, contemporary inner cities feature a population, the "underclass," whose primary predicament is joblessness reinforced by growing social isolation. Out-migration has decreased the contact between groups of different class and racial backgrounds and thereby concentrated the adverse effects of living in an impoverished community. These concentration effects, reflected, for example, in the residents' self-limiting social dispositions, have been created by inadequate access to jobs and job networks, the lack of involvement in quality schools, the unavailability of suitable marriage partners for Black women, and the lack of exposure to informal mainstream social networks and traditional Black role models. Wilson concluded that these constitute the structural forces and conditions that have resulted in the growth and development of a self-perpetuating "underclass."

Accordingly, Wilson asserted in *The Truly Disadvantaged* and later in *When Work Disappears* (1996) that the factors associated with the increases in inner-city social dislocation are complex and complicated. They cannot be reduced to the easy explanations of a "culture of poverty" that have been advanced by those on

the right, or simply of racism, posited by those on the left. Although the inner city is a product of historical racism and although present-day racism has undoubtedly contributed to the deepening social and economic crisis of its residents, to understand the dramatic expansion of these problems requires the specification of a complex web of other factors, including the postindustrial or managerial transformation of the American economy.

Wilson's explanation of urban impoverishment in the new age of knowledge, science, and technology received much attention from the media and government, liberal politicians and policy specialists, and informed sectors of the lay public. Significantly, his analysis was closely aligned or compatible with the neoconservative perspective. Conservatives tend to view social difficulties and their solutions in personal or individual terms; liberals tend to see social problems and their solutions as structural or societal. Hence, conservatives seek to change the individual, and liberals want to change aspects of the social structure. Very similar to neoconservative policy entrepreneurs Thomas Sowell and Glenn Loury, Wilson viewed impoverished Black urban communities as largely pathological, characterized by high levels of female-headed households, out-of-wedlock births, teenage pregnancies, crime, etc. For neoconservatives, as discussed above, the decisive factor is the role of individual attitudes and values in shaping the initial responses of "underclass" members to social and economic conditions. Notwithstanding his differences with neoconservatives on whether labor-market shifts, changes in Black expectations, or a combination of the two factors was originally responsible for the growth of the "underclass," Wilson's analysis of the contemporary predicament placed substantial emphasis on the role of individual attitudes and values. He insisted that the social isolation of inner-city life "generates behavior associated with a life of casual work (tardiness and absenteeism)" (W. Wilson 1987: 60). These norms develop, in Wilson's view, because urban Blacks live in communities in which most families lack a steadily employed breadwinner. Young Black women find out-of-wedlock childbearing acceptable. For Wilson, it was not a culture of poverty but social isolation that generated these negative norms and responses to economic conditions. Although Wilson admitted that cultural traits are significant dimensions of behavior, he insisted that social isolation can be reversed through appropriate changes in public policy and improved economic opportunities. Here, Wilson argued for changes not in the individual as do conservatives but, rather, in the social conditions that affect poor Black people's lives. On the question of improving the life chances for the urban Black dispossessed, Wilson's neoliberal perspectives proved to be ambivalent, at best, and neoconservative, at worst.

To handle the "underclass" predicament, Wilson argued that universal – as opposed to race-specific or income-targeted – policies were likely to be more effective. Race-specific policies – whether they call for equal opportunity or for preferential treatment – tend to aid the more advantaged members of the Black community, since only they can qualify for preferred positions. Although affirmative action programs have assisted some less advantaged Blacks to obtain

employment in law enforcement, construction work, and craft jobs in large companies, Wilson stated that members of the urban "underclass" are severely underrepresented among those who actually benefit from such programs. Income-targeted programs, he asserted, lack long-term political support by whites and have too marginal an impact on the employment opportunities for inner-city Black men.

Wilson thus called for implementing policies that would appeal to the more advantaged groups of all races or nationalities in America, but that would have an especially large impact on the inner-city "underclass." He advocated the adoption of the Western European model of social policy, whose major elements are full employment and a national labor-market strategy, perhaps involving training programs integrated with the education system very much like apprenticeships. Wilson also proposed other broad-based programs, such as childcare credits, assured child support payments, and family assistance. Despite his criticism of race-specific and income-targeted programs, Wilson wanted to maintain these programs, but in a way that would be more effectively implemented.

Wilson's policy prescriptions were persuasive to largely white neoliberal and neoconservative policy watchers and policy makers; he came under heavy criticism from most Black, especially Black left-leaning, scholars. Significantly, Wilson's discussion did not draw on policy lessons from past American and Western European experiences. In a 1988 critique of *The Truly Disadvantaged*, radical political scientist Adolph Reed, Jr. (then of the University of Illinois-Chicago, followed by the New School for Social Research and now the University of Pennsylvania) argued that Wilson's policy agenda failed to deal adequately with three critical problems. First, it did not appear that Wilson's policy proposals would substantially improve life chances for the urban dispossessed. Wilson seemed to think that merely by improving Black male job options Black families would become stronger, encouraging delinquent fathers to contribute more to their children's care and development. Yet improvements in employment possibilities would not necessarily override the much more lucrative potentialities of the underground economy. Additionally, Reed reasoned, it was not certain that improved employment prospects for young Black men would be sufficient enough to deter gang members from attempts to dominate inner-city schools and streets.

A second difficulty Reed found with Wilson's policy prescriptions was the possible conflict between achieving full employment without inflation and adding universal programs to the existing array of income-tested programs. Wilson was not attentive to the major objection to universal programs – their high costs. More importantly, he did not realize that only a few of the small Western European welfare states have been able to maintain both a full-employment economy and a good social welfare system.

Reed's third problem with Wilson was the sociologist's failure to consider the political dimension of his argument. This permitted Wilson, argued Reed, to subsume race neatly into the category of economic dynamics. In short, Wilson overlooked the politicization of race in the affirmative policy apparatus. Careful analysis of the spatial colonization of American cities makes it impossible to

distinguish purely racial from purely economic imperatives. Heavily Black labor markets were assumed to be plagued by low skill levels and poor "work habits"; sections of land occupied by urban Blacks were underutilized and ripe for redevelopment because the presence of impoverished populations tended to lower market values. Wilson himself noted that numbers of low-skill jobs were increasing nationally but not in those cities where "underclass" members were concentrated.

In this context, the race/class debate was beside the point, according to Reed, because it ignored that the logic of markets is socially and politically constructed and that race enters into social and economic life in complex and indirect ways. Racial subordination is reproduced through the impersonal operation of markets – with or without active anti-Black racism. Reed acknowledged that Wilson did correctly observe that racism – a notion that implies individual instances of prejudice and discrimination – did not explain the "underclass" predicament; however, like his neoconservative antagonists, Wilson did accept a perspective that viewed only the alternatives of explicit white supremacy and color-blind structural forces as explanations for Black economic subordination. This is in part because Wilson did not see that history is made by human action. Contrary to the imputations of some left-leaning policy intellectuals, Wilson's argument did not juxtapose race and class but race and economics, which he treated as beyond the scope of social intervention.

In this regard, Wilson's apolitical approach seemed to view the urban dispossessed as objects of managerial problem-solving strategies. Defined by Wilson as an urban "underclass," members of the permanently poor appeared incapable of changing their circumstances; they were not agents of social change and, thus, could play no role in human affairs. Wilson's conception of class was limited and ahistorical. This allowed him to misread the racial and class dimensions of Black insurgency in the 1960s – when the Black professional-managerial class sought to contain and manage grassroots Black rebellion and opposition to a variety of national urban policy betrayals, such as urban renewal and the decline of quality education in inner-city public schools. Ultimately, Reed concluded, Wilson's approach to policy discourse for improving the life chances of urban disinherited Blacks is managerial or technocratic (A. Reed 1988).

Conclusion: Managerial Challenge to Democratic Practice

What are the implications of the kind of elite policy discourse examined in this essay? The expanding political role of policy specialists generally, and Black policy professionals specifically, demonstrates the increasing politicization of expertise in the policy discourse of America's evolving managerial society. Whether right, left, or center, policy experts – as members of the professional-managerial class – believe in the central importance of knowledge in the policy-making process. They seek to shape the issues, define the problems, and prescribe

solutions. Policy specialists seek to influence governmental policy making by means of communication: rhetoric, persuasion, data analysis, and argument through publishing and speaking (G. Majone 1989). This is a major dimension of political dynamics in the contemporary period. Policy experts align themselves with organizational and ideological bases of power. Neoconservative policy entrepreneurs Thomas Sowell and Glenn Loury had political and ideological support from the powerful, ultra-right Reagan regime. Sowell, Loury, and Wilson were associated with and spoke from the pedestal of powerful, elite universities. Along with mass media attention, these Black policy professionals became prominent actors in the national debate about social policies directed at the urban poverty crisis during the 1980s and beyond.

In America's increasingly knowledge-intensive society, expertise has become a key commodity for political policy making and the professional management of people. As this essay suggests, a fundamental characteristic of the policy deliberation process is a struggle to assert one definition of a problem over another. The ability to control the definition of a problem is a major political resource in the determination of public policy. Power, in the policy-making process, is a function of the extent to which the management of others is accomplished by getting them to accept the power wielder's views and perspectives about social reality. "This is achieved by controlling, influencing, and sustaining your definition of the situation since, if you can get others to share your reality, you can get them to act in the manner you prescribe" (P. Hall 1972: 51). When it comes to policy making, "it is not the facts that are crucial, but language forms and socially cued perceptions" (M. Edelman 1977: 85; see also Froman and Froman 1992). The discursive battle between neoconservative and neoliberal Black policy professionals, as discussed in this essay, demonstrated this theoretical perspective. On the one hand, Thomas Sowell and Glenn Loury defined the "underclass" predicament in individual terms and relied on a culture of poverty explanation. On the other hand, Wilson defined the problem in more structural terms and relied on a much more complex argument about spatial confinement and postindustrial or managerial economic transformation. Even so, Wilson's self-styled neoliberal policy ideas proved to be nearly as conservative as those of his right-wing proponents, suggesting that neoliberalism is conservatism with a sympathetic face. Given the power of the Reagan regime's political ideas and policy agenda, together with its war against the liberal welfare state, it is not surprising that the neoconservative (and neoliberal) assault on affirmative action and welfare policies has continued into the twenty-first century (see M. Katz 2001; M. Meerpool 1998; A. Reed 1999).

The politics of managerial society, a virtual politicization of knowledge and expertise, necessarily marginalizes meaningful citizen participation (see F. Fischer 2000). This development has had the most severe consequences for urban Black communities, which historically have been largely powerless. In view of these circumstances, it is widely recognized that a major challenge to democratic theory and practice is the need to bring ordinary citizens back into the policy-making

process (see De Sario and Langton 1987; F. Fischer 1990, 2000; J. Willinsky 2000). The role of citizens in the United States of America has been increasingly weakened by the growth of powerful institutions – both public and private – where members of the professional-managerial class are lodged and where they shape policy agendas beyond the view of ordinary citizens. In the evolving social order, the political ascendancy of policy intellectuals and professional experts exacerbates the disempowerment of citizens. Indeed, power is exercised at the expense of the people.

This obstruction to citizen participation largely is a structural dimension of the increasing complexity of policy problems in managerial society. Complexity demands expertise. Professional experts and policy intellectuals gain increasing authority and autonomy (S. Brint 1994). It also is a function of the mystifying technical discourse or language that serves – often intentionally – to intimidate those who attempt to contest or deliberate with professional experts (J. Forester 1989; A. Gouldner 1979; R. Hummel 1977). In short, this is one of the critical issues facing the future of democracy in the new age of knowledge, science, and technology. Any credible theory of democratic practice needs to consider seriously the possibility of democratizing the mechanisms that integrate scientific expertise and political discourse. Professional experts, and the powerful knowledge institutions to which they belong, are today clearly working in the interest of an elitist rather than a democratic political society. More and more, policy professionals are being trained to become agents of a new system of technocratic power (Silva and Slaughter 1984). In the new society, knowledge is used increasingly not for citizen participation but for social management.

The alternative to managerial politics is a reconstitution of the organization, mobilization, and power of ordinary citizens, particularly Blacks and Latinos at the level of local communities. This means a renaissance in Black and Latino activism, initiative, self-reliance organizations, community-based development and service-delivery programs, political lobbying and policy advocacy efforts, and direct action political protest groups. In a knowledge-driven managerial polity, citizen activists and community leaders themselves need to view knowledge as a key resource in their efforts to resist the power of policy experts, the managerial class, and of the institutions they represent. In a manner of speaking, Black and Latino community activists will need to become policy analysts and advocates in order to put forward their own policy agendas for achieving social justice and to hold policy professionals accountable and to make them responsive to the people's needs (see F. Fischer 1990, 2000; S. Schram 1999). As an additional strategy to challenge managerial power, community groups can also employ their own policy specialists in order to assert a counter-discourse that challenges and resists the power of professional-managerial policy entrepreneurs.

Indications are that politics and policy making in America's evolving managerial estate may be increasingly repressive, elitist, and anti-democratic (F. Fischer 2000). In response, there is a growing cynical disillusionment among the people about the role of professional experts and policy technocrats, along with

mounting distrust of government and other social institutions (J. Goldfarb 1991, 1998). In the face of increasing multitudes of impoverished and unwanted urban residents, the new social order is rapidly becoming a *garrison-prison state*, which is characterized by the increasing militarization of the police, the dramatic growth of prisons, and the unrestrained police murder and incarceration of Blacks and Latinos (see F. Donner 1990; D. Garland 2001; J. James 1996; H. Lasswell 1941; C. Parenti 1999). These developments, along with the expanding roles of policy intellectuals and the increasing politicization of expert knowledge, also signal the managerial imperative – the coming of an increasingly fragmented, nihilistic, and repressive society. The new politics of policy making is witnessing an increasing nexus between professional policy specialists and professional politicians – a veritable convergence of knowledge and power – which appears to dominate, monopolize, and manipulate the dynamics of public policy discourse. This springs from the growing complexity of social problems and the demand for expertise. *The great threat of the managerial polity is to the belief in and practice of democracy itself.* If there is to be a democratic society in America's future, the role and responsibility of policy experts and their specialized knowledge cannot be to manage the people but to improve the quality of public discourse by probing assumptions, raising issues, and thereby helping the people to consider different formulations of problems and a wider set of possible solutions (G. Majone 1988, 1989). Policy intellectuals need to become not servants of the powerful few, but representatives of the silenced masses; policy intellectuals must become dissenters who speak truth to power (E. Said 1994). In the final analysis, knowledge must have a more public value and role so that the people can decide their own future (J. Willinski 2000). As we stand at the dawn of the new millennium, a burning question is whether industrial-capitalism and American democracy can survive an increasingly technocratic, elitist policy-making process that more and more defines the managerial age.

D Not by Bread Alone

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

From the Nile to the Niger: The Evolution of African Spiritual Concepts

Charles Finch, III

Introduction

In the parlance of alchemy, each life has, *in potentia*, a *Magnum Opus* or a Great Work to accomplish. For Cheikh Anta Diop, it was to repair that ruptured cord that tied contemporary West African history to that of ancient Northeast Africa, i.e., to the Nile Valley civilizations whose origins were traceable to 10,500 BCE. Much was achieved by Diop and others reforging those linkages in the domains of language, culture, manners, customs, and material artifacts. Though the domain of religious ideas was not ignored, more work remained to be done to reestablish that indelible connection linking the theology, symbols, and spiritual conceptions of the ancient Nile to those of West African cultures, particularly those now situated in areas lying between the Senegal River and the confluence of the Niger-Benue Rivers. It is here that the traditional West African religions or world-systems, when examined carefully, reveal numerous and unmistakable parallels to ancient Nile Valley thought and religion. It has become even more important to reestablish the continuity of African history, particularly at a time when calls for an African Renaissance, first sounded by Diop in 1948, have become more insistent. Since there is absolutely no prospect for such a renaissance without a revival of the most dynamic and empowering of African spiritual values, a study looking at the comprehensive universe of African spiritual meaning in time and space is an indispensable undertaking.

Neteru: The Divine Powers of the Ancient Nile Valley

The word *neter* (pl. *neteru*) as used by the ancient Egyptians is usually translated as "god" or "deity," but E. A. Wallis Budge (1904, 1934) maintained that the word meant or implied "self-existence" or "eternal renewal." It may have been related to the Egyptian name of the Saitic Neith (i.e., *Net*, meaning "that which is"). R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz stated that *neter*, in effect, meant "power" or "principle" and the symbol of the *neter* seemed to have been the stone axe. The reason for this tool symbolizing the *neter* is obscure, though in other parts of Africa the hatchet is associated with certain divinities, namely Shango, *orisha* of thunder and lightning among the Yoruba.

Though the entire Egyptian pantheon was eventually to consist of some 2,000 *neteru* or deities, the concept of a single creative power, a supreme being, is present from the very beginning. This being was called *U*, or "The One," or *Neter u*, "God One." The *neteru* thus came to be seen as the active powers or principles of the One. It could therefore be said that the supreme being was The One whose Powers (*neteru*) were many; thus "monotheism" resolved into "polytheism" and vice versa.

The Primordial Manifestations of the Creator and the Created

Several categories of *neteru* are discernible in the ancient Egyptian pantheon, in the same way that the Greeks distinguished between the titans, the gods proper, and the demi-gods. Among the ancient Egyptians there is clearly an older cycle of *neteru* and they represent the cosmic powers of primordial creation and ordering of the universe. They inspired deep reverence and awe among the dynastic Egyptians, for everything in the universe (including all the other *neteru*) was said to have sprung from them. They represent the oldest concepts of deity known to the ancient Nile dwellers.

1. *Ta-Urt* or *Ta-weret*, appears to be the oldest identifiable deity in the pantheon. She is a hippopotamus goddess (*netert*), often represented as standing on her hind legs, belly protruding, hands cupping her breasts. Her figurines are the oldest yet found, dating back to the pre-dynastic period. In her name, *Ta* means "earth" and *Urt* means "great," which makes her the zoomorphic form of the "great earth." Hippopotami are obese, aquatic animals floating in the waters of Africa; the earth was also imagined as "the Great Round," floating in the waters of Heaven. Ta-Urt is the primordial Great Mother deity, one of the earliest concretized forms of divinity. In Greece she was called Gaia, "Mother Earth."
2. *Nun* (or *Nu*) was the "initial un-creation," the *primum materium* of existence. Théophile Obenga has shown that the Pyramid Texts posit a "pre-created"

material state known as *Nun*, the primal or abyssal "waters" out of which all created things emanated. This watery Matter becomes conscious of itself and projects outward, igniting creation. Atum, in the form of a serpent or a rising mound, was the upsurge out of *Nun* that presaged creation. All potentialities and possibilities are contained in this Primal Matter called *Nun* and begin to manifest at the first moment of creation, at the "Beginning of beginnings" or "First Occasion," called *tep* or *tep sepi*, by the Egyptians. In ancient Egypt, then, there existed a speculation about what existed before the beginning of the universe, a state that modern physics assumes is impossible to imagine. *Nu* or *Nun* would be *Ouranos* (Uranus) in the Greek pantheon.

3 *The Cosmic Egg* was the universal egg containing the divine breath of life and was an image of that out of which all creation emerged. The Great Cackler, *Geb*, was he out of whom the Cosmic Egg came. It is of interest that astrophysicists have found evidence that the universe is closed; since it curves elliptically, it could be said to take the form of an infinitely vast egg. In Greek mythology it was referred to as the "Orphic Egg."

4 *The Four Primordial Pairs* represent the fundamental state of things just before the creation of spacetime, thus of existence *prior* to the existence of the universe. They were paired as follows:

Nu(n) and *Nut*: the male/female aspects of the Primal Waters. Nut became the personification of the heavenly ocean.

Hehu and *Hehut*: the male/female aspects of Timelessness or Infinity.

Keku and *Kekut*: the male/female aspects of the Primal Darkness.

Amen or *Kerh* and *Ament* or *Kerhet*: the male/female aspects of the Hidden/Invisible, or Inactivity/Inertness. The Great Invisible also connotes latency and potentiality.

Thus the precreated state, according to Egyptian thought, was a watery Void, infinite, dark, and invisible. A similar state is postulated in the opening chapters of Genesis.

The Divine Triads of Egypt

By the advent of dynastic times, circa 4,000 BCE, in each of the 24 original names of Egypt there was established a well-delineated cycle of divine triads. Indeed, Egyptian religion as a whole, with its rites, ceremonies, and conceptions of deity, was already well advanced. It seems likely that in earlier times, each district worshiped its own divinities, which were all incorporated into the body of Egyptian religion by the integrative trend evident in the period leading up to the unification of Egypt by Aha Menes 4,000 BCE. Several of the more prominent local triads came to be worshiped nationally and their symbols, attributes, and liturgies became important generally throughout Egypt.

1 *The Triad of Annu* (Heliopolis) consisted of *Atum*, *Kheper*, and *Ra*. Atum was the first *neter* of Annu and the earliest of the *neteru* to be represented in the form of a man. Atum rose out of *Nun* at the onset of creation and, not finding a place to stand, created the firmament. Atum was frequently represented as a serpent in this capacity. By a kind of divine onanism, Atum created Shu and Tefnut, who then brought forth humanity. Atum is thus the Man-god, creator of the firmament, and father of humanity. He is also a lion-god and the god of twilight or the setting sun, making him, in this capacity, a forerunner of Osiris. Moreover, he is the prototype of Adam in Genesis.

Kheper was the scarab beetle who was the personification of "becoming," so that, in one interpretation, creative action takes his form. He is often shown pushing the sun disk across the sky in the same way that natural scarabs push their spherical balls of dung, containing their eggs, along the ground. Kheper was also known as *Apur*, that is, "the flier up," in recognition of the beetle's capacity for flight. As Apur, he becomes Apollo among the Greeks.

Ra became the dominant *neter* at Annu beginning in the 5th Dynasty (ca. 3,000 BCE). He is represented as the noonday sun, at its full strength and glory. Zoomorphically, his form is the golden hawk and he became the supreme *neter* of the Egyptian state pantheon for the remainder of Egyptian history. The pharaohs were ever after styled "sons of Ra." In Greece, Ra was known as Helios.

The female triad at Annu was *Iusaaset*, *Nebt-hetep* ("Lady of Peace"), and *Rat*. Iusaaset and Nebt-hetep were consorts of Atum. Rat was the consort of Ra and seemingly crossed over into the solar worship of pre-Islamic Arabia as *Ilat*.

2 *The Triad of Men-nefer* (Memphis) was comprised of *Ptah*, *Sekhmet*, and *Nefer-Tem*, later *Iu-em-hept* (Imhotep). Ptah's name derives from the Egyptian word meaning "to open" and Gerald Massey (1880, 1970) asserts that Ptah was the "opener of Amenta." He was the divine sculptor, fashioner, engraver, and carver – the Great Craftsman *par excellence*. He is often shown fashioning the Egg of the World on a potter's wheel. Ptah was closely identified with both Kheper and *Nun* and one of the forms of Ptah was as *Ta-Tanen*, an earth-god. But Ptah was primarily the Demiurge, the Great Artificer or Architect of the universe. He was the patron of all builders, masons, and artisans and was sometimes represented as standing on a cubit, the measure that symbolized building. It was no coincidence that the height of pyramid building was attained during the ascendancy of Ptah in the Old Kingdom, near his sacred city, Memphis or *Men-nefer*. Since he was the "opener of the earth," he was also sometimes represented as a dwarf or pygmy, reputed to know the secrets of the minerals of the earth. Ptah was thus the patron of mining and metallurgy as well. Another form of Ptah was as *Seker*, the deity of darkness and the underworld. As Osiris gained prominence, he assumed most of the attributes of Ptah-Seker. Ptah's

zoomorphic symbol was the bull and in this guise, he was related to Hapi or Apis. The Greeks identified him with their own Hephaestos, the Divine Metalworker.

Sekhmet was the lion-headed goddess who was the sister-wife of Ptah. As lion-headed, she was identified with Tefnut, the sister of Shu and lion-headed as well. Hathor also seems to have been identified with Sekhmet. Her name may derive from a word meaning a fire and she represented the fiery heat of the sun and also the fire of sexual passion. Like many of the *neteru*, Sekhmet seems to have had a Nubian or Sudanese provenance. With Hathor, she was identified with the Eye of Ra and in this capacity was a Destroyer by bringing disease, pestilence, and fever. Sekhmet was, nonetheless, the patronness of the *sunu*, the priest-physicians of ancient Egypt, presumably because she could ward off disease as well as bring it on.

Nefer-Tem was the son of Ptah and Sekhmet and like his mother, was zoomorphically represented as lion-headed. Nefer-Tem was probably a form of Atum that Gerald Massey thinks was preceded by, and therefore sprung from, Ptah. He was most often shown either holding a lotus plant or sitting on top of one. Like Horus, Nefer-Tem was the god of the rising sun and new life; the lotus, arising out of the depths of the waters atop a long stem, is an umbilical image.

Iu-em-hetep (Imhotep) was a late form (sixth century BCE) of the son of Ptah who superseded Nefer-Tem. He was the deified form of the 3rd Dynasty physician Imhotep. His name meant “he comes in peace.” Imhotep was venerated by the Greeks as their own Asclepios, god of medicine.

3 *The Triad of Khemennu* (Hermopolis) consisted of *Tehuti* (Thoth), *Maat*, and *Sesheta*. In some ways Tehuti was unique among the *neteru* for he is the Divine Messenger who also personifies the Mind, Will, and Intelligence of The One. He is the Master of the Word (i.e., of Divine Speech) and the patron of all learning. Tehuti is also considered the “Measurer,” particularly of time, and is one of the earliest masculine deities associated with the moon. It is noteworthy that the early inhabitants of the Nile Valley followed the lunar calendar. He is also the “Balancer” and is featured prominently in the “weighing of the heart” in the funerary ritual. In this capacity Tehuti is the Great Arbiter and he reequilibrated the relationship between Set and Horus at the conclusion of their titanic battle. Tehuti has two important zoomorphic representations: the ibis and the cynocephalic ape (baboon). The ibis, in nature, appears to give enemas to itself, making it a natural image of the physician. The cynocephalic ape is the “herald of the sun” because of its propensity to chatter at dawn. The Greeks gave Tehuti the title Trismegistos, “three times great,” and identified him with their own Thrice Greatest Hermes, the source of all wisdom and learning. The Hermetica, encompassing all arcane subjects such as alchemy and astrology, is traceable to Tehuti.

Maat was the consort of Tehuti and was always symbolized by the ostrich feather. Her name literally means "that which is straight," and she personified all that connoted right, order, balance, and truth. In one way, she was supreme over all *neteru*, because all were subject to the rule of universal law she personified. Her feather, representing all righteousness and justice, was the balance against which the heart was weighed in the judgment scene. The modern image of Justice, a woman holding a balance scale, comes down directly from the ancient image of Maat.

Sesheta, the third member of the triad, was a goddess associated with Tehuti as the inventor of letters and the patroness of books. She was also the keeper of time, since she is seen holding a palm branch, symbol of time, and counting of the years. Sesheta is thus the one who presides over history and its recording. The Greek muse Clio descends from Sesheta.

4 *The Triad of Waset* or *Ta-Apt* (Thebes) was composed of *Amen*, *Mut*, and *Khonsu*. Amen was one of the Primordial Eight *neteru* who, with his sacred city Waset or Thebes, rose to prominence at the onset of the Middle Kingdom around 2200 BCE. Thebes was first dedicated to *Apt*, a form of the hippopotamus goddess Ta-Urt, before becoming the center of the worship of Amen. Thus an early name for the place, Ta-apt, later became hellenized to Thebes. The word *amen* means "hidden" and it is also a name for "the west." Its root *men* means "to be permanent." Amen became fused with the supreme state deity Ra as Amen-Ra and was the ruling deity of Egypt for the ensuing 2,000 years. Amen is repeatedly said to come forth from the land of the *Medjay* and from *Punt*, that is to say Africa south of Egypt. This reference to Amen's southern origin is perhaps why Napata in Cush (Ethiopia) became such an important center of his worship beginning in the 18th Dynasty (1580 BCE). Amen's zoomorphic symbol was the ram. To the Greeks, Amen was their own king of the gods, Zeus, also zoomorphically linked to the ram.

Mut was Amen's consort and her name means literally "mother." As Wallis Budge says, she was the "World-Mother" from which all existence sprang. The word *mut* may be etymologically related to our own word "mother." She was identified with Apt, the earliest goddess of Thebes. In Greek times, Mut was called Hera, queen of the gods and wife of Zeus.

Khonsu was a moon deity and the son of Amen and Mut. His name means "traveler," a reference to the changing phases of the moon and to its movement across the night sky. Like Thoth, he became, because of his movements, a type of messenger and also timekeeper. Among the Greeks, Khonsu would have been a type of the youthful Hermes.

5 To the *Triad at Abu* (Elephantine) belonged *Khnum*, *Satit*, and *Anqet*. Khnum was the guardian of the cataract and regulator of the flow of the Nile waters. The word *khnum* means "to unite, join, or build." Like Amen, his symbol was a ram, but of the flat-horned variety; like Ptah, he was a fashioner, molding human beings out of clay on the potter's wheel. As the regulator of the Nile flood, Khnum was the deity to whom appeals were directed when

famine threatened because of low waters. As with Amen, Khnum was profoundly venerated by Nubians and, with his two consorts, seems to have been of Nubian origin.

Satit was the consort of Khnum and her name derives from the word *sat* or *sati*, meaning to "shoot, eject, throw, or pour out." Her name suggests that at an early time she was a goddess of the hunt like Artemis-Diana of Greco-Roman mythology. She is often depicted with a bow and two arrows. In dynastic times, Sati was probably associated with the flood waters shooting forth over the cataracts during flood season in the Nile Valley.

Anqet was the second consort of Khnum whose name derives from the word *anq*, meaning "to surround, to embrace." Undoubtedly her name refers to the flood waters "surrounding" or immersing the fields, thus regenerating them. Anqet was worshiped throughout Northern Nubia.

The Osirian Cycle

With the Egyptian preoccupation with resurrection and immortality, with Anot dying a second time, it is no wonder that the cult of Osiris, the god of eternal life, should hold such a commanding place in Egyptian spiritual sensibilities for so long. It is in the Drama of Osiris, the archetype of the Christian dispensation, that the authentic soul of ancient Egypt is to be found.

The position of Asar or Osiris was unique in the pantheon of Egypt. His name, a compound of *As(t)* or *Isis* and *ar*, meaning "born of or created of," means literally "Acreated of Isis," making him at first a type of Horus as the son of Isis. Only later does Osiris become the brother-consort of Isis. He is the god-man who ruled as king, died (at the hands of Set), and was resurrected (by Isis), thus emerging as the type and symbol of resurrection after death and of life everlasting. The prominence of other *neteru* rose and fell over the course of Egyptian history, but Osiris maintained his central position in the religious sensibilities of all Egyptians for a period spanning 4,000 years. He assumed the attributes of many preceding *neteru*, especially those of Ptah, Seker, and Atum, and was represented by a slew of symbols. Osiris was the personification of the growing grain that was cut down at harvest, eaten as the bread, and then resurrected in the growth of new grain. He was also represented as presiding over the growing of grapes and the making of wine that was in some sense his "blood" and "spirit." For this reason, the Greeks considered Osiris as their own Dionysus, who was thought to have been born in North Africa. Osiris was also the growing tree, indeed all growing green things. Osiris had a lunar aspect as the waxing moon and was the sun that had set (i.e., the sun by night, making its perilous journey through *Amenta*, the "Hidden Land"). He was zoomorphically represented by the bull and considered to be the Lord of Eternity and the Judge of the Dead. The souls of all the deceased had to be justified before Osiris at the "Weighing of the Hearts," presided over by Thoth or Anubis. In his

mummified form, the emblem of resurrection, Osiris was the *keres(t)*, that in the Ptolemaic period yielded the Greek word *kristos*, meaning "anointed." This word *kristos* is the very word *christ* that became indelibly linked with the name of Jesus.

Ast or Isis was the sister-consort of Osiris and her name means "seat, throne, abode, womb, tomb." She became the most exalted of the great goddesses of Egypt and, like Osiris, her attributes were many. She was the feminine grain in its nourishing aspect, and she presided over beer-making as well. In Greek times, she was linked with the goddess Demeter, goddess of home, hearth, and horticulture. She was the full or pregnant moon whose zootype was the cow. She was identified with the star Sirius, the herald of the sun and harbinger of the flood. The flood was said to begin with a teardrop of Isis, so she was also known as *Remi*, "the Weeper." Isis was styled the "Queen of Heaven" and was the one who reconstituted the dismembered body of Osiris, reanimating it with the breath of life. Finally, Isis was the Virgin Mother of Heru (Horus) and one of her names was *Meri-f-u*, "his beloved one." Isis was identified with nearly every goddess in the pantheon, but most closely with Hathor, Bast, and Serqet. The cult of Isis was the only one to move beyond the confines of Egypt. She became one of the most venerated goddesses in the Roman Empire and her statuettes in her shrines in Europe were, during the period of Christianization, transformed into the Black Madonna.

Heru or Horus was the son of Isis and Osiris. His name means "face" as in "the face of heaven," because Horus was originally a sky-god. He was represented as the Divine Son of Isis but, in another manifestation, as the son and consort of Het-her or Hathor. Early on, Horus was a complementary twin to Set, but he and Set eventually became antagonists and evolved into the warring twins of light and darkness. In dynastic times, Horus was the son and avenger of Osiris, meaning that he was Osiris reborn. Horus became an image of the rising sun conquering the "dragon of darkness," Set or Apep. His birthday was December 25, the day the sun begins to rise on the ecliptic in the northern hemisphere. It is in this role as the "conqueror of the dragon" that Horus may have lent his Egyptian name *Heru* to the Greek word *hero*. As *Heru-khuti*, Horus was the prototype of the quintessential Greek hero Hercules; Horus was also the forerunner of the mythic Christian hero and dragon-slayer, St. George. Horus was zoomorphically shown as the Golden Hawk and in this aspect was fused with Ra. The pharaohs were considered human incarnations of Horus. As the Divine Infant cradled in the arms of Isis, Horus became part of the widespread worship of Isis and thus the prototype of the Madonna's Child, the infant Jesus.

Set is the fourth and most enigmatic "actor" in the divine drama of Osiris. Set is undoubtedly one of the oldest – if not *the* oldest – of the Nile Valley masculine *neteru* and is represented in the most diverse guises of any of the *neteru* in the pantheon. Among his numerous zoomorphic forms, he was variously the serpent, the jackal, the hippo, the raven, the ass, the boar, the goat, or the antelope. He was undoubtedly a *neter* that originated to the south of Egypt and early

on was entirely benevolent. The word *set* has a variety of meanings: "tail, earth, fire, shoot, eject, bow, quake, seat, cut." By early dynastic times, Set had become the Great Adversary, the murderer of Osiris, and the personification of death, drought, and destruction. In one of his aspects he was the light of the solar fire and thus the prototype of Lucifer, whose name means "light-bringer." Set eventually becomes Satan as *Set-an*, "the second manifestation of Set." Whereas Osiris was *Kem-Wer*, "the Great Black One," Set was *Teshert*, "the Red One." Set and Horus engaged in a titanic battle for supremacy, reflecting the contest between Darkness and Light, that Horus appears to win, though the relative positions of the two are reestablished in a dynamic equilibrium by Thoth. There are obscure hints that Set and Aset (Isis) were formerly connected, though if so, Set was supplanted in this arrangement by Asar (Osiris). Despite his change of status in the pantheon, Set and his worship remained a powerful factor throughout the history of dynastic Egypt. To the Greeks, Set was both Typhon, the Dragon of Destruction, and Ares, the god of war and conflict.

Other Important *Neteru* of Egypt

Anup or *Anubis* is among the more shadowy *neteru*, always depicted in the form of a black jackal. Anubis is invariably associated with the dead and everything to do with mortuary practices, undoubtedly because of the jackal's role as the eater of carrion. This characteristic of the jackal may explain the name of Anubis, which may derive from either *anep* meaning "to decay" or *anp* meaning "to swathe," in reference to Anubis's role as mummifier. Anubis most probably emanates from Set and is therefore older than either Thoth or Osiris, two *neteru* with whom he is closely associated. Anubis precedes Thoth as the "guide by night," taken from the jackal's nocturnal propensities. Mythically, he is the son of Nepthys, sister of Isis, by either Set or Osiris. As the mummifier of the dead and the balancer of the scales before Osiris, Anubis is, after Osiris himself, the most important *neter* in the funerary ritual. Other manifestations of Anubis are *Wep-wat*, the jackal or wolf *neter* who is the "Opener of the Way," and *Sab*, a jackal whose name means "Judge." These facts give clear indications that Anubis was Judge of the Dead prior to Osiris. The current pole star Polaris is in the Little Bear constellation, known in the Egyptian planisphere as the Jackal. In Greek myth, Anubis and Wep-wat appear as the three-headed hound Cerberus, who guards the entrance to Hades.

Aten was the disc of the sun and therefore coeval with Ra. He seems also to have been related to Set, since he was said to have emerged from his head. Aten becomes briefly preeminent during the reign of Akhenaten (ca. 1,330 BCE), who raised him to the position of sole deity. His name may be the source of the Semitic *adon*, meaning "lord."

Geb is the Egyptian earth-god who was the consort of the sky-goddess Nut and Chief Magistrate of the *neteru*. In dynastic times, Geb was accounted the

father of Osiris, Isis, Set, Nepthys, and the Elder Horus. His zoomorphic form was the Goose known as "the Cackler." To the Greeks, he was Father Cronos, whom the Romans called Saturn.

Hapi was the personification of the Nile. In human form, he was depicted as a man, with one female breast, pouring out water from two vases, representing the Upper and Lower Niles. Around 320 BCE he is fused with Osiris as *Serapis*, the preeminent deity of Ptolemaic times. The Apis Bull was sacred to Hapi and the name Apis derives from Hapi.

Het-Her or *Hathor* was a very old goddess. Her name means "mansion of Horus," making her an early mother-consort of Horus and identifying her with Isis, who may be later than Hathor. In addition to Isis, Hathor is identified with Nut and Sekhmet. As *Hathor-Nehsi*, "Hathor the Nubian," she too originates in the south and she is often shown and referred to as black skinned. Like Isis, she is zoomorphically the cow and related to the moon. She is, with Nut, "Lady of the Waters" and "Lady of the Sycamore." Hathor presides over love, marriage, sensuality, and merrymaking, and the Greeks identified her with their Aphrodite. Her son *Ihy* is the Egyptian prototype of Eros (Cupid). Hathor also had a "terrible" aspect as the "Eye of Ra" who brought destruction upon an impious human race. She had seven major shrines with seven personifications referred to as the "Seven Hathors."

Net or *Neith* was yet another very old Egyptian cosmic goddess whose sacred city was Sais. Her name had several meanings: "water," "weave," and "that which is." In effect, Neith represented the very fabric of the universe and across the lintel to her temple were inscribed the words: "I am all that has been and shall be. No mortal may lift my veil." Like Satit, she was depicted with two crossed arrows and the Greeks derived their own Athene from her. She was very probably a form of the sky-goddess Nut.

The Period of Transition

Between 1680 and 660 BCE Egypt experienced one significant era of conquest, that of the Hyksos or Shepherd Kings from 1680 to 1580 BCE. The Hyksos were probably nomadic peoples of the eastern desert, between the Nile and the Red Sea, who took advantage of a period of inner turmoil and weakness in Egypt to overwhelm the country, almost without a fight. They would have had religious and cultural links to the Canaanitic peoples and it is during the period of Hyksos rule that a small, marginal band of shepherds led by their patriarch, Jacob (a.k.a. Israel), migrated into Lower Egypt. After driving out the Hyksos, native Egyptian kings from Upper Egypt established their rule and the storied 18th Dynasty at Waset or Thebes (Luxor) began a campaign of conquest that eventually resulted in an empire stretching from the Blue Nile (Khartoum) to Anatolia (Turkey). During this period, known as the New Kingdom, Egypt reaches the zenith of its imperial power, wealth, and glory, which more or less continues through the

19th Dynasty from 1580 to 1200 BCE. At the end of the 19th Dynasty, Egypt, under Rameses III, repelled an invasion from a powerful coalition of northern Mediterranean pirate nations known as the Sea Peoples. Though Egypt is completely victorious against the Sea Peoples, from the 20th Dynasty on, a slow but inexorable decline is noticeable, so that by 750 BCE Egypt has come under the hegemony of its powerful neighbor to the south, Cush. In fact, Cushite pharaohs led their armies north to restore order in a rapidly disintegrating political environment in Egypt, and by 730 BCE have established the 25th Dynasty. There is a mini-renaissance in Egypt that flourished briefly during the 25th Dynasty, but within 40 years Egypt is menaced by a non-African aggressor for the first time in 500 years: the Assyrians.

The Assyrians, after a succession of battles stretching over 20 years, defeat the 25th Dynasty pharaoh Taharka in 660 BCE, forcing the Cushites to retreat to their capital at Napata. Though the Assyrians' domination of Egypt is shortlived, their victory against the 25th Dynasty pharaohs seems to set off a series of invasions of Egypt from outside Africa that will continue in waves for the next 1,300 years. One after another, warlike nations bent on empire – the Persians, Macedonians (Greeks), Romans, and Arabs – follow the Assyrians and wash over Egypt until the Egypt of the pharaohs vanishes from history.

The invasions of the Nile Valley have repercussions beyond the borders of Egypt itself; they are in fact felt along the Nile all the way to the confluence of the Blue and White Niles at present-day Khartoum. What is not sufficiently appreciated is that the lower (northern) two-fifths of the Nile was united by ties of history, culture, and the geopolitical overlordship of both Egyptian and Cushitic rulers into one great geocultural complex. It is thus possible to speak of Nile Valley culture in exactly the same way one might speak of European culture. Thus when Egypt and Nubia are assaulted by the shock waves of invasion and conquest, the whole region trembles. These invasions set in motion events that will decisively and permanently impact West African history.

Professor Boubacar Lam, a Senegalese historian and disciple of Cheikh Anta Diop, made a startling discovery in the 1980s. There exists a Senegalese oral history, collected and compiled (only to be forgotten) shortly after World War I by Yoro Dyâo, a scion of Tuculor nobility in northern Senegal, which details and documents migrations into West Africa from the Nile Valley. From the Senegal River in the north to the Niger Delta in the southeast, the major ethnic groups virtually without exception preserve traditions of an eastern origin. These traditions have been commented on by ethnologists and historians; some, such as the Yoruba antiquarian J. O. Lucas, author of *The Religion of the Yorubas* (1948), have gone so far as to link some of these ethnic groups to ancient Egypt itself. Reverend Samuel Johnson, also of Yoruba extraction and the nineteenth-century author of *The History of the Yorubas* (1921), asserted that the Yorubas, at the very least, can trace their remote origins to Nubia. Moreover, Cheikh Anta Diop himself used comparative linguistic analysis to demonstrate the manner in which several Senegalese ethnic groups (e.g., the Wolof, Serer, Peul, Tuculor, and

Djola) all migrated into Senegal from an area where the Egyptian language was spoken or had influenced the local languages. However, Professor Lam found an extraordinary oral record whose existence had all but been forgotten. These Senegalese sagas describe no fewer than *six* migrations from Northeast Africa. The first one began late in the sixth century BCE, at the time of the Persian conquest, and the last one in the seventh century CE, right at or just before the time of the Arab invasions of Egypt around 632 CE. Thus the ethnic traditions along 2,500 miles of the West African coast that have linked dozens of peoples to Nile Valley culture are shown to have a solid basis in historical fact. Moreover, dozens of inland peoples of the Western Sudan have equally strong historical links to the ancient Nile Valley.

It would require detailed ethnographic work, including careful analyses of oral histories, to determine which of these peoples moved into West Africa when. However, it should be possible to determine which peoples were sent migrating west as a consequence of which invasion, going back to the Persian invasion of the sixth century BCE and possibly back to the Assyrian invasion of the seventh century BCE. It should be noted parenthetically that Diop asserted that the present-day Berbers are descended from the defeated Sea Peoples of the northern Mediterranean who were sent fleeing north and west by the victorious navies and armies of Rameses III in 1,200 BCE. Thus the Berbers' ancestors would have permanently abandoned seafaring and taken up a pastoral mode of life as they spread westward across Northern Africa. But so saying, there is in fact one Western Sudanic people for whom there are reasonably reliable dates for their migrations west and that can serve as a case study of the peopling of Western Africa from the regions around the Nile: the Dogon.

The Dogon: A West African Link to the Ancient Nile Valley

The Dogon, currently inhabiting the area abutting the Bandiagra cliffs in southeastern Mali not far from the Niger River city of Mopti, state categorically that they originally came from the northeast. According to their most important ethnographer, Marcel Griaule, they would have left their original home about 1,400 years ago, eventually settling in Mali. Ethnically and linguistically allied with the Bambara and the Borzo (the fisher people of the Niger), they would have lived in proximity to these peoples until 700 years ago. Then, under pressure of an advancing and militant Islam, they made, as a people, a calculated decision to migrate en masse to the Bandiagra cliffs region, very remote from the main population centers and caravan routes, a place no one wanted enough to bother conquering.

Of all the groups that can trace their ethnic and cultural origins to the Nile Valley, the Dogon seem to have been the one group that preserved most faithfully the cultural and spiritual legacy they carried with them when they began their

migrations. Far fewer corruptions seem to have crept into their world-system than in others in West Africa. That they did indeed see themselves as preserving a precious legacy is indicated by their determination to maintain their traditional way of life, complete with its symbols, ceremonies, rites, and knowledge, against the rising, almost irresistible, threat of Islam. They could not fight the armies of the empire-building Muslim West African kings, but they could remove themselves to a place where few cared to follow. In exploring the Dogon system, clear and abundant parallels – even identities – with ancient Egyptian thought are to be found. However, it is a singular fact that the Dogon did not play the role of mere preservers, but amplified and augmented the system that they brought with them from Northeast Africa. Table 27.1 (below) shows the linkages that can be delineated between Dogon and ancient Egyptian thought.

Table 27.1 does not exhaust the close cross-cultural correspondences between the Dogon and Egyptian world-systems, but does provide clear proof that the Dogon, in their new Western Sudanic home, recreated their society on the foundation of ancient Nile Valley cultural and spiritual values. In point of fact, they carried away from the Nile Valley and dedicated themselves to preserving a legacy that was increasingly under attack from the outside. In examining their worldview and mode of life, ancient Nile Valley civilization can still be seen to be alive and vibrant.

The African Powers: Present and Past

Since the late 1980s there has been an unprecedented surge in interest in West African traditional religions among African Americans. In this respect African Americans are having to catch up with other diasporic African populations in Brazil, Haiti, and Cuba, where African-derived religions, grafted onto Christianity, have been thriving for at least 300 years. But Africans in the diaspora share one thing in common: within themselves, they are all amalgams of different African spiritual lineages in a way that is not found in Africa. In Benin (Dahomey), for example, the *vod* are worshiped exclusively, though the worship of the *vod* was powerfully influenced by Yoruba *orisha* religion because Dahomey was a vassal to the Yoruba kingdom of Oyo for nearly two centuries. However, in the West, Yoruba, Dahomeyan, and Congolese traditions all co-mingle in the syncretic religions of the Caribbean and South America.

The above being so, it is very easy for African-descended populations in the diaspora to find commonalities among the various West African religions. Indeed, the commonalities seem far greater and more significant than the disparities. Looking at each of the major religions of West Africa *sui generis*, it becomes clear that they are all branches that spring from the same trunk; their similarities are simply too abundant and too close to admit of any other conclusion. Indeed, the difference between the worship of the *orishas* in western Nigeria and that of the *vod* of Benin (Dahomey) seems to be purely one of language and terminology.

Table 27.1 The Dogon: A West African link to the ancient Nile Valley

	Dogon	*Egyptian*
1 *Calendars*	360 days, 12 months, 30 days/month, 5-day weeks	360 days, 12 months, 30 days/month, 10-day weeks
2 *Complementary social groups*	Masculine/Feminine, Initiates/Non-initiates, Elders/Youth	Men/Women, Priests/ Laypersons, Old/Young
3 *Occupational castes*	Farmers, metalworkers, woodworkers, fishers, leatherworkers, griots	Agricultural peasantry, artisans, boatmen, stoneworkers, praise singers
4 *Theocratic governance*	Hogon (priest-ruler), totemic priests, council of elders, administrators	Pharaoh (priest-king), sacerdotal priests, royal administrators, scribes
5 *Lineage*	Patrifocal system superimposed on a kinship system through the female line	Patriarchal superstructure undergirded by matrilineal family succession
6 *Role of women*	In charge of home, control farm produce, fashion handiwork for sale, run the marketplace, possess own secret societies and priestesses, have right to divorce	Controlled home, pass surnames to children, own farms, produce handicrafts for market, controlled royal inheritance, maintained own priestesshoods, trained in certain professions
7 *Spiritual personality*	Nine components to the Self	Seven components to the Self
8 *Names*	Each person has four names representing his/her "power"	Names are considered "words of power"
9 *Higher powers*	Called *Nommo* and control the workings of the universe as active agents of the Creator	Called *Neters* and rule the universe as the active principles of the Creator
10 *The Creator*	Called *Amma*, which means "to hold firmly" or "to keep in the same place"	Called *Amen*, meaning "to make firm" or "establish permanently"
11 *The creation*	Before creation, *Amma* had no place to stand	Before creation, *Amen-Re* had no place to stand
12 *World egg*	*Amma* brought forth an egg containing the cosmos	The Egg of the World was fashioned by *Ptah* on the potter's wheel

Table 27.1 *Continued*

	Dogon	*Egyptian*
13 The mind of the Creator	The universe came forth as a thought in the mind of *Amma*, who then uttered the Creative Word	The *neter Thoth* is the mind of Amen-Re where the universe is formed before it came forth as the Word
14 Spittle and breath	*Amma* created life on Earth from his spittle and breath	*Atum* created *Tefnut* from his spittle and *Shu* from his breath as the ancestors of living beings
15 The original powers	There are eight *Nommo* or primordial ancestors of man	There are eight primeval *Neters*
16 Opening of the eyes	The creation of the universe begins when *Amma* "opens his eyes"	Light is produced from the primeval darkness when Re opens his two eyes
17 The original twins	*Amma* created the original Male/Female Twins as the *po* (primal seed)	*Atum* created the original Male/Female Twins, *Shu* and *Tefnut*
18 The seat and the seeds	Within *Amma* is the "seat," which is the womb where the primordial seeds germinated	*Isis* is *Ast* whose name means "seat" and "womb"; she is the source of grains and seeds
19 Fermentation and resurrection	*Amma* caused things in evolution to "ferment," which is a "resurrection" of cereal grains destroyed in the brewing process	*Osiris* represents the harvested grain and through him grain and grapes are fermented to produce spiritous liquors; it is another form of his resurrection
20 The fish-being	The *nommo Anagonno* is a fish-being who is the precursor of man; *Ana* means "rain" and "man"	*An* is the Great Fish who was the harbinger of the Nile flood, "the tears of Re"
21 The serpent of time	*Nommo Sizu* is the Serpent who symbolizes immortality	The Serpent *Sata* dies and is reborn each day

Table 27.1 *Continued*

	Dogon	*Egyptian*
22 The lotus	"For it is said of the water lily [lotus] that it is the 'eye of the pond,' that is, of the water and of him who resides there, O *Nommo*, creature of *Amma* and begetter of humanity"	The *neter Nefer Tem* is associated with the lotus plant growing out of a pool of water, out of which emerges the head of the resurrected deceased
23 The creative water	*Amma* began his creation with water	*Atum* began his creation in the primordial waters of *Nun*
24 Disorder and chaos	*Ogo*, the Fox, is the universal principle of disorder, disorganization, opposition, and diversification	*Set/Anubis*, the Jackal or Wolf, is the author of all rebellion and conflict; he leads the "Children of Revolt"
25 Prematurity and incompleteness	*Ogo* was the premature being who stopped his own gestation and burst from his mother's side, dooming himself to incompleteness	*Set* tore himself prematurely from his mother's womb, emerging from her side, and is sometimes shown lame and imperfect because he is incomplete
26 Primordial incest	*Ogo* committed a primordial act of incest with his mother, the Earth	*Geb* the Earth-god committed incest with his mother
27 Celestial ladder	The "chain of *Ogo*," also called his ladder, connects earth and sky	The "ladder of *Set*" connected heaven and earth
28 Thief of light	*Ogo* stole the sun's fire	*Set* stole the sun's light
29 Power comes from the south	*Ogo* emerged from *Amma*'s womb to the south	*Set* comes from and is identified with the south
30 Opener of the way	*Amma* made *Ogo* descend to the World after an "unauthorized ascent" to "show the way" for all future descents of the beings created in his womb	The Jackal *Wep-au-wat* is the "Opener of the Way" for all those souls descending into *Amenta*, "the Hidden Land"

Table 27.1 *Continued*

	Dogon	*Egyptian*
31 The turning of the Earth	The Earth turns by the movement of the Paws of the Fox (*Ogo*); it is said: "The Fox has turned with his tail; the Earth has turned on its axis"	In the Egyptian planisphere, the north polar axis, upon which the Earth turns, points to the constellation of the Jackal (Ursa Minor)
32 Sacrifice of the twin	*Nommo Anagonno*, the Twin of *Ogo*, who personifies the seeds and growing plants, will be sacrificed then resurrected to bring back order into *Amma*'s creation. However, the equilibrium between order and disorder will be maintained in *Amma*'s universe	*Osiris*/*Horus*, the twin of *Set*, personifies all growing things; his death and dismemberment by *Set* leads to his resurrection, then a victory over Sethian disorder. *Thoth* restores the balance between *Osiris*/*Horus* and *Set*, between order and disorder
33 Humanity's guardian	*Nommo Anagonno* is humanity's ancestor, provider of spiritual principles, and protector	*Osiris*/*Horus* is the ancestor of human beings, the agent of their spiritual resurrection, and their guardian
34 The sacrifice of the phallus	*Nommo Anagonno*, the Fish-Being who is the Image of Man, was separated from his penis at his sacrifice, which was swallowed by a fish	*Osiris* at the time of his death and dismemberment was separated from his penis, which was swallowed by a fish
35 The crucified victim	*Nommo Anagonno* is the sacrificed victim who will be resurrected; he is tied to a tree standing up, arms outstretched, and attached to two branches extending at right angles from the tree	*Osiris* is principle of sacrifice and resurrection who is raised upright on the *Tet* cross, the symbol of a tree; the raising of the *Tet* cross is the act of resurrection
36 Feeding mankind	*Nommo Anagonno* "shared his body among mankind to feed it"	*Osiris*, in dying, gives his body as harvested grain to humanity for food

Table 27.1 *Continued*

	Dogon	*Egyptian*
37 Removal of the organs of the body	*Amma* takes the body of the sacrificed *Nommo Anagonno*, removes the seven organs, and preserves them for the restoration of the *Nommo* at the time of his resurrection	During the mummification of the osirified deceased, four organs are removed from the body, placed in four Canopic jars for preservation, then restored to the deceased at the time of resurrection
38 Restoration of the body	*Amma* cuts up the body of the sacrificed *Nommo*, disperses it, then regathers it, reknits the body with all the organs replaced, and brings the *Nommo* back to life (in some versions it is *Ogo* the Fox who performs these functions)	*Set*, after the death of *Osiris*, dismembers the body and scatters the parts. Isis then gathers the parts, puts them back together, and reanimates the body of Osiris (in other versions, it is *Anubis* the Jackal who reassembles the body of Osiris and mummifies it)
39 Weaving the word in the water	In the formation of *Amma*'s second universe, the *Nommo* will weave the word in the primordial water, creating the "cloth of existence"	*Neith* is *Net*, whose name means "water," "weave," and "that which is"
40 The Sirian calendar	The heliacal rising of Sirius is a major in the Dogon year and of prime importance in their Sirius-based long calendar	The ancient Egyptians discovered the calendar of 3,653 days based on the heliacal rising of Sirius and rectified their civil calendar of 365 days every 1,460 years by reference to the Sirian calendar
41 Orion	The Dogon say that the three stars of Orion's Belt represent the sacrificed *Nommo*	The ancient Egyptians called Orion *Sahu*, which is the spiritual body of Osiris
42 The beneficent sun	The Dogon depict the sun with each of its rays ending in an open hand, representing *Amma*'s power over all creation	The pharaoh Akhenaten installed the sun disk Aten as the single deity of Egypt with his rays ending in open hands

The two systems seem to be as close as the religious mythologies of ancient Greece and Rome were, where the only detectable difference between the two sets of gods was that one set of names was Greek and the other Latin. Thus, Zeus *was* Jupiter, Hera *was* Juno, Hermes *was* Mercury, etc. If we admit, therefore, that the major West African religions are branches of the same tree trunk, it is equally clear that the roots of that tree go deep into the spiritual subsoil of the ancient Nile Valley.

The comparative list that follows outlines the correspondence between the divinities of three religious systems: the *Vod* (Fon/Popo), the *Orisha* (Yoruba), and the *Neteru* (Egyptian). Note that there is no one-to-one correspondence between the attributes of the West African Powers on the one hand and the Egyptian ones on the other. Among the Egyptians, for example, Thoth or Djehuti is the Divine Messenger and Linguist, the role of Elegba in West Africa. But Elegba is also the Trickster, which is not an attribute customarily associated with Thoth (though it is with his Greek counterpart, Hermes). Moreover, Thoth, as the Divine Mind, Will, Intelligence, and Wisdom, is also linked to the Yoruba Obatala. But Obatala, as the one who forms human beings out of clay, also resonates closely with the Egyptian Ptah.

None of this is surprising; these West African peoples began their migrations out of the Nile Valley 20–25 centuries ago. That the Divine Powers that accompanied them would have re-formed under different circumstances in different geographical and cultural landscapes is to be expected. The aborigines in the lands these migrants settled in would have had their own pantheon, much of which would have been adopted by the immigrants or fused with the ones brought in by them. What is striking is the way in which the archetypes have been preserved so consistently against the hazards of migration and resettlement over a period of many centuries. Thus, the pantheons of the deities of Dahomey, Oyo, and Egypt are closely attuned with one another. It will be noted below that the Creator in each of these systems is listed above and not among the Divine Powers because the Creator is usually thought of as bringing forth and therefore existing beyond the Powers. Very often, the Creator will be acknowledged in prayer but, unlike with the Powers, no special duties are encumbent because the Supreme Being is not thought to participate directly in human affairs.

The divine powers of Africa: Present and past

Dahomey (Fon/Popo)	*Oyo (Yoruba)*	*Egypt*	*Attributes*
Mawu-Lisa	Olorun	Ra	The Creator who made the universe by opening the eyes, then withdrew from its affairs

	Vod	*Orishas*	*Neteru*	*Attributes*
1	Lisa/Dã	Obatala	Ptah-Atum	Shaped the universe, molded humans from clay, king of the gods, Principle of Light (Sun), "Lord of the White Cloth"
2	Holosue Dã	Odudua	Ta-Urt/Nut	Primal Mother of the universe
3	Mami Wata/ Naète	Yemoja	Hathor/Ast	Mother of Life and Humanity; the Great Mother of the Waters
4	Agbe (Agwe)	Olokun	Nu/Hapi	God of the (bottom of) ocean and of the heavenly and earthly waters
5	Fa	Orunmila (Ifa)	Tehuti	Master and Reader of Fate; God of knowledge and science
6	G	Ogun	Horus	God of War and Metals; Defender of Justice
7	Legba	Elegba/Eshu	Wep-Wat/Bes	Master of the Roads and Crossroads, Messenger of the Gods, Guide of Souls, Divine Trickster, Opener of the Way
8	Hevioso	Shango	Set/Amen	Master of Thunder and Lightning (symbolized by ram)
9	Minona	Oya	Bast/Kheprit	Goddess of the winds and of the sun's fire, of the ancestors, of the world of the dead
10	Mami Wata/ Avrekete	Oshun	Hathor	Goddess of love, beauty, and sensuality; associated with

Vod	Orishas	Neteru	Attributes
			rivers, pools, streams, lagoons, waterfalls; Mermaid goddess
11 Sakpata	Sankpanna	Geb/ Sekhmet (♀)	King of the Earth; deity of plagues
12 Gedè/ Metonofi	Egungun	Osiris/Anubis	Ancestral King, deity of resurrection, Lord of the Dead, the Night Sun
13 Nana Buluku	Nana Buukun	Heqit	Grandmother Goddess presiding over Death, Resurrection, and Magic; Feminine "Ancient of Days"
14 Azizã		Osanhin	Imhotep God of Medicine (Herbs)
15 Agè	Ochossi	Anup (Anubis)	God of Hunters
16 Loko	Oko	Osiris	God of growing plants and trees; God of agriculture

The divine powers of Africa: Forms and archetypes

Vod	Orishas	Neteru	Archetypes
Mawu	Olorun	Amen-Ra	The Eye
1 Lisa/Dã	Obatala	Ptah/Atum	(1) Python (2) Chameleon (3) Scarab Beetle (4) Sun
2 Holosue Dã	Odudua	Ta-Urt/Nut	(1) Python (2) Hippo (3) Rainbow (4) Heavenly Vault
3 Mami Wata	Yemoja	Hathor/Ast	(1) Mermaid (2) Fish (3) Cow (4) Star Sirius
4 Agbe (Agwe)	Olokun	Nu/Hapi	(1) Boat
5 Fa	Orunmila (Ifa)	Djehuti	(1) Ape (2) Ibis (3) DiviningTable
6 G	Ogun	Horus	(1) Falcon (2) Iron (3) Sword

Vod	*Orishas*	*Neteru*	*Attributes*
7 Legba	Elegba/Eshu	Wep-wat/Bes	(1) Dog/Jackal (2) Phallus
8 Hevioso	Shango	Set/Amen	(1) Ram (2) Goat (3) Lightning Bolt (4) Thunderbird
9 Minona	Oya	Bast/Kheprit	(1) Cat (2) Wind
10 Naète	Oshun	Hathor	(1) Mermaid (2) Mirror (3) Moon
11 Sakpata	Sankpanna	Geb	(1) Crocodile (2) Goose
12 Gedè/	Egungun	Osiris/Anubis	(1) Hare (2) Jackal (3) Cross Metonofi
13 Nana Buluku	Nana Buukun	Heqit	(1) Frog
14 Azizã	Osanhin	Imhotep	(1) Ankh
15 Agè	Ochossi	Set/Anubis	(1) Jackal (2) Bow
16 Loko	Oko	Osiris	(1) Tree (2) Grain

The pantheons of each of these systems are far larger than outlined here, consisting of hundreds, even thousands of deities. However, those listed above represent the principal Divine Powers in these systems. In each system, the Powers personify the attributes of the Creator; that is to say, when the Creator acts in the universe, each action takes the form of one of the *vod*, *orishas*, or *neteru*. In that sense, though these Powers have all been anthropomorphized, what they really represent is energy: divine energy. They cannot be defined, therefore, by human moral categories. The energy of electricity, for example, lights up cities and powers modern civilization; as lightning, it causes destructive fires and death. The household electricity and the lightning are the same power. However, when it is benign, it cannot be called "good," nor when it is destructive can it be called "evil." It is just energy, in all its aspects. Among the Dahomeans the Essence of this electric energy is Hevioso, among the Yoruba it is Shango, and in ancient Egypt it was Set. The true good or evil is manifested in one's relationship to these Powers; it is human beings, not the Powers themselves, who bring the good or the evil to the interaction. God and humans are bound inextricably together and in the relationship the human being is not without power; the power of good and evil rests in human hands. And it is the human being that must accept the consequences of this relationship to the Powers, since by his actions, he determines its course.

Conclusion

In the African framework, there is no arrow of time; that is to say, time does not move in one direction from past to future. Time is a circle or a spiral, and the

epigram "to know the future, one must look to the past" succinctly captures the African mood and spirit. Ancestors, living beings, and the yet-to-be-born are all of a piece with the great chain and cycle of being and therefore the ancestral memory, the ancestral link, is of prime importance. The *houngan* in Benin would in fact say that the *vod* know all that is going to happen on earth because it has already happened in their world.

What we have attempted to do here is continue in the tradition of the late Cheikh Anta Diop and repair the rupture with our spiritual past from its remote beginnings as a way of claiming the present and the future. We are finding that these Divine African Powers, even from far back, are reclaiming their children everywhere. Gradually, we are beginning to realize that they – the *vod*, the *orishas*, the *neteru* – are the only future we have.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Three Rival Narratives of Black Religion

William D. Hart

Introduction

This essay is a self-conscious effort to "think" Black Religion by thinking outside the narrative of the black church, of the Protestant establishment, of Christianity. To think "outside" is first to think within and through the black church narrative. Among the questions to be explored are the following: What is Black Religion? What is its scope? Its dominant tropes? What level of abstraction is appropriate to the concept of Black Religion? How do we deal with the difficult issue of categorizing the data – that is, when should we lump and when should we split?

Black Religion (as I use the term) is a conceptual tool, a historically and discursively informed way of categorizing a heterogeneous ensemble of cultural practices in the Black Atlantic world. I prefer the terms "black American" or "Black Atlantic" to "African American." These terms resist the twin evils of parochialism and amnesia/nostalgia. Black Americans are truly American, omni-American.[1] They share America's virtues and vices, including the arrogance of hegemony, which comes with superpower status. Black Americans construct the Black Atlantic world – the world that the trans-Atlantic slave trade made – in their own image. Thus "African American" becomes a false generic for the Black Atlantic world. I strive to avoid this nationalist parochialism, even though my account is about Black Religion in America. As black is a more expansive term than African American, religion is more expansive than church. If the Black Atlantic world cannot be reduced to the conceptual imagination of Black America, then Black Religion in America cannot be reduced to the black church or isolated from the diverse forms of religiosity in the Black Atlantic. The second reason for my preference of nomenclature is, as announced, the danger of amnesia and nostalgia. The terms black and Black Atlantic accent the irremediable wound of slavery, which constitutes us as black people. Our history effectively begins with the horror, pain, and ugliness of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. We are the descendants of slaves. Resistance to this fact is a form of amnesia (forgetfulness) and

nostalgia (false memory) that undermines our prospects in the only country that we know and which dishonors the world that our slave ancestors made.[2]

In an essay of this length, I am limited to a few gestures. My approach is to identify various tropes (figures of speech) that are characteristic of the discourse of Black Religion. By discourse I mean loosely what Michel Foucault means, that is, a complex relation between words and things, which produces, disciplines, and normalizes subjects. I refer to the very dispositions, practices, and ways of living through which subjects come to be, through which their notions of normality are constructed. To avoid any confusion, I should emphasize my use of Foucault as a rough guide, as a useful way of mapping the territory. But – to use a different metaphor – I will "force" Foucault into my bed of Procrustes before allowing myself to be forced into his. On this view, ideas are best when thoroughly digested and warped according to the specificity of one's need. In this account, I provide a tropic and discursive analysis of several texts, many of which have played an important role in the construction of an object called Black Religion. Thus, three rival narratives: Black Religion as the Soul of Black Folks, Black Religion as the Black Church, and Black Religion as Ancestor Piety.[3] Ancestor Piety has two versions: Afrocentric and Afro-Eccentric. I shall argue for the latter.

Black Religion as the "Soul" of Black Folks

W. E. B. Du Bois's "Of the Faith of the Fathers" is the prototype for studies of Black Religion. This essay, which constitutes chapter 10 of *The Souls of Black Folks*, establishes the following conventions: that religion is the essence, genius, or soul of black folks; that this religion of African origin has been transformed by slavery, Jim Crow, and Christianity; that "the Preacher, the Music, and the Frenzy" are the distinctive characteristics of Black Religion; that the black church is the most important institution and social center in the black community; that the church teeters between resistance to white supremacy and submission, between "manliness" and "effeminacy." Much of this conventional wisdom is still evident in studies of Black Religion. Moreover, Black Religion as *The Souls of Black Folks* prefigures – in both enabling and disabling ways – Black Religion as the Black Church and Black Religion as Ancestor Piety.

Du Bois's brief narrative provides a metaphysics, an existential phenomenology, and historical sociology that continue to influence our understanding of Black Religion. The history of black religious studies, to a great extent, is a series of footnotes to "Of the Faith of the Fathers." Metaphysically, within this interpretive tradition, Black Religion is the preeminent revelation of the character, "soul," or "inner ethical life," as Du Bois puts it, of black people. Phenomenologically, Black Religion is distinguished by its theatricality, its mesmerizing music, its kinetic orality, passionate physicality, and combative spirituality (C. West 1988: 5–6). As historical sociology, Black Religion is

bifurcated geographically between North and South, dispositionally between militant church and submissive church, and ethical-politically between fashionable if trivial pursuits and hard questions. Du Bois, who calls the Negro "a religious animal, – a being of that deep emotional nature which turns instinctively toward the supernatural," provides a summary account of the historical-sociological foundations of Black Religion. I quote at length:

> We must realize that no such institution as the Negro church could rear itself without definite historical foundations. These foundations we can find if we remember that the social history of the Negro did not start in America. He was brought from a definite social environment, – the polygamous clan life under the headship of the chief and the potent influence of the priest. His religion was nature-worship, with profound belief in invisible surrounding influences, good and bad, and his worship was through incantation and sacrifice. The first rude change in this life was the slave ship and the West Indian sugar-fields. The plantation organization replaced the clan and the tribe, and the white master replaced the chief with far greater and more despotic powers. Forced and long continued toil became the rule of life, the old ties of blood relationship and kinship disappeared, and instead of the family appeared a new polygamy and polyandry, which, in some cases, almost reached promiscuity. It was a terrific social revolution, and yet some traces were retained of the former group life, and the chief remaining institution was the priest or Medicine-man. He early appeared on the plantation and found his function as the healer of the sick, the interpreter of the Unknown, the comforter of the sorrowing, the supernatural avenger of wrong, and the one who rudely but picturesquely expressed the longing, disappointment, and resentment of a stolen and oppressed people. Thus, as bard, physician, judge, and priest, within the narrow limits allowed by the slave system, rose the Negro preacher, and under him the first Afro-American institution, the Negro church. This church was not at first by any means Christian nor definitely organized; rather it was an adaptation and mingling of heathen rites among the members of each plantation, and roughly designated as Voodooism. Associations with masters, missionary effort and motives of expediency gave these rites an early veneer of Christianity, and after the lapse of many generations the Negro church became Christian. (W. Du Bois 1999b: 123–9)

While one might quibble here and supplement there, this is still the dominant narrative of Negro/Black Religion at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

As Kwame Anthony Appiah has shown, Du Bois's notion of racial identity is indebted to Herder's claim that each race has a *Volksgeist*, that is, distinctive spirit, which irradiates all of their undertakings (K. Appiah 1992: 31, 50). Du Bois describes this spirit variously. In "The Sorrow Songs," the concluding chapter of *Souls*, he speaks of three gifts of black folks: "a gift of story and song," "the gift of sweat and brawn," and "a gift of the spirit." But however he describes these gifts, they have a Herderian, hereditary, essentialist sense. These gifts are expressions of the racial character of black people no less than thorns and a

pleasing aroma are expressions of roses. These "gifts of black folk" are the leaven, salt, and spice of American life. For, as Du Bois asks rhetorically, "Would America have been America without her Negro people?" These gifts seem inextricably connected to the sorrow of the Sorrow Songs, these spirituals, these antecedents of the blues. And yet these gifts transcend sorrow. They are expressions of an undying, sweat-stained, and blood-drenched hope (W. Du Bois 1999b: 16, 162–3). They express the full range of black *religio*, as both *relegere* and *religare*. *Relegere* is piety toward the ways of one's ancestors, those rites that gather black people together by retracing old ways. In this sense, *religio* is *traditio*. *Religare*, in contrast, refers to those rites of desire and fear that tie black people together by tying them to the gods (R. King 1996: 35–8).

In these Sorrow Songs, where *religio* is both *relegere* and *religare*, the play of presence and absence is recorded. Du Bois speaks of the presence of mother and child and the absence of father, the absence of "wooing and wedding" and of "deep successful love." Only a sorrow this great could have given rise to so great a hope. Such are the Sorrow Songs: "the most original and beautiful expression of human life and longing yet born on American soil" (W. Du Bois 1999: 160). "These songs," according to Howard Thurman, "were rightly called 'Sorrow Songs.' They were born of tears and suffering greater than any formula of expression. And yet the authentic note of triumph in God, rings out trumpet-tongued!"

> Oh, nobody knows de trouble I've seen;
> Glory hallelujah.

Thurman's theological skills enable him to supplement Du Bois's account with important insights about the sources of the Sorrow Songs. In addition to the "religious experience" of black people, these songs draw liberally from the Hebrew scriptures (Old Testament) and from the portrayal of Jesus in the gospels, while assiduously avoiding the Pauline corpus. Thurman draws on personal experience to analyze this avoidance. His grandmother, a former slave, to whom he regularly read the Bible, disdained the letters of Paul because of their use by slave masters as a tool of slave management and social control: "Slaves be obedient to your masters."

Thus she vowed, God willing, to "never read that part of the Bible!" were she ever freed and learned to read (H. Thurman 1945: 2–5). This anecdote is testimony to the intelligence and cunning of unlettered and illiterate slaves. It is characteristic of the vista that these songs provide into the souls of black folk. Indeed, Thurman discovers much about black folks in the spirituals, such as their ability to conjure freedom from bondage as revealed in the spiritual "The Blind Man." Thurman ponders a challenge to the very integrity of black people posed by the necessary deception (or the morality of hypocrisy and compromise) that they, like all oppressed people, practice. This liberating deception is captured in

songs such as “Heaven! Heaven!” In the spiritual “A Balm in Gilead” Thurman spies an ontological optimism, that is, a basic trust in the ultimate goodness of things. In “Deep River,” finally, he discerns a certain universality and transcendence in the aspirations of black people (ibid: 19, 23, 27, 32).

Like Du Bois and Thurman before him, James Cone finds in the spirituals – and, unlike them, in the blues – the privileged vista on black character, soul, and life. According to Cone: “It is the spirituals that show us the essence of Black Religion, that is, the experience of trying to be free in the midst of a ‘powerful lot of tribulation’ ” (J. Cone 1991: 29). He describes the blues as “secular spirituals.” Cone may well have added that the spirituals are “sacred blues,” which would dovetail nicely with Du Bois’s description of spirituals as “Sorrow Songs.” Within a perspective that is shared by Du Bois, Thurman, Cone, and many others, which I call Black Religion as the Soul of Black Folks, music and dance are the privileged modality of black expressive culture in general and Black Religion in particular. The Sorrow Songs and the blues, the sacred and the profane, the art of sliding from sacred note to profane note, of always already “bluing,” blurring, and fudging the difference between the two: this is the substance of Cone’s analysis. Where Du Bois had primarily cast his analysis in historical-sociological terms that were decidedly non-theological, Cone brings to his analysis of the Sorrow Songs a disciplinary orientation and critical imagination that is self-consciously preoccupied with contemporary debates in Protestant theology. Even more than his great predecessor, Howard Thurman, Cone discovers a full-fledged theology in the spirituals: a doctrine of God, a doctrine of salvation, a Christology, theodicy, and eschatology.

The blues emerged from the same matrix that produced the spirituals and that inspire questions such as “What did I do to be so black and blue?” Why do black folks catch so much hell? Is God a white racist? These questions are generated by what theologians call the problem of evil, which arises in any religious system where the deity is conceived as singular, all-loving, all-knowing, and all-powerful. According to Cone, the meaning of the blues is inseparable from the suffering of black people. “The blues mood means sorrow, frustration, despair, and black people’s attempt to take these existential realities upon themselves and not lose their sanity.” If spirituals offered a transcendent relief, then the blues often spoke of the body, food, and “sexual healing” (J. Cone 1991: 100, 110). Both the spirituals and the blues help black people to transcend their “troubled minds” by representing, lyrically and musically, the sources of their suffering and the objects of their desire. Through the paradoxical juxtaposing of moods that are simultaneously beautiful and sublime, they capture the depths of black despair and the heights of black transcendence: “Wish I’d died when I was a baby, / O Lord rocka’ jubilee, / Wish I’d died.” Or: “Trouble in mind, I’m blue, / But I won’t be always, For the sun goin’ shine in my back door some-day. / Trouble in mind, that’s true, / I’ve almost lost my mind; / Life ain’t worth livin’ – feel like I could die. / I’m gonna lay my head on some lonesome railroad line, / Let the two nineteen pacify my troubled mind.”

Black Religion as the Black Church

It is hard to think of a place other than the church where more black people gather on a regular basis for non-trivial purposes. This must have occurred to Du Bois. Thus in the same year that he published *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois published an edited volume, commissioned by Atlanta University, entitled *The Negro Church*. The first important study of its kind, it was followed by several studies in which Black Religion is defined as the Negro church and later as the black church. The following is a highly selective list of Negro/black church studies whose principle of selection is the social scientific ambitions of the authors:

Carter Godwin Woodson's *The History of the Negro Church* (1921)
Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph W. Nicholson's *The Negro's Church* (1933)
Arthur Fauset's *Black Gods of the Metropolis* (1944)
Ruby Funchess Johnston's *The Development of Negro Religion* (1954)
E. Franklin Frazier's *The Negro Church in America* (1964)
C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Church Since Frazier* (1974)
Hart Nelsen and Anne Kusner Nelsen's *Black Church in the Sixties* (1975)
Ida Rousseau Mukenge, *The Black Church in Urban America* (1983)
C. E. Lincoln and L. Mamiya's *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (1990)

Woodson's *The History of the Negro Church* (1921) begins with an account of missionary activities among slaves and concludes with a contemporary account of the Negro church. It more or less establishes, in detail, the standard narrative of the Negro/black church. The highpoints in this narrative are the emergence of the black preacher and the independent church movement, the catalytic effects of the Civil War and emancipation, and the tension between conservative and progressive forces within the church. It does not require much effort to see the ways in which Woodson's account follows a path that was canalized by Du Bois. This path would be followed faithfully by subsequent commentators such as Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph W. Nicholson. In *The Negro's Church* (1933), they supplement and significantly extend Woodson's Negro church narrative with a historical-sociological account. This allows them to provide a more detailed analysis of the social basis of the Negro church, of the process of urbanization, and of the way that different social classes were the bearers of different forms of religiosity, while commenting on a variety of demographic considerations such as church membership, finances, and leadership. In their pursuit of accuracy, Mays and Nicholson do not shy away from the harsh conclusion that

> the Negro church is in part the result of the failure of American Christianity in the realm of race-relations; that the church's program, except in rare instances, is

> static, non-progressive, and fails to challenge the loyalty of many of the most critically-minded Negroes; that the vast majority of its pastors are poorly trained academically, and more poorly trained theologically; that more than half of the sermons analyzed are abstract, other-worldly, and imbued with a magical conception of religion; that in the church school less than one-tenth of the teachers are college graduates; that there are too many Negro churches; that the percentage of Negro churches in debt is high; that for the most part the Negro church is little concerned with juvenile delinquency and other social problems in its environment; that less than half of the reported membership can be relied upon to finance the church regularly and consistently; and that the rural church suffers most because of the instability and poverty of the rural Negroes.

Mays and Nicholson try to balance these harsh conclusions with an argument for the genius of the Negro church. Their counter-statement reads like a Du Boisian litany. Thus the Negro church is the one institution that black people own. It is a school for common people, and a place where black people can relax away from the normalizing gaze of white supremacy. The Negro church is the black folk's "commons" as well as a business park. Finally, it is a place of democratic fellowship where genuine interracial reciprocity is possible (Mays and Nicholson 1933: 278–88).

Arthur Fauset's *Black Gods of the Metropolis* (1944) and Ruby Funchess Johnston's *The Development of Negro Religion* (1954) provide a similar perspective. Both accounts of Black Religion center on the Negro church, underwrite the assumptions and priorities of the Protestant establishment, police "heterodoxy," and enforce an "orthodox" Christian narrative. Fauset defines black religious cults in terms of their deviance from the black Baptist and Methodist establishment. And he finds nothing incongruous about including the Moorish Science Temple in his narrative of the Negro church. The Moorish Science Temple and, for that matter, the Church of God (Black Jews), which are two of the cults that Fauset studies, are anomalous with respect to the Negro/black church narrative. Thus to place them is to determine their degree of conformity or deviance from the Protestant Christian – Baptist and Methodist – template. Johnston – whose language is more reminiscent of the crude, colonial, and evolutionary language of late nineteenth and early twentieth century accounts of religion than of a presumably more enlightened, mid-twentieth century, decolonizing discourse – is even more determined to cut Black Religion according to the Procrustean bed of the Protestant establishment. Indeed, her definition of religion – "Religion signifies a system of beliefs centered around a supreme being and expressing itself in terms of regulatory principles of conduct and action, sometimes finding an outlet in physical, economic, political and social phases of life" (R. Johnston 1954: xvii) – seems designed to signify Christianity. On this view, a narrative of the Negro, Protestant, orthodox, established church is a narrative of Black Religion.

Ten years after the publication of *The Development of Negro Religion*, E. Franklin Frazier published *The Negro Church in America* (1964). And ten years

after the publication of this text, C. Eric Lincoln published *The Black Church Since Frazier* (1964). One of the merits of Frazier's book, at least for my limited purposes, is the thorough summary he provides of his major claims. Frazier concludes that the peculiarities of their capture, transport, and enslavement in America has stripped black people of their African heritage; that "dancing, the most primitive form of religious expression," was the only African survival; that little progress was made in converting blacks to Christianity until the arrival of Baptist and Methodist missionaries; that a covert, "'invisible institution' of the Negro church," which developed under the nose of slave masters, was absorbed after emancipation by an emergent, independent black church movement among free people of color; that this integration produced class conflict and stylistic differences in the church; that the black church, nevertheless, became the center of black educational and political life, while facilitating the emergence of a black business class; that "the Negro church organizations became the most effective agencies of social control among Negroes in their relatively isolated social world."

As a sociologist, Frazier is especially sensitive to issues of social structure, change, and stratification. Thus he accents processes of urbanization and class differentiation. The emergence of a black middle class is especially important. Frazier correlates middle-class religiosity with processes of secularization, racial marginalization, and the creation of a "make believe world." He correlates lower-class religiosity with a paradoxical articulation: on the one hand, a "reactionary" return to primitive forms of Christianity, on the other hand, a turn toward "secular nationalistic aims." What troubles him most, however, is the authoritarian and anti-intellectual consequences of the Negro church, which "has left its imprint upon practically every aspect of Negro life." The "petty tyrant" style of the black preacher has stereotyped black leadership in other spheres of black life. As a result, blacks have been undereducated in the ways of democratic life, debate, and problem solving. According to Frazier, "escape from the stifling domination of the church" is prerequisite to the intellectual and artistic development of Negro individuals. "This development is only being achieved on a broad scale to the extent that Negroes are being integrated into the institutions of the American community and as the social organization of the Negro community, in which the church is the dominant element, crumbles as the 'walls of segregation come tumbling down'" (E. Frazier 1974: 86–90).

The Black Church Since Frazier was originally presented as the James Gray Lectures at Duke University in 1970. C. Eric Lincoln's chief claim is the following: "The 'Negro church' that Frazier wrote about no longer exists. It died an agonizing death" in the turmoil "of the 'Savage Sixties,'" as it confronted "the possibility that 'Negro' and 'Christian' were irreconcilable categories." From the ashes of the Negro church the black church arose. This change in nomenclature is meant to signify several things, not the least of which is the death of the servile and accommodating disposition of the Negro church, whose peasant and working-class members consoled themselves through ecstatic liturgies and whose middle-

class members inhabited a "make believe world" of superficiality and conspicuous consumption, famously described by E. Franklin Frazier in *Black Bourgeoisie* (1957a).

Unlike Frazier, his great predecessor, Lincoln is a "church sociologist," that is, his sociology is driven by the theological priorities and normative assumptions of the black church. He has a vested interest in countering Frazier's dismal portraiture of the Negro/black church. Lincoln's defense of the black church has three foci: first, a description of its newfound militancy; second, an account of the "new black theology" as the intellectual face of that militancy; and third, an effort to account for the Nation of Islam within the narrative of the black church.

The black church militant, which Lincoln describes, is really a small minority of black churches, specifically, those churches that actively participated in the Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s. It is not clear, Lincoln's claim notwithstanding, that Frazier's assessment of the black church circa 1974 would have been all that different from his 1964, posthumously published analysis of the Negro church. Granted, he would have to deal, as Lincoln suggests, with the phenomenon of Martin Luther King, Jr. and his leadership of the progressive wing of the black church. Frazier, who died in 1962, was not ignorant of King, the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955, and an emergent, church-led wing of the Civil Rights Movement. Yet this knowledge does not figure in his account of the Negro church. Given his leftist proclivities, his interest in democratic forms of accountability, and his attention to social differentiation and class conflict, Frazier is unlikely to have been as impressed by the post-1960s black church as Lincoln, who confounds the black church as such and the small, progressive, politically active wing of that church. That church, even its progressive wing, was still the domain of petty tyrants and the abode of anti-intellectualism.

Despite Frazier's unsparing critique of the Negro church and Lincoln's apology for the black church, they share the narrative of Black Religion as the Negro/black church. Where Frazier folds an account of the Moorish Science Temple into his narrative of the Negro church, Lincoln folds an account of the Nation of Islam into his narrative of the black church. Would Frazier have been impressed by new trends in black theology? It is hard to say. However, his claim that the "Moorish Science Temple represents *the radical secularization of Negro religion or of the Negro church*" (E. Frazier 1974: 70–1; my emphasis) may suggest the beginnings of an answer. Frazier construes the Moors, a "heterodox" Islamic cult, as Christian deviants. And he regards their Black Nationalist sensibilities as a radical form of secularism. If we extrapolate from this analysis, we might well extend these conclusions to the advocates of the new black theology, especially the Reverend Albert Cleage, pastor of the Church of the Shrine of the Black Madonna in Detroit, Michigan, and James Cone, the most influential of the new black theologians. Having said this, it is hard to discern Frazier's attitude

toward secularization. He appears to share in this regard the ambivalence toward the process of rationalization and secularization that is so evident in the analyses of Max Weber. But where Weber saw the Protestant ethic as constitutive of the spirit of capitalism and of processes of bureaucratic rationalization and of secularization as disenchantment, Frazier saw the Negro church as an obstacle to the cultivation of democratic habits and as the bane of critical intelligence.

Ida Rousseau Mukenge's *The Black Church in Urban America* (1983) is written in the tradition of E. Franklin Frazier's *The Negro Church in America* (1964). For analytical purposes, she distinguishes between black church and black religion. Black church refers to the institution, black religion to the ideology that institution houses. This distinction allows her to reemphasize issues of social differentiation, class conflict, power, and social change, which are muted in the black church studies of Lincoln (1974) and of Hart and Anne Nelsen (1975). Against their "church sociology," she self-consciously retrieves Frazier-style sociology of religion. Thus the following observation: "Organizational ideologies (and theologies), goals, or incentives, when used alone do not have explanatory capabilities; they can also be explained in terms of political economy" (I. Mukenge 1983: 10). This reads like a version of the old "base-superstructure" argument. From this view, ideology is merely a reflex of social structure. At the time this was written, Mukenge was probably unaware of contemporary developments in social theory, which undermine notions of structural-economic bases and ideological superstructure. When corrected in light of these and other theoretical advances, her argument is a significant contribution to the sociology of the black church. This is especially evident in her analysis of the urbanization/transformation of the black church from a site of mass unity to one of class unity. She traces this process of class differentiation and stratification from the late nineteenth century through the third decade of the twentieth century. This development was inevitable, she argues, for many reasons, not the least of which was the decline of the church's monopoly as a service provider in the face of competition from secular philanthropic organizations. In addition, there was political competition from secular offsprings of the church, such as the Afro-American League (1890), which "was the forerunner of the 1905 Niagara Movement, the immediate predecessor of the NAACP" (1909). Bureaucratic growing pains associated with the internal dynamics of the church, competition from new religions and new churches, and increases in government aid in the wake of the Great Depression also contributed to the transformation of the black church from a mass to a class-oriented institution (I. Mukenge 1983: 51–65). Thus the black church ceased being the all-purpose site that Du Bois described in *The Souls of Black Folk*.

Mukenge's study appears to have had little influence on *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (1990), which is a massive if not definitive study. In this text, C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya provide a theoretically sophisticated account of the Black Church as Black Religion. Drawing on recent

scholarship, they identify three components – religious, institutional, and dialectical – of a "sociology of black churches." The religious dimension refers to an underlying "black sacred cosmos," which resulted from the synergy of African traditional religions and Christianity, under the conditions of slavery. The institutional dimension refers to processes of sphere differentiation between economy and society, which is distinctive in the black church owing to its partial nature. The dialectical dimension refers to a variety of tensions within the black church: between the priestly and prophetic functions, the worldly and otherworldly, the communal and private, the charismatic and bureaucratic, and between resistance and accommodation (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990). This Dialectical Model of the black church is Lincoln and Mamiya's response to Nelsen and Nelsen's 1975 analysis, *Black Church in the Sixties*. I take Lincoln and Mamiya's Dialectical Model as attempting to summarize and elaborate Nelsen and Nelsen's typology of the social scientific scholarship on the black church. I quote Lincoln and Mamiya at length:

> 1. The Assimilation Model – The essence of this view is the belief in the necessity of the demise of the Black Church for the public good of blacks. The Black Church is seen as a stumbling block to assimilation in the American mainstream. The assimilation model also views the Black Church as anti-intellectual and authoritarian. This model is found in the views and studies of E. Franklin Frazier.
> 2. The Isolation Model – The Black Church is characterized by "involuntary isolation" which is due to predominantly lower-class statuses in the black community. Isolation from civic affairs and mass apathy are the results of racial segregation in ghettos. Thus, black religion is viewed as being primarily lower class and otherworldly. The isolation model is found in the work of Anthony Orum and Charles Silberman.
> 3. The Compensatory Model – The Black Church's main attraction is to give large masses of people the opportunity for power, control, applause, and acclaim within the group which they do not receive in the larger society, as St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton asserted in *Black Metropolis*. This view is also related to Gunnar Myrdal's perspective in *An American Dilemma* that the black community is essentially pathological and black culture is a "distorted development" of general American culture, so black people compensate for this lack of acclaim and access to mainstream society in their own institutions.
> 4. The Nelsens' fourth alternative (developed by themselves) is the "ethnic community-prophetic" model which gives a more positive interpretation of the Black Church. This model emphasizes the significance of the Black Church or its members. It also accentuates the potential of the Black Church or its minister as "prophet to a corrupt white Christian nation." (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990: 10–11)

Again, Lincoln and Mamiya's Dialectical Model takes itself as superseding this four-part typology by appropriating its insights and correcting its myopia. But in their corrected account, Black Religion is still the Black Church.

Black Religion as Ancestor Piety

Ancestor piety is not unique to African cultures or to the cultures of the Black Atlantic, but is common to those cultures that modernist anthropologists call "traditional." There are many ways of venerating the ancestors. In his magnificent study *Slave Religion* (1978), Albert Raboteau does a marvelous job of placing the emergence of the black church within the African and Black Atlantic context. He turns Frazier's suggestive metaphor for the black church, "the invisible institution," into a careful and groundbreaking analysis, which is more generous, sophisticated, and multi-layered than most church histories. Further, he provides a nuanced account of the Frazier–Herskovits debate concerning the survival or death of African cultural traits (also called "Africanisms") among black people in the United States. Raboteau splits the differences between Frazier and Herskovits, moderates their excesses, and unifies their perspectives where such unification makes sense. He is equally subtle in reading what I will call the "Frazier–Cone debate" – despite the fact that the two men did not formally engage one another – on the "otherworldly" versus "worldly" character of the spirituals. Frazier's otherworldly, apolitical reading of the spirituals and Cone's political reading are persuasively if not elegantly reconciled in Raboteau's analysis. Unlike standard black church histories, Raboteau's *Slave Religion* strives to do justice to *all* the ancestors.

Raboteau's subtlety and desire to do justice to *all* the ancestors are sadly missing in Afrocentricity. Afrocentricity and what I playfully call "Afro-Eccentricity" should be understood as competing versions of Black Religion as Ancestor Piety. Afrocentricity is an intellectual and cultural movement that is most closely associated with the name of Molefi Kete Asante and with five texts that he has published since 1980: *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change* (1988), *The Afrocentric Idea* (revd. edn. 1998), *Afrocentricity* (1988), *Kemet, Afrocentricity, and Knowledge* (1990), and *The Painful Demise of Eurocentrism* (1999). On its face, Asante's definition of Afrocentricity – "which means, literally, placing African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior" (M. Asante 1998: 6) – is simple. But like many simple ideas, it is not as simple as it seems. Who count as African people? What is African culture and behavior? Are the Berbers and Arabs of North Africa African? If not, why not? And what about white South Africans? If Asante is not making an unacknowledged appeal to race, which he claims is a Eurocentric idea, then why distinguish between black Africa and Arab Africa, and imagine white Southern Africa into non-existence? Why are areas that are near if not contiguous with Africa – such as the Arabian Peninsula and the Middle East – not Africa? Except for a hidden appeal to an essentialist notion of race, why should we imagine that the culture and behaviors that Asante calls African should obey lines on a map that was drawn by European cartographers? I can do nothing more at this point than to pose these questions. But Asante's failure to pose these questions himself and to address them detracts from his argument.

In the spirit of these questions, I pose another. What are the contours of Asante's Afrocentric version of Black Religion as Ancestor Piety? Ironically, the initial answer to this question is the black church. According to Asante: "The black church is the single most authoritative religious force within our community. It is, furthermore, our only continuous anchor to the *orishas*, *loas*, and ancestors of our past." The communal nature of the black church experience recalls an earlier "time when our ancestors called the *loas* and *orishas* with the polymetric beats of the drum." But Asante is quick to add that it is the ancestors and not the church that is the source of this "power and spirit." The spirit of the ancestors is simultaneously the spirit of the church and the night club, of spirituals, blues, and "all that jazz" (M. Asante 1988: 71, 74).

Asante rides piggyback on the black church narrative in the way that a parasite rides its host. Thus, he describes the day when the black church will emerge, butterfly beautiful, from the ugly caterpillar of whiteness in which it has been forced to crawl for so long. Eventually, the church as presently constituted will be stripped to the bone and reclothed in the garments of the Afrocentric idea. Finally, black Madonnas, which replaced white Madonnas during the transitional phase, will in turn "give way to new symbols arising out of the lives of Isis, Yaa Asantewaa, and Nzingha" (ibid: 77). In short, African symbols and ritual forms will replace the rites and symbols of whiteness. Thus the Afrocentric idea, Black Religion as Ancestor Piety, will eat its way to strength, liberation, and dominance from within the belly of the black church. The details of this Afrocentric perspective on transcendence are presented in a cluster of interrelated ideas. Thus, "*nommo*, the generative quality of the spoken word," which underwrites the sudic ideology of harmony and epistemic wholeness, has its ideal expression in the philosophy of personalism, whose expressive modalities of possession and music evade the dichotomous Western logic of matter and spirit (M. Asante 1998: 183–95). This, in perhaps too concise a manner, is the Afrocentric idea – Black Religion as Ancestor Piety.

Afrocentricity has been severely criticized (M. Lefkovitz 1996; W. Moses 1998; C. Walker 2001). In a turn of phrase whose irony is wicked, Clarence Walker describes Afrocentrism as "Eurocentrism in blackface."[4] "This can be seen in the very categories Afrocentrism uses to define itself. Frequently used words such as 'classical' and 'African,' for example, have a Western etymology and are not African in origin." Further: "In focusing on ancient Egypt as a site of black achievement, Afrocentrists like Asante create an idealized mythic space that stands in opposition to the present grim reality of black inner-city America." More important, however, than Afrocentrism's preoccupation with pharaohs and queens is the "trivialization of black American history, Africa, and the black Atlantic," which privileges a synchronic over a diachronic narrative. Thus the history of black people is reduced to a static phenomenon, which is a gross misunderstanding that ignores the difference that slavery and the Black Atlantic experience made. But that is not all: "Afrocentrism sentimentalizes Africa by depicting it as a place where blacks lived in perfect harmony before the arrival

of whites." Africa is sensationalized as the birth place of civilization and of mighty kings and queens, which serves the therapeutic end of getting "black Americans to appreciate the real unity of their history." "Finally, Afrocentrism is a ritualistic invocation of community as the site or origin of racial authenticity: black people are nothing if they do not identify with the community" (C. Walker 2001: 4, 41, 59, 91, 92). In the end, Afrocentrism is a form of conservative reaction reminiscent of Booker T. Washington's accommodationism and of Louis Farrakhan's Jewish-envy, anti-Semitism, and *ressentiment*. It is a totalitarian form of identity shot through with homophobia and a gender politics that is conservative in its reaction. Is this critique fair? Only so far as Afrocentrism is a proper name for Asante and for fellow travelers like Maulana Ron Karenga, John Henrik Clarke, and Leonard Jefferies.[5]

I want to supplement Walker's critique by emphasizing Afrocentricity's captivity to a modernist, European idea of culture as a bounded, internally homogeneous entity, which tracks, mimics, or otherwise serves as a proxy for a biology and/or metaphysics of race, which underwrites a rank-ordering of cultures. This "metaphysical biology" is essential to Asante's way of imagining the ancestors. I propose a different way. In this version of ancestor piety, which I shall outline in broad strokes, the notion of culture that Asante relies on is as big a villain as the notion of race that he claims to reject. One is no less Eurocentric than the other. Culture is not the bounded, internally homogeneous, genetically encoded, and timeless phenomenon that Asante's argument requires it to be. Culture is fluid, borrowing is the norm. This fact is just as deadly for the Afrocentric idea as it is for any notion of Eurocentrism. Europe and Africa are mutually constitutive. If Europe is an African artifact, then Africa is a European idea. Genetic lines and cultural lines – genes and memes – have always already been mixed. Our ancestors are those to whom we owe a debt of gratitude. According to the Afro-Eccentric version of ancestor piety that I see as emergent in black culture, we pay that debt by remembering. However, we constantly face the ethical-political task of choosing whether to remember and how. Among the multitude of ancestors are countless surrogate, step, foster, and adopted kinfolk. We imagine our kinship with them, which has nothing to do with consanguinity, through the reverence of remembrance. Indeed, blood, family, and kinship may be the wrong words, since what we owe these ancestors is the gift of inspiration and insight. Ancestry and inheritance are a function of appreciation and appropriation. While surely given, ancestry is also a choice. The claims of genetic and cultural ancestors must compete with the ancestors that we choose. And that choice, above all else, is an ethical-political choice.

Where Afrocentricity would erect a "Great Wall of Africa" designed to maintain its purity and cultural homogeneity, Afro-Eccentricity throws open the gates. We Afro-Eccentrics welcome cultural exchange, the stranger and strange ideas. We remember our ancestors by remembering their gods, but not necessarily as they would have us remember, that is, we revere them enough to disagree. As cosmology busters, we invoke the names of Olodumare, Damballah, Allah, Jesus,

and Yahweh in the same breath. Indeed, is there any god – the Great Rainbow Serpent, Krishna, Buddha – whose name our ancestors have not called? Thus we refuse to choose between those ancestors who invoke the gods of Africa and those who invoke other gods. And we revere those who invoke no gods at all, who are indifferent to the gods or curse the gods or, like Countee Cullen, who trivialize God as a toy that should be put away (C. Cullen 1929: 83). The sentiment of these ancestors is captured in the following formula: Any god we need, we do not want; any god we want, we do not need. These religious dissidents are our ancestors, too. And we revere them. We especially admire their eccentricity and nonconformity. Their greatest gift is disharmony, that is, their willingness to disrupt false and oppressive forms of community. These ancestors called nasty and unjust aspects of their culture into question by reference to minor, alternative, and scandalous currents within their tradition or in light of insights that they acquired from other traditions. They endured the ridicule of their compatriots who regarded them – like a black person who cannot dance, who prefers the ecstasy of solemnity to the ecstasy of frenzy – as odd, strange, and weird. Refusing all invitations to uncritical celebration, these ancestors were willing to be ostracized and even exiled. We honor them best, and indeed all the ancestors, by remembering, criticizing, and revising what they have given us, by refusing to purify and mummify the tradition. On this view, reverence is an act of improvisation, of both conservation and innovation.

Afro-Eccentricity is a species of "natural piety." We Afro-Eccentrics praise the inchoate wisdom of ancient ancestors who gazed on distant stars and worked out complex systems of kinship between the human species and other species. If they looked on the starry sky in awe, construing the sun, moon, and planets as deities, then we speak, in light of astrophysics, about the creative power of stars. We now know that all life on earth is a result of the cosmic processes of star formation: *ashes to ashes, stardust to our dust*. We know that the dusty debris of star formation made possible the complex chemistry and biology of the evolutionary process. In short, these processes underlie our kinship with other species. The wisdom of the peoples of the totem and of other people who intuitively rejected the notion of ontological gaps by developing constitutive relations between humanity, divinity, and animality now seems obvious. Afro-Eccentricity is part of this new realization of cosmic kinship and we bow before it in a spirit of respect, humility, and awe that is always curious and always prepared to ask one more question.

Conclusion

The narratives of Black Religion that I have identified are dominated respectively by the Soul, Church, and Ancestor tropes. Each trope is part of an ensemble: race, culture, and essence are analogies of Soul that do the work of Soul by extending its scope; Church is part of the discourse of economy and society, of

institutionalization and differentiation; Ancestor is the fulcrum around which a discourse of fiduciary responsibility – of debts incurred, rescheduled, or cancelled – move. Thus the following typology of Black Religion:

1 Soul = Race = Culture = Essence = The Eternal Same
2 Church = Society = Institutionalization/Differentiation = The Changing Same
3 Ancestor = Fiduciary = Rescheduled/Cancelled Debt = Emergence, Difference, Novelty

While the relationship between the narratives is not perfectly linear, there is a relationship of accumulation between them. Black Religion as the Soul of Black Folks is constitutive of Black Religion as the Black Church and both are constitutive of Black Religion as Ancestor Piety, even if their relation to the Afro-Eccentric version of ancestor piety is critically mediated. Each narrative is unimaginable without the reality of a white supremacist, male dominated, heterosexist social order whose brutal process of capital accumulation began with the "primitive accumulation" of black bodies. This accumulated wealth in black subject-bodies – underwritten by the chronic violence and dishonor to which black people were subjected – was simultaneously their material impoverishment. Thus the subject of Black Religion – in its Soul, Church, and Ancestor narratives – is fearful, anxious, and insecure. While there is no absolute difference in the ways that the subjects of these narratives respond to an oppressive social order, each trope – Soul, Church, and Ancestor – signals an important difference. The proponents of the Soul narrative seek refuge in the *Volksgeist* of black people, which soars magnificently above or creeps stealthily beneath the veil of a white supremacist social order. They seek refuge, that is, in a Platonic form, an ideal or essence that is beyond the reach of white supremacy. In contrast, the proponents of the Church narrative acknowledge if not embrace notions of social change in light of which the soul of black folks may be nothing more than an index of their historical experiences. But there is a powerful nostalgia in this narrative for a *Volksgeist* (principle of black identity, unity, and essence) that soars or creeps through spacetime and yet somehow remains the same. The Ancestor narrative is both old and new. In its old, black nationalist/Afrocentric version, black people owe a debt to the ancestors that must be paid. This debt is paid through reverence and remembrance, through *religio* as *traditio*. When accurate, this form of *religio* is a slavish form of mimesis, of *relegere*, which retraces the ways of the ancestors without question. When inaccurate, which is often the case, this form of reverence and remembrance is sheer fantasy, made in America. As should be evident, the proponents of this older, Afrocentric version of Black Religion as Ancestor Piety, are indebted to the essentialism of the Soul narrative and the nostalgia of the Church narrative.

Afro-Eccentricity is made possible, in part, by three contemporary developments: (1) the globalization of capital markets, labor markets, and culture, (2)

the "disestablishment" of authoritarian institutions and authorities, if not outright processes of de-institutionalization, and the emergence of diverse forms of spirituality and piety,[6] and (3) the emergence of a radical democratic spirit to which even God must submit. The claims of God, the gods, and the ancestors must conform to our ethical-political standards. Thus the proponents of the emergent, Afro-Eccentric version of Black Religion as Ancestor Piety have a different notion of indebtedness. On this view, it is imperative that we make our ancestors better than they were by judging them, insofar as they are entitled to our reverence, by our standards. When, to paraphrase Marx, the traditions of our ancestors weigh like a nightmare on our ability to imagine something new, it is time for an exorcist. The spirits of all the dead generations – conjured by our fear of the future and by our retreat from the demands of the present – must be allowed to die. As "Ghostbusters," it is our duty to put to rest, to reschedule and even cancel our debts to these spirits. We must refuse to pay. Thus, to paraphrase Nietzsche, we must know when to remember the ancestors and when to forget them. Sometimes – and this oxymoron is appropriate – the best way to remember the ancestors is to forget them. To forget at the very least those aspects of our inheritance that do not meet our ethical-political standards. As ancestor piety, Afro-Eccentricity is an inspired form of *bricolage*.

Notes

1 "Omni-American" is Albert Murray's term. According to Murray: "For all their traditional antagonisms and obvious differences, the so-called black and so-called white people of the United States resemble nobody else in the world so much as they resemble each other. And what is more, even their most extreme and violent polarities represent nothing so much as the natural history of pluralism in an open society" (A. Murray 1970: 22). To speak of black people and white people is, of course, to speak of race, whose constructed nature is by now common knowledge. To say that race is constructed is to say that it is produced and reproduced by the very practices of dividing people into population groups whose members are said, erroneously, to share a common biogenetic heritage or metaphysical essence. But just as Columbus's inadequate knowledge of geography resulted in the construction of the native peoples of the Americas as "Indian," many people, perhaps all, are constructed as the bearers of race. Their racial identity is no less real than the Indian identity of the native peoples of the Americas. If Columbus's mistake has become a reality, then so has the mistake of identifying people racially. Each is no less real because they are mistakes. They are *real* mistakes. Thus we must deal with the reality of race. It cannot be wished away.

2 This argument is indebted to Clarence E. Walker's *We Can't Go Home Again* (2001).

3 There are four texts whose ambitions exceed the limitations of the narrative typology that I have constructed. They are sufficiently distinctive to merit separate treatment. I refer to Charles H. Long's attempt – "Perspectives for a Study of Afro-American Religion in the United States" (1971) – to theorize Black Religion, which is truly distinctive owing to his comparative training. I refer also to William R. Jones, *Is God a White Racist?* (1973), Cornel West, *Prophesy Deliverance!* (1982), and Theophus Smith, *Conjuring Culture* (1994). Each text challenges my typology in various ways and will no doubt inform my constructive efforts.

4 Walker's rhetoric is hyperbolic. For a more nuanced treatment of Afrocentrism, see Wilson J. Moses, *Afrotopia* (1998). Moses rejects, proleptically, Walker's claim that Afrocentrism and

Eurocentrism are equivalent. Walker is focused single-mindedly on the "totalitarian" and quietist dangers that Afrocentrism poses to the political agency and independent judgment of black people. Moses' focus is dual: in addition to the dangers that Walker describes, he is also concerned by the dangers of dismissive critique, as exemplified by Mary Lefkovitz, *Not Out of Africa* (1996), which wittingly or not reproduce racialized, Eurocentric narratives. Given this view, the Glenn Loury's of the world who regard themselves as descendents of the Greeks are excluded. According to Moses: "Lefkovitz's book has served only to obscure definitions further; it is ahistorical, presentist, synchronic, and absolutely devoid of any of the methods of serious cultural or intellectual history. Like most polemicists, its author finds methodology inconvenient and precise definitions intolerable. Thus she is hardly different from the various demagogues and polemicists who have gathered on the other side of the Afrocentrism debate. Much silliness and ill will has been spewed forth by the likes of Mary Lefkovitz and the black nationalist polemicist Maulana Karenga, who represent two sides of the same hateful coin. As a result, it has become almost impossible for most persons to engage in analytical, dispassionate discussion of the various expressions of those movements – both intellectual and emotional – that constitute what we today refer to as 'Afrocentrism.'" If this were not bad enough: "Lefkovitz frequently makes statements that would be challenged by any shrewd undergraduate. For example, speaking of George James, she asserts that 'many otherwise well-educated people believe that what he claims is true.' Who are these 'otherwise well-educated people' to whom she refers? She does not identify them nor does she provide any data as to their numbers." "She has thoughtlessly muddled ideas derived from nineteenth-century ethnography, popular mythology of the 1920s, and cult literature of the 1980s. She makes the generalization that all of these ideas constitute Afrocentrism, and then implies that this 'Afrocentrism' is being widely taught in college classrooms. Has it ever occurred to her that proponents of African American studies are divided into numerous categories, influenced by disciplinary affiliations, ideological backgrounds, and political affiliations? Conservative, feminist, deconstructionist, and Marxist scholars in black studies programs and departments have long and vocally opposed romantic and sentimental Afrochauvinism – indeed, far longer than she has" (A. Moses 1998: 6, 9–10, 226).

5 Again, I refer the reader to Wilson J. Moses' *Afrotopia*, which shows quite clearly that Afrocentrism cannot be reduced to Egyptocentrism and anti-Semitism. Such reductions, among other things, ignore the prominent role of "white Afrocentrist," especially Jewish scholars, such as Franz Boas and Melville Herskovits. These reductions, furthermore, exoticize Afrocentrism by implying that the "practice of creating a monumental past for one's race or nationality" is unique to African contributionist and vindicationist history. As Moses observes, Afrocentrism, which predates the word, owes more to Enlightenment Christianity, biblical typology, "eighteenth-century progressivism, and black resistance to white supremacy" than to Egyptology. Finally, Afrocentrism has a folksy, harmless, inoffensive face and a totalitarian face. In his desire to fight the latter, Walker conflates it with the former. Moses is determined to maintain their distinctiveness in a multileveled, comprehensive critique (A. Moses 1998: 10–12, 15).

6 There are good reasons and bad reasons for criticizing the new spirituality and piety. To the degree that they are merely an index of how deeply market forces have penetrated religious practices, the criticism is well earned. To the extent that criticism of these developments is merely an index of an inability to conceive authority except in authoritarian terms, by reference to inappropriate metaphors for authority such as parent, king, master, or – in the wake of the war psychosis and hysteria generated by the September 11 catastrophe – military command, the criticism is poorly made and merits rejection.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Babel in the North: Black Migration, Moral Community, and the Ethics of Racial Authenticity

Eddie S. Glaude, Jr.

Historiography of the Interwar Period

Traditional historical accounts of African-American religious life in the 1920s and 1930s often describe mainline black churches as unable to cope with the pressures of urbanization that coincided with the Great Migration. As such, many scholars describe the period as the "era of sects and cults" – the moment in which we see the proliferation of storefront churches and the emergence of esoteric cults and charismatic leaders with peculiar theologies. The emergence of these groups is often attributed to a psychological dislocation that occurred in the shift from rural to urban life, as well as to the failure of traditional religious vocabularies to account for the migrants' new circumstances. As Arthur Fauset notes in *Black Gods of the Metropolis*, "for many of their members, certain religious cults in northern urban communities assist the transplanted southern worshiper, accustomed to the fixed racial mores and caste requirements of the South, to adjust his psychological and emotional reactions to conditions in the city, where all life and living are more fluid and intermingling of the races is inevitable" (A. Fauset 2002: 81). As this particular story goes, black Southern migrants – with the push factors of Southern racial violence and agricultural disaster and the pull factors of the promise of a better life in the North setting them off on their historic journey – found themselves adrift in industrial, urban

America, and the so-called cults and storefronts provided them with a ballast and an anchor.

This narrative in some ways requires an account of the failure of traditional mainline black denominations. The rising presence of storefronts and so-called cults in urban, black America signaled, for some scholars, a decline among traditional black churches or what Gayraud Wilmore goes so far as to call the "deradicalization of the Black Church." In Wilmore's view, at least three significant factors hampered the ability of mainline black denominations to maintain their historic roles as *the* central institution in the public and private lives of African Americans. First, many congregations lacked the financial resources and an adequately trained ministry to effect any significant influence on their respective communities. During this period, many a church was "characteristically impoverished, paid its clergy less than any professional in the community, and was all but overwhelmed by the anomie and antisocial lifestyles that accompanied the rapid secularization of black life in the metropolis" (G. Wilmore 1984: 161). The impoverished churches also retained what Wilmore calls a rural orientation: they relied on a moralistic and revivalistic interpretation of Christianity to hold off the pain and miseries of their lives and to imagine the possibility of enduring (not flourishing) in the United States. This particular approach led to a passive relation to the actual political challenges of their life-world. Wilmore maintains: "As far as challenging white society, or seeking to mobilize the community against poverty and oppression, most churches were too otherworldly, apathetic, or caught up in institutional maintenance to deal with such issues" (ibid: 161).

The second factor that contributed to the retreat of mainline churches was the extreme proliferation of black churches throughout the cities, which weakened the overall impact of black religion by diffusing its economic and political potential. According to Wilmore, this resulted in a competitive denominationalism and rivalries among congregations that "diverted energies and money from self-help and community welfare concerns to ecclesiastical gamesmanship and institutional housekeeping" (ibid: 162). These realities were only compounded by the increased competition mainline churches encountered from secular organizations. This third factor points to the growth of black civil society beyond the institutional boundaries of the churches. Social clubs, fraternities, lodges, and other small private groups began to take on roles that were increasingly beyond the gaze of the church and its doctrine. And for Wilmore, this signaled an important shift:

> The church, which throughout most of the nineteenth century was able to integrate much of the activity of the masses around the core of its own ideology of racial uplift and moral development, now found itself relegated to the periphery of the closed circle that was the segregated black community. From that eccentric and unfamiliar position the church began to offer personal security for older adults – mostly female – of the lower middle class. (Ibid: 164)

The new-found marginal status of mainline black churches was solidified as the "profane" dimensions of black life associated with a "debased" class of the black poor and an emergent, confident, and somewhat secular black intelligentsia began to take center stage. In short, between an expanding black underclass and a rising black middle class the church lost its leading role in black communities throughout urban America.

A somewhat melodramatic narrative indeed. The story of the rise of sects and cults and the decline of black churches in the North requires, to some extent, exaggerated conflicts and disfigured characters in order to make sense. The historical record suggests that black churches bore the brunt of the responsibility for the new migrant population. Traditional churches experienced unprecedented growth in their memberships due to the migration of black Southerners. Albert Tindley's East Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, for example, saw its active membership increase to over 7,000 persons by 1923, and the membership of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Pittsburgh grew from 1,500 members to close to 3,000 between 1915 and 1926 (W. Sernett 1997: 184). In fact, a careful look at the *Census of Religious Bodies* for the years 1926 and 1936 "points to a 9 percent increase in all black membership among all denominations, from 5.2 million to 5.7 million." Black Baptists showed the most remarkable increase, growing "from 3.2 million in 1926 to nearly 3.8 million a decade later" (R. Burkett 1994: 135). So even if we account for the great deal of turnover among their members as well as the deliberate exaggeration of church roles, we must recognize that the Great Migration era was an extraordinary time of growth for traditional black churches in the North (W. Sernett 1997: 184–7). To be sure, these churches confronted tremendous challenges, but to characterize their efforts as a retreat or, even worse, as an indication of deradicalization, is to succumb to the worst kind of melodramatic *narrative of decline*.[1]

This narrative presupposes a number of different ideas. First, there is a high moment in black church history, usually the church of the nineteenth century, when black religious institutions served the spiritual and social needs of black communities. Second, a fixed view of what constitutes the social and political role of the church is presupposed, often drawing a hard distinction between an otherworldly theological orientation (the bad view) and one that is based in a social ethic (the good view). And, third, implicit and sometimes explicit in each of these assumptions is an understanding of what the "true" theology of the black church is. This view serves as the basis to judge the relative effectiveness of black religious institutions. The plot of narratives of decline then is that once upon a time the church was central to black folk's lives, but in the 1920s and 1930s it was not. There was a tragic descent. I want to pick out two central themes here that will hopefully get at some of the trouble with this sort of interpretation and use them to offer a different way of making sense of this critical moment in the religious and political life of black America.

Two Features of Narratives of Decline

> Attacked by both the “nigger on the block,” who had abandoned the too exclusive, too unjust God of white Christianity, and by the educated elite of “New Negroes” – who imagined themselves superior to preachers and too sophisticated for religion – many black preachers retreated to what they knew best: preaching hell fire and damnation and raising money. With a few outstanding exceptions, their churches turned inward to satisfy the spiritual hunger of a dispossessed and exploited people who found emotional release in the ritualism and organizational effervescence of black church life. (Gayraud Wilmore)

The emergence of diverse black religious expression in the 1920s and 1930s is often accounted for in the narrative of decline as an indication of (1) the fading moral significance of traditional black churches and (2) the eclipse of moral ends that these institutions embody. The former really speaks to the processes of secularization that turn otherwise faithful folks into unfaithful people or, minimally, privately faithful folks. On this view, migration unleashed torrid forces which led to the differentiation and stratification of black life, accelerated the process begun in the late nineteenth century in which black civil society emerged as an independent sphere apart from black religious life, and made possible other domains of living that influenced the moral character of black individuals. A concern then about the disenchantment of black life and a subsequent loss of meaning for black Americans animates this particular worry.

Indeed, by the end of the Great Migration era, the religious landscape of African-American communities looked somewhat different from that of the nineteenth century. The church of the nineteenth century preoccupied itself not only with the spiritual needs of its members but was also exercised by the presence of slavery in the South, the impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction and, of course, the consequences of the nadir. These churches have been described as organized publics consisting of those who were directly and indirectly affected by the consequences of transactions to such an extent that they deemed it necessary to have those consequences systematically cared for (E. Glaude 2000: 23). In short, black religious institutions were, to a large extent, the consequences of the efforts of members of the community to address their common ills.

Much of the historical scholarship around the black church in the nineteenth century relies on a crucial distinction: that black religious life in the South was principally liturgical – the ecstatic experience of God’s presence, singing, and dancing were central – and the essence of Christian life in the North was essentially ethical with a stress on education and moral reform (A. Raboteau 1997: 99–102). W. E. B. Du Bois, for example, described the faith of the slave as a form of religious fatalism. The slave’s religious life emphasized ritual and liturgy and turned the slave’s attention away from this world and focused it on the promise

of a place in heaven – an otherworldly escapism. In contrast, the religious conviction of black Northerners was understood as a pragmatically driven social ethic, what Du Bois saw as a this-worldly sense of racial advocacy (W. Du Bois 1995a: 501–2). Here black religion led to an active engagement with the evil of racism and the circumstances of black communities.

This difference, due in part to the context in which these forms of religious expression took shape, provides part of the structure to the story of black religious life in the nineteenth century. Black religion in the South was primarily rural and escapist and, in the North, this religion was basically urban and socially active. The characters were similar: AME, Baptist, AMEZ, CME, and black members of predominantly white denominations. And in both geographic regions an idea of a black moral community was presupposed; that is, the sense that despite the denominational differences and even with the contrasting theological orientations the conjoint actions of black folk to secure some consequences and to avoid others (in a world of white racists with state power) were seen as goods to sustain, energetically and passionately, just because they were goods shared by all. The cooperation among black individuals, in the North and South, and the use of religious languages by them to address their common ills aided in the construction of what can be called a national moral community. I call this community a moral one because it emerges out of the experiences of addressing the problems of white supremacy, and these experiences are shot through with conflict, contingency, uncertainty, and struggle – notions that go, on my view, straight to the heart of moral experience.

But by the 1920s and 1930s the scene changed. The influx of black Southern migrants dramatically affected religious life in Northern black communities. By 1926 Harlem alone contained more than 140 churches. In addition to traditional mainline black churches, non-traditional forms of black religious expression emerged. Just to name a few: Commandment Keepers, Holy Church of the Living God, the Pillar and the Ground of the Truth, the Temple of the Gospel of the Kingdom, Prophet Bess; Mt. Zion Pentecostal Church; Holy Temple of God in Christ – all dotted the religious landscape of the Harlem community (W. Sernett 1997: 181).[2] Because of this diversity and plurality, at least according to the narrative of decline, the moral significance of black religious life began to fade. In particular, the emergence of storefronts and non-traditional forms of black religious expression led to the church's loss of its broader purpose and to a focus on its own individual aggrandizement. So, the institution that once provided the members of the black community with moral and political languages to inhabit as they challenged the state and passed judgment on the moral life of the nation had now been relegated to "ecclesiastical gamesmanship and institutional housekeeping."

The fading moral significance of black churches is directly connected to what I have described as the eclipse of moral ends these institutions embody. The diversity of black religious expression led to the activity of navel-gazing among individual religious institutions. Preachers were concerned only with the

spiritual wellbeing of their members. An otherworldly focus dominated the theological orientation of the church. Miles Mark Fisher, for example, believed that the otherworldly focus of the church prevented many churches from seeing the radical social, political, and economic forces transforming the lives of their membership. Instead, preachers "invoked the Bible as the solution to social problems. Biblical literalism and theological fundamentalism proved the order of the day."[3] Commentary on the structural forces impacting the lives of black Christians was relatively absent from black sermons; instead, the behavior of individuals in a corruptible world was their primary concern. In the narratives of decline, such an outlook is directly connected to the notion that the "real" social aims of black religious institutions were lost to the individual desires of those caught in the lights of urban America. Just as the influx of Southern migrants diversified the religious landscape of black urban enclaves, the impact of these spaces – industrialization, greater mobility, and secularization – turned these migrants away from the traditional church *and* blinded the traditional church to the true meaning of its theology. The lure of the street and the rational pursuit with maximum efficiency of new-found desires became the measure of success. And the church, finding itself on the margins of this new instrumental reason, sought to offer primarily security and salvation for its membership.

I reject the basic thrust of the narrative of decline. It seemingly rests on a confusion about how best to describe the evolution of the black church from a nineteenth-century institution to a twentieth-century one. On the one hand, there is the notion that black religious institutions lacked the capacity to handle the influx of black Southern migrants. On the other hand, black churches are characterized as otherworldly and theologically conservative. Such an orientation, on this view, prevented black religious institutions from intervening, meaningfully at least, in the lives of black individuals – migrant or not – as the forces of urbanization and industrialization transformed their environments. On the first view, the primary causes of the decline are non-moral: the decline is a negative byproduct of social change. Black religious institutions simply responded inadequately to these changes. The second view, however, begins with a critique of the theological orientation of black churches. In some ways, these churches were doomed to fail because they maintained an otherworldly focus that turned their attention away from the worldly forces changing the circumstances of their lives. On this view, the primary cause of decline is moral in the sense that the motivations that actuate black religious folk are connected to certain moral ideals about how we should orient ourselves to the world and others. This orientation failed in the face of modernizing forces, but was not a consequence of them.

No matter how the story is structured, though, the conclusions appear basically to be the same: that "a relative quietism and an apparent vacuum of church leadership was filled by flamboyant messiahs and cultists like Father Divine and Daddy Grace, whose promise of utopias and provision of social services to the

abject poor caught the attention of the press and the imagination of the people" (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990: 121). I think these conclusions are wrong for a number of reasons. But I want to acknowledge the importance of key features in narratives of decline. We have to account for the consequences of urbanization and industrialization, the emergence of non-traditional forms of black religious expression, the proliferation of churches (traditional and non-traditional) throughout black urban centers, and the potential effects of these events on the form and content of black religious life. However, I am not so much concerned with the decline of mainline black churches in the face of these events but, instead, the transformation of a particular moral community and the moral languages that animate it. In short, I am more interested in *narratives of transformation* than decline.

Narratives of Transformation and Moral Language

> The moral language we use in daily life has much to do with what that life is like, with what we are like. (Jeffrey Stout)

In the third chapter of *Ethics After Babel* Jeffrey Stout argues that the task of the moral philosopher does not begin with unearthing foundational principles which allow us to say once and for all what constitutes *the* moral language that we all use (no matter what place we call home). Nor is it only a task of looking at major historical actors whose redescriptions have impacted the way we see and talk about ourselves and the world around us. Instead, Stout urges us to see that moral philosophy is "a kind of reflexive ethnography." It requires of us an attention to the intricate details of our moral languages and the forces that can lead to adjustments, transformations, and even wholesale abandonment of words that comprise our moral discourse (J. Stout 1988: 60–81). Of course, Stout says much more than this. But for the purposes of this essay, I want to bring together his discussion of two possible sources of conceptual change in modern ethics and how these sources can be used to understand more fully the phenomenal transformation in the 1920s and 1930s of black religious life (of black life in general) and the moral languages that go along with it.

One source of conceptual change is the blurring of inherited distinctions. With the emergence of new social practices and institutions, distinctions that once ordered the lives of folk become less sharp. Distinctions that once helped us make sense of events may become difficult to manage, and this can lead to all sorts of problems as our moral language seemingly falls out of step with the new circumstances. The black migrants of the 1920s and 1930s, for example, had a moral language in hand when they arrived in the North. This language developed in a particular social, political, and economic milieu in which certain kinds of

distinctions made sense. I am reminded of Albert Raboteau's characterization of black slave piety. For him, the context of the slave South constrained certain kinds of actions, particularly open rebellions against the peculiar institution. But, for Raboteau, it does not follow that accommodation to such a brutal context necessarily entailed an internal acceptance of oppression. The slaves' internal attitudes, Raboteau argues, must be distinguished from their external actions, for "the inner world of slaves was the fundamental battleground and their evangelical Christianity served as an important weapon in the slave's defense of his psychological, emotional, and moral freedom from domination" (A. Raboteau 1997: 99–102). The love of God, for example, allowed the slave (even the individual living in the Jim Crow South) to understand herself apart from her conditions of living: God's love and grace, in effect, provided her with the recognition required to see herself as a self-determining agent in spite of the brutal realities of slavery (or Jim Crow). However, in a Northern, urban context these very languages could have easily proven ill-equipped to handle new sets of problems. A moral language developed within a context with one set of economic, social, and political practices that might be carried over into another context in which technology, social arrangements, modes of production, and political realities are quite different, and in such circumstances the language may fail to provide appropriate or feasible guidance (J. Schneewind 1983: 122–4).

In narratives of decline, the so-called otherworldly focus of black rural (read Southern) religion in the context of the North detached black religion from its lived context. On this view, the physical realities of black life in Northern urban settings – crime, poverty, racial violence, just to name a few – took a back seat to spiritual matters, what Raboteau describes as the internal attitudes that enabled black folk to hold on in a world shot through with evil. However, such a theological orientation under particular circumstances can be seen as entirely appropriate and even this-worldly, for a system designed to dehumanize a people – to make of them, in effect, extensions of a master's will – is held at bay by the ecstatic belief in a power beyond this world. This particular orientation makes possible the conditions for any active engagement within this setting. Yet, in the context of cities in the North, such a view may lapse into incoherence or lead to self-defeating actions or the orientation may be adapted and transformed to fit the new environs, looking and sounding quite different from the old moral language.

Many storefront churches in the North, for example, were reconstituted Southern congregations. Migrants attempted to reestablish familiar forms of worship in an unfamiliar place, particularly in light of what some felt to be the alienating size of Northern churches and their sterile worship services. They often met and worshiped in their homes and when the meetings outgrew that space, they eventually found a storefront. Not all these storefronts consisted of exotic forms of worship and strange theological views (W. Sernett 1997: 191). The majority of the churches maintained a Baptist or Methodist orientation with a decidedly Southern inflection. They looked different: they were lodged in a

storefront in some black urban neighborhood instead of in a small, intimate building in some rural Southern town. And because of the setting, they sounded differently: utterances about the promises of a better life in heaven and the power of God's love in a corruptible world amounted, at least to those who espoused a social gospel view, to an abnegation of social responsibility. In other words, a language that once enabled action in the South was now understood by some as a justification for inaction in the North.

Descriptions of these processes as a decline or as indicative of the deradicalization of traditional black churches won't get us very far in understanding the outcomes. In fact, they will only lead us to search for a more pristine expression of what we take to be *the* moral language of the black church and, by extension, black communities.[4] The point to be made here is that there is not some predetermined, uniform, and unchanging moral language – one that always has the right words and advice for us – which stands apart from our particular situations and problems. As Stout notes:

> If moral philosophy is reflection on the languages of morals, it can claim no uniform or unchanging subject matter. The next culture heard from or the latest wrinkle in our own form of life can yield new candidates for truth and falsehood, ways of living in the world that we hadn't anticipated, and quite possibly new kinds of people for us to be. (J. Stout 1988: 72)

The dramatic changes in the form and content of black religious life during the 1920s and 1930s constitute such an extraordinarily rich moment in which unanticipated ways of living in the world (and new kinds of black folk like the "New Negro," the Garveyite, and the black communist) emerged in the face of transforming social forces.

Another possible source of conceptual change in modern ethics – and this, in my view, is crucial if we are to understand how the transformations took root in the 1920s and 1930s – is what Stout calls, following David Lewis, the kinematics of presupposition. Every time we talk with someone what we say affects what they can presuppose about whatever we may be talking about. It would be odd, for example, if I, as a member of a COGIC church, invoked God, and my interlocutor presupposed I was talking about Fard Muhammed, who is God in the person in the theology of the Nation of Islam. Once I realize that every time I say God she thinks of Fard, I know that I am unable to presuppose the truth of my religious belief about God whenever I am talking with her. Our notions of who God is simply conflict. I may try to convince my friend that her description of Fard Muhammed is wrong, even blasphemous. But to no avail. She may argue that my conception of God is this blond-haired, blue-eyed devil who has enslaved me. I would not be convinced. Nevertheless, we both agree that we should work to end white supremacy. This underlying interest in ending white supremacy may get me to avoid invoking my religious beliefs as a basis for my political activity; it "may get me arguing in new ways, putting new twists on familiar usages

and possibly even bringing new candidates for truth and falsehood into being without trying to do so" (J. Stout 1988: 79).

With the plurality and diversity of black religious life in the North, certain notions commonsensically understood by all could no longer be taken for granted when black persons with different theological beliefs engaged one another about their conditions of living.[5] Perhaps I can make the point clearer with the following thought experiment. Imagine a conversation between three black individuals, each of whom professes a belief in God that serves as the basis for their public action. Let's say that one of the persons is a recent migrant from the rural South and is Baptist. Another is a proponent of the social gospel and was born in the North, and the other is a member of a storefront church, a Oneness Pentecostal. All of them ascribe ultimate authority to God and scripture, and their opinions about the state of black America are intimately connected to that authority. Suppose also that each of them is familiar with the views of their interlocutors. The Baptist and Pentecostal know that the advocate of the social gospel has criticized their theological views as otherworldly. He has even gone so far as to suggest that persons with such views have turned their backs on the true message of Christ. The proponent of the social gospel knows that the Pentecostal sees himself as reclaiming the true spirit of Christianity and that he believes his style of worship to be the best way of expressing that spirit. He also knows that the rural Baptist is firmly committed to his views because they have carried him "a mighty long way." It does not follow that it will make sense for each of them to appeal to the authority of God or scripture in settling disputed questions in public about the state of black America. Of course, they *could* and many religious folk did in the 1920s and 1930s. They talked about moral vices like drinking, gambling, and crime. But they were "religious folk." In terms of a general public discussion about the problems of black America, many "folk with religious conviction" understood that others with similar concerns about the condition of black America held incompatible (not incommensurable) views of what God and the Bible said about the political condition of black people in the United States. So, given the diversity of belief *and* the awareness of that diversity, it would be unwise for any of the three interlocutors to appeal to their religious beliefs in an effort to convince the other about what would be an appropriate course of action for black Americans. The point here is that the plurality and diversity of black religious life in the 1920s and 1930s[6] contributed significantly to the transformation of black moral discourse or, even better, contributed to the secularization of black public discourse in the North.

I do not mean by secularization that process by which faithful people are made unfaithful or "the passage, transfer, or relocation of those persons, things, functions, meanings, and so forth, from their traditional location in the religious sphere to the secular spheres" (J. Casanova 1994: 13). Rather, I maintain that the secularization of discourse in black public settings is about the inability of those who hold theological commitments – and who nonetheless wish to speak to a religiously plural audience – to take for granted that others are presupposing the

same commitments they are.[7] I am not suggesting that religiosity among black folks waned or that mainline black churches somehow lost their importance in black communities. Not at all. Instead, I am arguing that traditional religious presuppositions that informed African-American public life in the nineteenth century could no longer be taken for granted in the twentieth century.[8] To be sure, the religious convictions of non-traditional forms of black religious expression, the theology of some storefront churches, and the emergence of black public institutions that stood apart from black churches contributed to the secularization of black public discourse. But it is a mistake to attribute the effects of this secularization to a failure on the part of mainline black denominations to address the spiritual and social needs of their communities. It is much more complicated than that.

The effort to continue to talk across the plurality and diversity of black religious life and address the newfangled circumstances of black folk in urban America spurred this process on. The secularization of black public discourse in the North resulted, in part, from the linguistic transactions that took place between black persons as they reflected together on the conditions of their community. The underlying agreement of the need for critical reflection on the circumstances of African Americans remained (just as it was in the nineteenth century). A moral language was simply needed to negotiate the plurality and diversity of belief among African Americans, particularly when, as Hubert Harrison (the founder of the short-lived Liberty League) noted with a bit of exaggeration, black radicals ranged from "agnostics, atheists, I.W.W.'s, Socialists, Single Taxers and even Bolshevists" (H. Harrison 1920: 76). The change in what these folk could presuppose and the subsequent effort to accommodate that change had a great effect on the form and content of black moral discourse. Particularly, it contributed to what can be called an *ethics of racial authenticity*. The pieties of black religion as a source of moral discourse and identity stood alongside the pieties of black experience. In the case of the former, African-Americans' relation to God as the source of their being was absolutely essential to how they understood themselves as moral agents. On the latter view, being in touch with a source like God was tied to or bound up with being in touch with one's inner self and certain narratives of experience that made one unique – stories that told of the African-American sojourn in the United States and were not reducible to an idea of God and his activity in history.

The Ethics of Racial Authenticity

> The intelligent Negro of today is resolved not to make discrimination an extenuation for his shortcomings in performance, individual or collective; he is trying to hold himself at par, neither inflated by sentimental allowances nor depreciated by current social discounts. For this he must know himself and be known for precisely what he is. (Alain Locke)

The ethics of racial authenticity find their starting point in a basic lesson learned from black Christianity: that black folk are a unique people with a different moral sense about them, capable of distinguishing intuitively the wrongness of slavery and racial discrimination and the rightness of their common complaint, because of their distinctive relationship to God. This connection with God allows them to step outside of the master-slave relationship, which defines the slave as a means to the master's ends, and to see themselves as self-determining agents. In other words, this relation with God makes possible, at least in the nineteenth century, a notion of black autonomy.

The ethics of racial authenticity assume the moral thrust of this lesson, but with a significant difference. God is no longer required to be in touch with the uniqueness of oneself or the race. Instead, what I want to call an expressivist conception of the racial self takes hold.[9] The idea is that African Americans are self-determining agents because there is something unique about them *as* black people. They are autonomous because their actions are a sole product of their own will. External factors like God's love or recognition by white folks do not determine who they are as individuals or as members of the black race. No. Something inside of black individuals defines their relation to others and themselves. Imitation here becomes a cardinal sin and self-creation a virtue. It is not surprising then that Benjamin Brawley, the black writer and educator, described black people as thoroughgoing romantics (B. Brawley 1915: 305). On the expressivist view, if a black individual fails to connect with this inner something and with those who are similarly situated, she will in effect fail to live the life that is uniquely hers. If black people fail to embrace their peculiar, unique form of life, then they will in effect fail to live in the way that is truly theirs. This gives added moral significance to the idea of being true to oneself and moral gravity to notions of racial obligation.

This is one of the languages that accommodated the changes in black public discourse,[10] a language of racial authenticity that affected, for good or ill, the form and content of black moral discourse in the North well into the twentieth century (even into our present moment).[11] The blurring of inherited distinctions and the kinematics of presupposition transformed the role of black religious language in public deliberation. To be sure, that language continued to provide tropes and images for public utterances, but it no longer formed the background agreement within which notions of right and wrong, social activism, and the individual wellbeing of African Americans could be made intelligible in the North. The structural changes in the setting and the diversity and plurality of black life affected that role significantly. Marcus Garvey, for example, recognized this shift, and in an article in the *Negro World* in 1923 offered the language of his Universal Negro Improvement Association as an alternative.

> The churches were not doing the work undertaken by Marcus Garvey, yet some preachers are among the crusaders. A full explanation of their attitude might be pretty hard to arrive at and harder to state without entering on contentious matter.

> It is enough simply to point out the obvious fact that Negro churches are divided, in some cases forbidden to work together with other movements, and they furnish no convenient meeting-ground for united work. Only a movement that welcomes all people of all denominations and is officially attached to none while having its own assembly hall can spread its net wide enough to gather in all people desiring to identify with it. (Quoted in R. Burkett 1978: 56)

Garvey's point about a *convenient meeting-ground* must be understood beyond talk of physical buildings. Like many black Northerners, he saw the need for a moral discourse that allowed black folk with varied commitments to reflect together on their circumstances. Religious sectarianism blocked the way. The ethics of racial authenticity was offered as an alternative path.

Alain Locke, in his manifesto "The New Negro," captured the basic thrust of this shift and the impact it had on the form and content of black moral discourse:

> The Negro today wishes to be known for what he is, even his faults and shortcomings, and scorns a craven and precarious survival at the price of seeming to be what he is not. He resents being spoken of as a social ward or minor, even by his own, and to being regarded a chronic patient for the sociological clinic, the sick man of American Democracy. For the same reasons, he himself is through with those social nostrums and panaceas, the so-called solutions of his problem, with which he and the country have been so liberally dosed in the past. Religion, freedom, education, money – in turn, he has ardently hoped for and peculiarly trusted these things; he still believes them, but not in blind trust that they alone will solve his life-problem. (A. Locke 1995: 53)

Locke found traditional responses to the problems of black people wanting. Religion and the important tropes of modern liberalism – freedom, education, and money – failed to change substantively the lives of African Americans. In their place or, at least, as a framework within which these notions could be given deeper significance, Locke offered racial expressivism (alongside his account of pluralism). He writes that "each generation, will have its creed, and that of the present is the belief in the efficacy of collective effort, in racial cooperation. This *deep feeling of race* is at present the mainspring of Negro life"(ibid: 53; my emphasis).

The deep feeling of race was made possible, on Locke's view, by the extraordinary migration of black people from the South to the North. Up to this point, he maintained, the idea of racial solidarity was an effect of white racial proscription, an outcome of a common condition among otherwise different individuals. With the influx of black Southerners into Northern cities, however, Locke saw the emergence of a common black consciousness. He wrote that "the chief bond between [black folk] has been that of a common condition rather than a life in common. In Harlem, Negro life is seizing upon its first chances for group expression and self-determination" (ibid: 50). The Great Migration enabled then

the possibility of an authentic life and art for black people. Langston Hughes wrote of the new migrants: "They furnish a wealth of colorful, distinctive material because they still hold their own individuality in the face of American standardizations. And perhaps these people will give to the world its truly great Negro artist, the one who is not afraid to be himself" (L. Hughes 1995: 306).

Sentiments such as those voiced by Alain Locke and Langston Hughes were expressed throughout the 1920s and 1930s. We see them in the language of Garveyism and even in the rhetoric of black communists. Garvey's anthropology, for example, announced that "man is the individual who is able to shape his own character, master his own will, direct his own life and shape his own needs" (R. Burkett 1978: 56). Garvey understood that black people, like people in general, were distinctive precisely because of their will, which was the source of their freedom to act and choose. This view gave added weight to his political and cultural ambitions: that despite the many differences, religious and otherwise, that make up the black world, a common sense of who black people are and the shared beliefs that flow from this sense ought to orient them to the world and others. In short, a sense of racial pride and destiny ought to animate the lives of black individuals.

But Garvey's political take on the ethics of racial authenticity was not the only political articulation of this ethics. Black communists often brought together an expressivist conception of the black self and the ideological program of the Communist Party, finding spaces within the party, as Robin D. G. Kelley demonstrates, "to create an expressive culture which, in some respects, contradicted the movement's goal of interracial solidarity" (R. Kelley 1994: 120). The black communist William L. Patterson, sounding a lot like Alain Locke, wrote in 1933 that African Americans were connected by a common culture. He said "the spirituals, the jazz, their religious practices, a growing literature, descriptive of their environment, all of these are forms of cultural expression. Are these not the prerequisites for nationhood?" (ibid: 115). To be sure, strivings for racial authenticity – in the aftermath of World War I and in the context of reconfigured social practices and institutions due to the influx of black migrants (Southern and international) – emerged as a moral language within which a number of different folk with varying political views and quite different religious presuppositions (if any at all) could talk and reflect on the conditions of African-American living.

This does not mean that black religious discourse waned. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham has demonstrated quite convincingly that vernacular black church culture thrived during this period, that the popularity of religious race records "gave a new public dimension to black religion and especially to the working-class churches" (E. Higginbotham 1997: 159). What she calls the "age of the voice" had everything to do with the transformation of the Northern religious landscape by Southern migrants who challenged traditional forms of religious expression. How do I then reconcile the popularity of black religion in the North with my

claims about secularization? First, I am not claiming that black religion was relegated to a private domain. I maintain that secularization took place in *linguistic transactions* as black people with varied commitments attempted to converse about their lives.[12] Faith commitments were left intact. But the way black folks in the North talked about their condition with one another changed, and the ethics of racial authenticity provided a convenient, linguistic meeting place for that conversation. I am not suggesting that the ethics of racial authenticity suddenly became the only way to talk about all moral concerns. This is a problem with most theories of secularization: it's either all or nothing. I am arguing instead that the ethics of racial authenticity became the predominant way to talk about black folk in relation to racist practices in the North: a particular way of speaking about a specific set of problems. Of course, the moral languages of the black church continued to animate conversation about black people. The tropes of exodus, the promised land, notions of redemption and salvation remained in circulation. However, they no longer provided the overall framework for the conversation. Listening to the exchanges between "New Negroes," W. E. B. Du Bois, Garveyites, and black communists of various kinds provides a sense of this shift.

Second, the prevalence of heightened church activity – in the form of gospel blues or in the efforts of proponents of the social gospel – does not really challenge my thesis. In fact, I have criticized the plot structure of the narrative of decline by pointing to this increased activity. The point here is not that mainline black churches or even working-class churches somehow lost their moral significance in the lives of their membership. The historical record suggests otherwise. I am arguing instead that with the diversity and plurality of black religious life appeals to religious beliefs as a basis for settling disputes or conceiving of strategies for public action became less effective or simply failed. And those who continued to make such appeals were simply thought of as *religious folk*, individuals whose public actions were principally defined by their religious commitments. These were folks who "sought to establish boundaries around their lives in the effort to shield them from dangers that were perceived as emanating from both outside and inside their own communities"(E. Higginbotham 1997: 171).

Moreover, the heightened activity of black vernacular church culture must be understood in light of its place within American commercialism. As Higginbotham notes, "race consciousness, creative expression, and the black church became implicated in America's growing corporate capitalism" during the period of the 1920s and 1930s (ibid: 164). Black folks were now able to purchase gospel blues or recorded sermons and listen to them in the privacy of their own homes or among selected friends. As a result, a new relationship to the content of black religious life was established. Folk could play the records over and over again, skip the parts they did not like, and turn the phonograph off when something else caught their attention. In short, the commodification of black religious life simultaneously extended its public appeal – large numbers of persons had access to black religious culture – and transformed the nature of that appeal.[13]

Conclusion

I have argued throughout this essay that the changes in what could jointly be presupposed about black religion in the North and efforts to accommodate those changes had tremendous effects on black moral discourse in the 1920s and 1930s. Specifically, I have suggested that efforts to accommodate the plurality and diversity of black religious expression in the North contributed significantly to the secularization of black moral discourse, particularly in terms of the way black Americans reflected publicly on their conditions of living. I have only offered a preliminary sketch of the importance of the ethics of racial authenticity in light of these substantive changes. And this serves as a beginning for a more nuanced account of the persistence of racial essentialism in our present conversations about race. Much more work needs to be done. Still in need of refinement, as Darlene Clark Hine suggests, is our understanding of the connection between migration and the rise of protest ideologies which shaped this particular moment. My understanding of the ethics of racial authenticity and the expressivist conception of the racial self it presupposes offers one way of understanding that connection. But the emergence of this moral vocabulary and the way it took hold in the North requires of us "a kind of reflexive ethnography," that is, thick descriptions of the way a moral community and its languages were transformed in the face of extraordinary events.

Narratives of decline fail to capture the complexity of these processes. They too often assume that there is a fixed moral language of the black church and, by extension, the black community. Perhaps the plots of these stories find their origins in the very processes of secularization that I have outlined. Maybe they are attempting to answer questions about the relevancy of black religious conviction in an increasingly secular political arena. My intention has been to open a space for a different kind of interpretation, one that places the transformation of the black church in the 1920s and 1930s in historical context and gives attention to the intricate details of a moral language under transformation.

Notes

1 I use this particular phrase in order to suggest the *active* work of the religious historian in constructing the story of black religious life. Although I don't have the space to explore the nuances of my view in this essay, I want to suggest that interpretations of black religion involve a choice of a plot structure for sequences of events. As Hayden White notes, "the 'story' which the historian purports to 'find' in the historical record is proleptic to the 'plot' by which the events are finally revealed to figure a recognizable structure of relationships of a specifically mythic sort" (H. White 1978: 60–1). He goes on to identify three ways the historian interprets her material: (1) by the choice of a plot structure; (2) "choice of a paradigm of explanation, which gives to their arguments a specific shape, thrust, and mode of articulation"; and (3) a moral or ideological decision (ibid: 67). In this essay, I emphasize (1) and (3). The choice of plot structure in narratives of decline aims for a certain kind of epiphany: that

the reader will see the necessity of the black theological project to reclaim the "high" moment of the church. This is the moral decision that is made and, perhaps, one of the main problems of the narrative. But I am getting ahead of myself.

2 Sernett cites Ira De A. Reid's study, "Let Us Prey!" (I. Reid 1991: 276).

3 "Miles Mark Fisher, himself a Baptist preacher, characterized the state of African-American religion prior to the Great Migration era: 'Prior to the world-war the negro preacher was expounding otherworldly topics in addition to an occasional sensational or practical sermon' " (W. Sernett 1997: 121).

4 In some ways, this sort of narrative is necessary for the black theological project. It figures itself as somehow riding in to save the black church from itself and reclaim the true moral language of the church by reclaiming the prophetic impulse of the nineteenth-century church.

5 Churches remained important. The questions and concerns that animated black life prior to this moment continue to do so; they form what can be called a horizon of significance in which certain questions and concerns are singled out as more important than others. But how they are talked about begins to change.

6 I don't want to be accused of holding a monolithic view of black religious life in the nineteenth century. There was certainly diversity. The diversity, however, rarely threatened the conversation about the conditions of black folk. God could be invoked without radical differences in how he was understood.

7 C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya describe this process as a result of partial differentiation. For them, "partial differentiation emphasizes the continuous interaction and interrelationships between churches and areas like politics, economics, education, and culture. The view of the complete differentiation of religion, a withdrawal into a private religious sphere which is prevalent in the social sciences, leads to a misunderstanding of the role of black churches in urban society" (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990: 123). On their view, the established black churches were affected by the differentiation, stratification, and pluralism which the urban environment encouraged, but this fact should not lead us to overemphasize the competition of these various sectors with the church or to embrace a hard distinction between the sacred and the secular. My use of secularization rejects traditional understandings of the term. I am not claiming that religion is relegated to some private domain. Instead, secularization takes place in the way people deliberate about public matters (the sorts of languages that emerge to bridge stratification, plurality, and differentiation). As for Lincoln and Mamiya's use of the phrase "partial differentiation," I am content to think about it pragmatically: what difference would it practically make to use the phrase "partial differentiation" as opposed to my understanding of secularization? If no practical difference can be found, then the two alternatives mean practically the same thing.

8 This does not mean that these convictions were now held only in private or that they were no longer viable in public conversation. The only point I am making is that people could not assume that folk outside of their respective congregations (with whom they worked to challenge white supremacy) held the same religious presuppositions.

9 I don't want to suggest that the ethics of racial authenticity are somehow unique to this particular moment. We see this discourse as early as the 1850s. During the nineteenth century, however, the language is very much embedded in a black Christian discourse or, at least, stands alongside that discourse. Listen to Orishatukeh Faduma (1888): "In the education of a race, *unselfish* individuality in action should not be discouraged. Every successful attempt to deindividualize a man makes him lose whatever virtue there is in him, it makes him a chameleon-like man – a mere reflection of a man, a stage-player versed in the art of personifying. The *unselfish* living 'I' is of more worth than a selfish inactive, dead 'we.' The first and last influence upon which both God and man have to act is your inmost self, your special character or individuality – don't trifle with it, don't sell it for a mess of pottage, for peace, for quiet" (quoted in W. Moses 1978: 204). Moses also makes the point that in the rhetoric of the classical black

nationalist before the American Civil War, there is a "manifest commitment to Christianity and civilization. Such tendencies were hardly obliterated during the 1920s, though there is in the rhetoric of most black writers of the post-World War I era, a characteristic ambivalence or outright hostility toward the Victorian conceptions of Christianity and civilization to which classical black nationalism was sympathetic" (ibid: 267). The ambivalence was expressed in the ethics of racial authenticity and the expressivist conception of the racial self it presupposed.

10 It is important that we understand this language as not somehow obliterating all differences in the black communities. Class, gender, and cultural differences remained and often exerted tremendous pressures on the conversation. As Peter Gottlieb (1991: 74) notes, "tensions that arose from growing differences of class within the African-American population were not overcome by the rising awareness of a common racial identity, actively promoted by the *Pittsburgh Courier* and by some prominent figures in the community." The point I am making, however, is that the language of the conversation within which those tensions were expressed was often that of racial authenticity.

11 Such a view could help us understand, for example, King's failures in the North as, in part, a discursive one. He continued to ground his public utterances in his religious belief. Or, we can think of the failure of Malcolm X's initial religious effort, The Muslim Mosque Incorporated, and the subsequent "secular" Organization of African American Unity as an example of the discursive requirements of the black North.

12 Not only must we disentangle theories of secularization from claims about the would-be erosion and decline of religion, but we must also inquire into the effects of processes of modern differentiation and all they entail on the way we talk about moral matters. In other words, once we get rid of "the confusion of historical processes of secularization proper with the alleged and anticipated consequences which those processes [are] supposed to have upon religion" (J. Casanova 1994: 19), then we can get about the business of attending to the transformations of moral languages and moral communities. That is, we can get about the business of "reflexive ethnography."

13 They were now listening to it in commodified form in the privacy of their own homes.

CHAPTER **THIRTY**

Locating Afro-American Judaism: A Critique of White Normativity

Walter Isaac

> We know not how to speak in the same breath of the Negro and the Israelite. The very names have startlingly opposite sounds – one representing all that is debased and inferior in the hopeless barbarity and heathenism of six thousand years; the other, the days when Jehovah conferred on our fathers the glorious equality which led the Eternal to converse with them, and allow them to enjoy the communion of angels . . .
>
> There is no parallel between such races. Humanity from pole to pole would scout such a comparison. The Hebrew was originally free; and the charter of his liberty was inspired by his Creator. The Negro was never free; and his bondage in Africa was simply duplicated in a milder form when he was imported here . . . The judicious in all the earth would agree that to proclaim the African equal to the surrounding races would be a farce.
>
> *Jewish Record*, January 23, 1863

"Are Jews White?" An Introduction to Black Jews

Ever since Jacques Faitlovitch (1920–1: 80–100) first published his findings on the Jews of Ethiopia, various anthropologists, journalists, and rabbis have been keenly enchanted with the subject of black Jews.[1] Perhaps responding to their fascination, black American religious sects have propagated notions of Jewish blackness by hailing "the black man" as "the (original) Jew." Although most commentators have labeled this idea as anti-Semitic or racist, their responses have consistently ignored how Jews construct white racial assignments for themselves by caricaturing and/or denying black Jewish existence.[2] In short, dismissals of Jewish blackness have revealed the white supremacist thinking that often underlay self-assertions of Jewish identity. Let's explore this provocative suggestion further.

In the United States there are various groups of African Americans who also refer to themselves as Jews, Hebrews, or Israelites. These religious sects are related to each other by their practice of Judaism and by the fact that, for the

most part, they represent the poorest, least educated and "darkest" segments of American Jewry. The white Jewish community has never acknowledged the black Jews' legitimacy, and as a result researchers have sought out information that might confirm the black Jews' religious claims. At first, searching for the Jewish authenticity of blacks might seem important for nothing more than determining the black Jews' status according to halakha (Jewish law). However, it is exactly this need to verify black Jewish legitimacy that highlights the distinctly racial component of contemporary Jewish identity, for if the Jews are not a race, why then would the black Jewish community's status as Jews be in doubt?[3]

Consider the following comment on Albert Ehrman's classic article "The Commandment Keepers: A Negro 'Jewish' Cult in America Today":

> While journalistic accounts of a Negro "Jewish" cult in Harlem have appeared from time to time, Mr. Ehrman's essay is an original documented study of its origins, growth and activities. Far from being an exotic, passing phenomenon, the author's conclusion points to a growing group that with cultural advancement may have to be reckoned with on the American Jewish scene. (A. Ehrman 1959: n. 266)

This excerpt reveals some interesting presuppositions. On the one hand, the passage does not call black Jews "an exotic, passing phenomenon." But on the other hand, it mentions the need for their "cultural advancement" before they have to be "reckoned with." We also notice that in the first sentence, the term "Jewish" is surrounded by quotes and modified with the words "Negro" and "cult." By writing this way, the author alludes to a difference between "American Jewish" and "Negro Jewish" communities. But what kind of distinction is being suggested here? Are the black American Jews not American? Or does their "Negro" identity cancel out their Jewish identity? If the former, why would they "have to be reckoned with on the *American* Jewish scene?" If the latter, why call them "Jewish" at all? Our passage, in short, raises the philosophical problem of locating the black Jew in a world where Jews are not black. But this presents us with an interesting question: if Jews are not black, then what race are they? What color are they? Could Jews be white?

Although we are inclined to deny the contemporary relevance of conceiving the Jewish people as a race, the virtual obsession that Jewish cultural studies has had with distinctly racial concepts suggests otherwise. Numerous books and articles have shown how American Jews navigate between identities of Jewishness and whiteness. Michael Rogin's *Blackface, White Noise* and Karen Armstrong's *How the Jews Became White Folks* are but the tip of the iceberg, and as Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin write in their introduction to *Jews and Other Differences*,

> The construction of racial categories is in fact a key topic driving research in cultural studies in general . . . the tortured question of whether Jews are "white" is

> shown to have a complex history – and that history in turn sheds light on the politics of identity and exclusion in American life. The articulation of this legacy can reveal how much the persistence of racism has enabled Jews in the United States to be and become safely "white." (Boyarin and Boyarin 1997: xi)

This statement is highly provocative because it asserts whiteness (and hence, racial assignment) as a basic feature of at least American Jewish culture. Yet throughout *Jews and Other Differences* no substantial references are made to the black Jewish community. Although the authors may have wished to focus solely on the study of white Jews, it is difficult to see how "the new Jewish cultural studies" can honestly engage "the tortured *question* of whether Jews are 'white'" by presuming that Jews *really are* white and ignoring millions of black Jews scattered throughout the Americas and sub-Saharan Africa.[4] That such communities are virtually absent from the scholarship indicates that studies of Jewish culture are usually initiated with a European or Euro-American centered bias.

In this essay we will offer suggestions on how to proceed with the academic study of Afro-American Jewish history, culture, and thought. However, we will first see how the Jewish world's "politics of identity and exclusion" can be detected in literary depictions of black Jewish sects in America. Throughout the twentieth century, this literature was saturated with conceptual divergences between blackness and Jewishness, such that when applied to the study of black Jewish communities, the researchers almost unanimously concluded that what is black could not be Judaic. As a result, not only has the black Jewish community been conveniently absent from academic writings on Jewish culture, but also a racially segregated American Judaism has gone unacknowledged, vividly demonstrating that "Jews in the United States" are "safely 'white.'"

The Early Literature: Black Jews as Radically "Other"

To examine Jewish racial assignments, we will survey the chief assumptions driving twentieth-century literature on Afro-American Jews. Foremost among these is a very problematic idea: the Jew's presumed *fact of whiteness*.[5] We define the *fact of whiteness* as a social and literary condition in which Euro-American Jews are bound to a racially stratified society that presumes white (European) superiority over the inferior black (African). In other words, whether white Jews adopt such phenotypifications or not, popular American social discourse has categorized them as "white" (i.e., black Jews are not *really* Jews).[6] As a result, those studying black folk's Judaism could express audacious conclusions, such as the following:

> Now the Jewish world, for its part, has wondered what to make of these [black Jewish] sects ever since it first discovered them; and there has *naturally* been a good

> deal of curiosity about them. *While Judaism knows no racial barrier* to conversion, Sammy Davis, Jr. being only the most celebrated of such examples, it is nonetheless true that *the phenomenon of a Negro being a Jew cannot help but strike the Jew as being unusual.* They *naturally* are led to wonder*: Are these people really Jews? How did they get to be Jews in the first place? What practices do they observe?* (H. Brotz 1965; my emphasis)

Howard M. Brotz, the author of this passage, has been recognized as the earliest authority on black Jews in America.[7] Although the temptation is great, I will not point out his ideas about the nature of Jewish racial identity. The assumptions need little explication. Yet these statements are troubling, for they have played a commanding role in establishing the investigative parameters for studying black Jewish movements. For example, if someone wishes to find information on Afro-American Judaism, he or she immediately runs into the most widely circulated material, depicting black Jews as completely outside the purview of legitimate Jewish religion. This situation persists, despite no one ever conducting an exhaustive study of exactly *what* constitutes Afro-American Judaism. For example, innumerable attempts are made in the literature to convince readers that

> This [Afro-American] Judaism has never become significant in the Negro life of the United States or elsewhere; and it has been hardly more than a curiosity to American (white) Jews. It has made no impact on social institutions or values, though it can matter in some personal lives. (R. Landes 1967: 176)

What would make Ruth Landes, the author of this passage, write such statements in the *Jewish Journal of Sociology*? Her tone does not reflect an anthropology of black Jews; she is instead almost condemning their existence. For her, Afro-American Judaism "has never become significant," and although this denigration might be explained by her contention that "in their services, lectures and songs, hatred for the white race was manifest," she never states which elements in their liturgies advocated racial hatred (ibid: 185).[8]

In the compendium of literature written on black Jews, one finds a hesitancy to denounce or at least question the racist ideas underpinning the conclusions of Brotz and Landes. This is not to say the literature has not contributed insights to the academic discussion of black Jewish faith. It has. But its theoretical presumptions have rarely been critically examined. In most cases the documentation of black Jewish groups has been undertaken with a cue from what I cynically call the *black-Jewish differential*, according to which the white Jew's existence is justified, whereas the black Jew's existence needs justification.[9] Not only is "the Jew" understood to be entirely separate from "the Negro," but also white Jewish legitimacy is taken for granted, while a hermeneutic of suspicion is called forth when black Jews appear. In a very literal sense, the presence of black Jews cannot be true. This is why

> whites and middle-class coloured people have condemned [black Jews] generally as *false* . . . But it is possible to trace a thread of psychological sense in the garbled pretense of the Black Jews . . . [The] urban world imposes new and difficult standards that determine survival. The Negro masses grow bewildered and frightened, and like other masses in a comparable situation, they stampede. One flight leads repeatedly into Black Judaism. (R. Landes 1967: 177–8; my emphasis)

Although in this excerpt Landes provides us with a rationale for black Jewish existence, it seems she is describing herds of buffalo or elephants rather than human beings. The allusion to "masses" of people in a "stampede" is not accidental; it serves an underlying hermeneutical function. If white Jews can barely interpret the black Jews as capable human beings, then they will have more difficulty seeing them as capable Jews. In Landes's opinion, because of the rigorous culture shock of urban life, black people were "frightened" into Judaism. We do not need to address the coherency of her argument, for she provides no evidence that her speculation is, in fact, what took place. Our concern is how this type of language has depicted black Jews as inferior to white Jews, and although Landes does not explicitly mention Jewish whiteness in this excerpt, one clearly sees patterns of "orienting" or "othering" black Jews.[10]

Ammiel Alcalay describes for us the manner in which "orientalizing" texts distort social reality: "In every instance, the judgmental language implies superiority and inferiority . . . the 'Oriental' is incapable of independent agency, but can only express him or herself in reaction to dominance" (A. Alcalay 1997: 336). If we critically engage Ruth Landes's explanation for the rise of black Jews, using Alcalay's description of the "Oriental" as our point of departure, we find she is promoting more than a possible account of Afro-American Judaism's origins. She includes a hidden text, a "subtext," saturated with ideas of dominance and superiority over the black Jewish "subjects." In our excerpt, she describes black Jews as "false" (not true), "garbled" (not clear), "country" (not sophisticated), "illiterate" (not learned), "adjusted to the lowest economic standards" (not high class), "uprooted" (not fixed), "disorient(ed)" (not directed), "crippled" (not functioning), "bewildered" (not certain), "frightened" (not courageous), and "stamped(ing)" (not stable).[11] Within these descriptive parameters, the black Jewish subject has extremely limited agency, and therefore she "subtly" erases the profession of black American Jews' self-determination. Depicted as such, her reader may be led to believe that black Jews cannot function adequately in an urban environment, that they cannot formulate advanced concepts of their own, and that they cannot practice Judaism correctly. Rather, they can only "crudely imitate more complex" ways of life, such as Euro-American Jewish culture. These hidden texts in the literature on black Jews are rarely made explicit, because the writers wish to convey their scientific objectivity to the reader. As a result, their works have accomplished a dual task, not only (1) denigrated the Judaism of blacks as primitive and heretical, but also (2) reinforced the supremacy and centrality of Euro-American Judaism by constructing white-

over-black hierarchies of Judaic religious culture. Hence the black-Jewish differential suggests that Judaism with European roots is normal while other Judaisms are not.

Given intellectual backing by leaders in the dominant American Jewish community, the orientalization of black Jews became a fundamental characteristic of literature on Afro-American Judaism. For years, it was not unusual to find articles in Jewish and non-Jewish journals that ridiculed and ultimately dismissed Jewish blackness as a weird and exotic conundrum of identity (A. Coleman 1978: ix). But as the black Jewish communities grew, more theories about their origins would emerge in order to explain their otherness.

Allegory and Identification: Black Jews as Imitations of White Jews

The 1960s presented Americans with a number of opportunities for sociopolitical alliances to exist between certain leaders and groups in the black and Jewish communities. The situation was no different for Afro-American and Euro-American Jews. Various leaders in the black Jewish communities attempted to establish dialogues, educational opportunities, and even business partnerships with white Jews.[12] There was even an organization for black and white rabbis (J. Landing 2002: 356). However, the emergence of such relationships was continually questioned by some of the laity in both communities. For the most part, white Jewish leaders still considered African-American Judaism an inauthentic version of their religion. Conversely, black Jewish leaders accused the white Jews of racist bigotry. Eventually, the vast majority of the efforts at reconciling black and white Jews were abandoned. Nevertheless, scholars and the media remained interested in documenting the existence of the black Jewish communities, and as a result of their sporadic encounters and brief dialogues, another narrative about the origin of these groups became circulated among white Jewish leaders. As articulated beautifully by Lenora Berson: “Black Jewish congregations are made up of Caribbean Island Negroes who are descendants of miscegenous marriages between Sephardic Jews and blacks, descendants of slaves on Jewish-owned Southern plantations, leftovers from the Back to Africa Movement of the 1920s, and recent converts” (L. Berson 1971: 210).

In light of the apparent connections between popular American Jewish history and the emergence of the black Jews, a new and politically charged element had been introduced into the discussion on Afro-American Jewish history: white Jews’ participation in slavery. The recent mobilization of Black Power had already highlighted Jewish racism in the black community; some black leaders even began circulating a conspiracy theory depicting Jews as the primary masterminds behind the slave trade.[13] As Jonathan Kaufman (1988) writes, these events initiated a “broken alliance” between black and Jewish leaders. In such a political climate, the existence of black Jewish groups that were virtually ignored and

ridiculed by the white Jewish community did not contribute to positive relations between blacks and Jews. To shield themselves from accusations of Jewish racism, white Jewish organizations sponsored and/or supported a number of publications meant to explain, once and for all, the origins of the black Jewish groups.[14] Despite the obvious implications of Berson's statement about the origins of black Jewish congregations, historical connections between black Jews and Euro-American Jewish slavery were repeatedly dismissed by the researchers. Consider the following conclusion penned by Howard Brotz: "Black Jews may be accurately regarded as sects of Christians who pressed their identification with the figures of the Old Testament to the extreme belief that they themselves are Jews" (H. Brotz 1952).[15] In this passage, Brotz identifies "black Jews" as "Christians," and he justifies this assertion on the basis of group, symbolic-identity formations arising out of the black church.[16] We will refer to this explanation as the "allegory thesis" of black Jewish origins. The thesis rests on two propositions: (1) the existence of early black Christian identification with the stories of Hebrew enslavement and exile contained within the Christian scriptures, and (2) the power of such religious identifications to play formative roles in the construction of personal and collective identities among black Americans. The allegorization hypothesis has enjoyed a sustained acceptance both in the media and scholarly writings, for it allegedly provides an explanation for the African and Judaic syncretisms characteristic of black Jewish congregations.[17]

Unfortunately, adherents to the allegory thesis have not addressed a long series of problems with their analysis. First of all, *all communities* embrace multiple group identities. They embody the conflation of various group histories and endorse a multifaceted narrative that transgresses the formerly accepted margins of cultural differentiation. Such are typical characteristics of cultural development and change. However, Brotz seems to ignore these basic dimensions of ethnic formation. In the case of African-American Jews, an exceptional explanation is required. According to him, "*black* Jews" are *not* (even religiously speaking) "Jews." They are "Christians." Yet Brotz does not provide the reader with his criteria for determining Christian identity. Left with the assumption that conventional understandings of Christian affiliation (Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Christian religious movements) will suffice, the reader may be provoked to ask why a group of Christians would refuse to accept any religious affiliation with Christianity? Brotz does not address this question. He states black Jews believe they are Jews. He does not say, however, exactly *why* entire communities of African Americans would believe themselves to be Jews when they are not.[18]

Perhaps noting Brotz's inability to provide a satisfactory explanation for the emergence of communities claiming to be black and Jewish, Berson would insist years later that "Their rituals range from impressionistic versions of Jewish ceremonials to exact replicas. Their existence is testimony to the desperate desire of American Negroes to find an acceptable self-image" (L. Berson 1971: 210). According to this explanation, although many people in these groups are descended (both biologically and religiously) from black–Jewish unions in slavery,

their rituals are *not really* Jewish. Rather, they are "impressionistic versions" and in some cases, "exact replicas." The performance of these inauthentic duplicates of Jewish ritual, rather than being testimony to the legacy of Jewish involvement with America's racially charged history, bears witness to a "desperate desire of American Negroes to find an acceptable self-image."

Although Berson was the progenitor of the above notion that black Jews are "versions" of white Jewry, she was not the one to most clearly formulate the thesis. That distinction goes to Rabbi Israel Gerber, who advanced what we will call the "Black Hebrew Identification" thesis, named after a chapter in his book, *The Heritage Seekers: American Blacks in Search of Identity*. The thesis can be summed up as follows:

1 During slavery, African Americans had no confidence in their basic abilities as persons.
2 After Emancipation, African Americans needed to develop a sense of selfhood.
3 The search for selfhood produced an identity crisis in African Americans, who abhorred their blackness and yearned to become one with and belong to white folks.
4 *In conscious deception*, blacks began to imitate modern Jews, falsely calling themselves "Israelites" and adopting a social and cultural structure that would furnish them with feelings of dignity and worth (I. Gerber 1977: 176–97).

There are a number of problems with Berson's reasoning and Gerber's formulation. The space of the present essay will not permit us to allude to all of them here. However, we should concentrate for a moment on the fourth, concluding aspect of Gerber's identification thesis. Central to his hypothesis is the idea that *in conscious deception*, African Americans began to call themselves Jews. In short, the contention that black Jewish identity "was an attempt at counterfeit self-esteem" is tantamount to saying that they were lying to themselves and to others. Thus, the labeling of deception had become a substantial aspect of the research claiming to represent black American Jews.[19] Translated, this means that although the blacks claimed to be Jews, their claims could be understood as attempts to trick well-meaning and innocent white Jewish philanthropists into giving them charity. And what we notice is how this characterization changed the fundamental theses about the origins of black Jews; no longer could Afro-American "Israelites" be depicted as mentally ill (i.e., Ruth Landes). If not rigorously dismissed, black Jewish claims, combined with their devotion to traditional Jewish observances, might cultivate undesired publicity against the white Jewish community. Therefore, we find in some writings a strange correlation between black Jewish religion and literary caricatures of it: the more black Jews became devoutly religious, the more the media constructed distance between (normal) white Jews and (abnormal) black ones.

To illustrate, a striking manifestation of the above can be found in James Landing's *Black Judaism* (2002). In the following passage, Landing explicates his invention of the difference between black Jews (lower case "b") and Black Jews (upper case "B"):

> Black Judaism is defined in this work as a form of institutionalized (congregational) religious expression in which black persons identify themselves as Jews, Israelites, or Hebrews (sometimes as Hebrew-Israelites) in a manner that seems unacceptable to the "whites" of the world's Jewish community, primarily because Jews take issue with the various justifications set forth by Black Jews in establishing this identity. Thus, "Black Judaism," as defined here, stands distinctly apart from "black Judaism," or that Judaic expression found among black persons that would be acceptable to the world's Jewish community, such as conversion or birth to a recognized Jewish mother. "Black Judaism" has been a social movement; "black Judaism" has been an isolated social phenomenon. Thus, "Black Judaism" will be seen to be more emphatically a black expression than a Jewish one. (J. Landing 2002: 10)

What Landing neglects to mention here is that a "recognized Jewish mother" usually means a white Jewish mother and that "conversion" to Judaism means a conversion overseen by white Jews or other Jews of color that are recognized by white Jews. By building on these premises, he has, in effect, theorized the Jewish people as two groups – "the world's Jewish community" and "black persons [who] identify themselves as Jews." Although the primary reason whites may be repelled by black Jewish identities has little to do with black Jewish justifications and much to do with white American Jewry's fact of whiteness (buttressed, as we have seen, by the black-Jewish differential), Landing ignores the fact that (b)lack Judaism and (B)lack Judaism have been, historically speaking, quite interrelated and composed of the same persons, groups, or families.[20]

Instead of following this pattern of separating "kosher" (b)lack Jews from "treif" (B)lack Jews, we should ask why a scholar such as Landing feels compelled to draw such ambiguous distinctions in the first place. Does he believe (b)lack Jews are really Jews, whereas (B)lack Jews are merely black? If so, is he suggesting that only the "'whites' of the world's Jewish community" are entitled to determine the disciplinary boundaries for a social scientific study of American Judaism? Rather than arguing over these belated points, we should confess the obvious: by discursively eliminating "Black Jews" from "the world's Jewish community," Landing is promoting white normativity in his construction of Jewish identity. We need not mention the implications of such inaccuracies. Their effects are symbolized in the existence of segregated churches and synagogues all over the United States.

By using the allegory and identification theses, researchers such as Landing force us to reckon with theories that have substantial limitations. Over half a century ago these limits had to be cast aside and taken as intellectual dilemmas to be solved in succeeding generations. Despite the questions they provoked but

could not answer, the theories gained canonical acceptance, and for over seventy years, scholars and journalists would continue to marvel at the Negro Christians who professed to be Israelites. But as we have seen, the wholesale absorption of the allegory and identification theses did little but lead to pejorative characterizations of the blacks. Eventually, the caricatures of black Jews as allegory and imitation would eventually need considerable reexamination, and unforeseen by many, subtle resistance to these conclusions would come from an unlikely source – black Orthodox Jews.

The Test of Halakha in Determining Black Jewish Legitimacy

By the time studies such as Morris Lounds, Jr.'s *Israel's Black Hebrews*, Israel Gerber's *The Heritage Seekers*, and Graenum Berger's *Black Jews in America* had been written, a small number of Israelites had infiltrated the ranks of Orthodox Jewry. Unforeseen, a handful of them had studied at yeshivas as children and become rabbis in later years.[21] Because a number of them had personal affiliations with the black Jewish congregations that were formerly depicted as inauthentic and sometimes "Christian," a new dilemma emerged in the efforts to characterize black Jewish sects. How could the identification thesis, which demanded a certain degree of black Jewish deception, be imposed on black people who, for all intents and purposes, appear to be Orthodox Jews? Perhaps the cultural differences between black and white Jewish congregations could be cited as evidence of deception, but when no significant *religious* differences could be detected by an outside observer, how could such a group be labeled as "inauthentic"?

Authors in the 1970s and 1980s dealt with this problem in various ways. Diane Shapiro (1974), for example, reasoned that the black Jews merely wanted to gain access to Western society and imitating white Jews was their means. Rabbi Gerber (1977: 121–2, 128–9) cites an extended appeal to halakhic authority, requiring every "questionable" case of Jewishness to be substantiated with documentation (i.e., Black Jews need to have their "freedom papers"). Morris Lounds (1981: 33–4) ignored the issue altogether, perhaps because the black Hebrews in Israel did not wish to be identified as "Jews" per se, but rather as "Israelites." Graenum Berger endorsed Gerber's opinion. In the conclusion to *Black Jews in America*, he wrote:

> So the Black Jew in America has come full circle. Though they are few in number now and there is little likelihood of any spectacular increase in the foreseeable future, some will wish to link their fate with the historical Jewish people. But at the same time, *it must be recognized that most have invented and accepted a mythology about their origins*, which makes it difficult for them to achieve acceptance and integration within the Jewish community, whether in America, Ethiopia, or Israel. Those that elect to convert should be welcomed with total hospitality into the

> House of Israel. Those that are repelled by this formal act of identity, should not be treated like a mere dissident Jewish sect. There are no partial Jews. *There can be only one test – halakha – for white and black*. (G. Berger 1978: 206; my emphasis)

From the 1970s into the 1990s, an appeal to halakhic authority along with the other theories dominated the dispute about black Jewish origins. Persons who called themselves "Black Hebrews" or "Black Jews" were not *really* Hebrews or Jews unless they could demonstrate their "Orthodoxy."

At first the resort to halakhic conversion was an impressive solution to many white Jews. Even liberal and secular Jews appealed to the black Jews' need to convert in order to settle the dispute. Yet the problems with this solution immediately became apparent. For example, although conversion was often equated with being accepted as a member of the Jewish people, this was not necessarily the case for black Jews. Even observant black Jews faced racial discrimination from white Jews, and their status was still constantly in doubt, especially if they found themselves in unfamiliar Jewish settings. In addition there was the question of whether it was even possible to test a black Jew's claim to being halakhically Jewish. Does one press for evidence or assume that black Jews' claims are legitimate? If one presses for evidence, what becomes the criteria for determining the veracity of black Jewish claims? If conformity with traditional Judaism is the response, then what about the black Jewish sects who were observant in a traditional sense? Some of these were among the very sects that white Jews could not accept in the first place. In the prior generation, the black Hebrew identification thesis was one way of explaining at least black Christian conversion to black Jewish movements, but what about their children who, as far as they were concerned, grew up in Jewish homes?[22] Furthermore, how could white Jews justify their uncritical acceptance of whites' claims of Jewishness while placing in question the black Jews' status? Was not this tendency itself a manifestation of white priority in the practice of Judaism? From numerous problems such as these it eventually became apparent that not even white Jews' interpretations of Jewish law could realistically govern the interactions between black and white Jews in America. A new paradigm for black–white Jewish relations in America would have to emerge.

Shifting the Paradigm: Locating a Black Jewish Cultural Studies

The researcher who wishes to take seriously the varied ritual practices, ideological foundations, historical developments, and cultural particularities of black Jews must request more than a hermeneutic of allegory, a psychological description of "black Hebrew identification," or a lesson on halakhic conversions. Not only did such perspectives often make vast overgeneralizations about Jewish

whiteness and black non-Jewishness, but they were also prime examples of questionable scholarship.[23] In fact, one wonders what response African Americanists would receive from the dominant Jewish community if they published articles driven by statements such as "the phenomenon of a white man being a Jew cannot help but strike the Jew as unusual." After reading most of the literature on black Jews, one is left with the impression that proponents of the allegory thesis, "black Hebrew identification," and black "conversion" never took seriously the black Jews' religious claims in the first place.[24] To do so would have meant the recognition of distinctly black *and* Jewish religious communities, thereby shattering the assumption of Jewish whiteness. Hence these theories opened the door to many poor studies of black Jews, and for generations the dominant Jewish groups continued to dismiss organized black Jewish presence on "scholarly" grounds.

As a result of these lingering issues in American Judaism, a small number of scholars, lay leaders, and theologians began to reanalyze the ethnic composition of American Jewry.[25] Not the least of their interests has been the black Jewish community. Yet no one has articulated any directions that black Jewish studies should take for the future. In the remaining sections of this essay, we will examine some potential areas for expanded inquiry and scholarship. We have seen how previous writers on the subject dismissed significant aspects of black Jewish life because of American Jewry's fact of whiteness. Those mistakes should not be made again, and any insightful articulation of how black Jews contribute to the larger world of Jewish culture should be devoid of such presumptions.

Israelites of the Colonial Atlantic: Suggesting a History of Black Jews

A black Jewish studies for the next generation must first recognize *black Jews as a historical reality*. For Israelites who trace their diasporic consciousness through Africa as opposed to Europe, an understanding of the history of African and African Diaspora Judaism remains essential. This does not only refer to North African Jewish history. Rather, black Jewish historical studies would be concerned with the retrieval of any and all past instances when black and Jewish identities merged in order to create a unique and historic symbiosis.

Broadly conceived, black Jewish history may include the study of both oral and written histories of black Jewish groups such as the Temple Beth-El congregations, the Ethiopian Jews, the Igbo Jews of Nigeria, or Southern Africa's Lemba people. Of particular relevance, however, would be a historical account of the emergence of African Diaspora Judaism. Toward that end, black Jewish historical scholarship should compile artifactual and documentary evidence for the antebellum presence of black Jews in North America, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. Much of the evidence for this topic would come from researching the presence of enslaved New World black Jews. For example,

a number of oral traditions in the black Hebrew communities describe the genesis of their movement by recording the slave-raid induced destruction of entire Jewish villages in west Africa. Most of these traditions can be expressed in the following six points:

1. There existed a number of Jewish communities in West Africa up until the nineteenth century.
2. These communities were made up largely of Jews who had migrated from North Africa and settled on other people's ancestral lands as traders and merchants.
3. The presence of the Jews sometimes raised tensions between them and the traditional African peoples, who saw the Israelite traders as foreigners.
4. Somehow, during the horrors of the slave trade, these intercultural and territorial disputes were manipulated in order to justify the liquidation of these Jewish communities for trans-Atlantic slave labor.
5. The communities were mostly destroyed, with the exception of a few families who were able to pass on their traditions and customs to their progeny.
6. After American slave systems were abolished, those blacks who inherited their families' traditions of Jewish descent sought to assemble other blacks with similar traditions in an effort to reconstitute "Israel" in African America.[26]

Such oral traditions are not the only evidence testifying to an antebellum black Jewish presence. Despite the hesitancy of many historians to address the issue of race relations within the Jewish community, one finds many references to colonial Jewish communities that are wrestling with the racially stratifying elements of New World society.[27] In such cases, the (black and Jewish) interracial cohabitation became such a prominent feature of Jewish life that local religious authorities often enacted measures to control the emergent racial diversity of the Jewish plantations. Unfortunately, these same measures had the effect of alienating and placing in doubt the Jewish identity of the black Jews. For example, according to the Surinamese Sephardic community's *hascamoth* of 1754:

> Since experience has taught how prejudicial and improper it would be to admit Mulattos [racially "mixed" Jews] as *Yahidim*, and noting that some of these have concerned themselves in matters of the government of our community, it is resolved that henceforth they will never be considered or admitted as *Yahidim* and will solely be *Congreganten*, as in other communities. (R. Cohen 1991: 161)

In short, *congreganten* were people who could not become full members of the Jewish congregation. They usually possessed some trait (such as the status of a New Christian or *anousim*) that limited their participation in Jewish rituals.[28] But in the case above, African identity as revealed through racial phenotype or genealogical records was enough to discredit one's full membership. The white Jews

of Suriname were not alone in passing laws such as this one. The end of our excerpt makes explicit reference to "other [Jewish] communities," undoubtedly speaking of "the [West Indian] island congregations" that had "constitutional provisions . . . which discussed equal religious privileges or intimated differences between black and white" (M. Whiteman 1970: 23).

A number of questions of historical importance begin to plague our inquiry here. Why should the issue of race have been discussed at all in the context of the West Indian synagogues' constitutional statutes and bylaws? If the Jewish communities mentioned traded slaves, obedience to the relevant secular slave codes would have been expected. However, the legislation of *congregational* statutes indicates that blacks were participating in Jewish religious life. What was the nature of this participation? Why were laws discussing "equal religious privileges" needed if there were no or few black Jews in these colonies?

The truth is that New World Africans were interfering in every aspect of antebellum Judaism, just as Jews were interfering in every facet of the slave trade. And this phenomenon was occurring wherever substantial numbers of Jews and Africans interacted closely, including Barbados, Jamaica, Curaçao, and other places. Robert Cohen describes in vivid detail what the religious life of black Jews in some of these congregations may have consisted of:

> Not only the [Jewish] mulattos would be considered second-rate members, but also those who married a female mulatto [Jew] . . . Their offspring was to be considered mulatto to the second generation, after which "they may be rehabilitated" only if they had married white [Jewish] women. Nor could [mulatto Jews] become full members by learning the Jewish laws and customs . . . if they had been demoted, they and their mulatto spouses were still to be subject to all bylaws, fines and punishments as though they were full-fledged members. Their inferior status was stressed in the ritual of the synagogue. The mulattos were to be relegated to the bench of the Abelim (mourners). So as not to affront anyone, no mulatto or black [Jew] could receive a Misheberah (blessing), and "considering the Respect of the Holy Place" no female black, mulatto or Indian [Jew] was allowed in the synagogue . . . [Among the Ashkenazim] Jewish mulattos belonging to an Ashkenazi master could not be buried in the cemetery and officially admitted congreganten would be buried in a separate part of the cemetery. The price of admittance as congregant rose . . . and saying a blessing for a mulatto congregant was made more difficult in synagogue ritual. (R. Cohen 1991: 161–2)

What makes Cohen's references so interesting is their allusion to the presence of non-white Jews as a moral dilemma that needed to be addressed. To be sure, Jewish plantations based on slave labor enforced codes limiting the freedoms of the Africans. But these codes not only kept the blacks and mulattos in bondage; they also helped prevent the "white" Sephardim and Ashkenazim from completely assimilating into the darker populations. Thus colonial Jews from Europe attempted to construct and maintain a "white" identity by religiously splintering their communities along color lines. And this was the case not only for the island

congregations. The need to segregate mainland American Jewish communities became ever more important, not only because Africans were converting to Judaism *en masse*, but also because white Jews knew that each and every African who was emancipated from a Jewish home was, according to Jewish law, supposed to be considered "an Israelite in every respect." For both historical and theological reasons, therefore, this essentially means that upon the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment, a black Jewish community was created in the United States.[29]

Although we have already examined some Jewish writers' race-thinking via their studies of black Jews, historical accounts of antebellum Jewish raciology have yet to reveal the impact of such ideas on American Judaism. This scholarly oversight is all the more glaring in light of Jewish segregation during that era (R. Cohen 1991: 161–2). Historian Jacob Rader Marcus insists that the antebellum practice of segregating Jewish communities was in part "directed against Negro slaves who might be attracted to the synagogue of their masters" (J. Marcus 1975: 224). One well-known example of this can be found in the constitution of the Jewish congregation in Charlestown, South Carolina. In rule number 23 of its founding document, it states:

> The Congregation will not encourage nor interfere with making proselytes under any pretense whatever, nor shall any such be admitted under the jurisdiction of this congregation, until he, she, or they, produce legal satisfactory credentials from such other Congregation, where a regular Chief, or Rabbi and Hebrew Consistory is established; *and provided, he, she, or they, are not people of color*. (My emphasis)[30]

Clearly, historians of Judaism should consider revising their works to more adequately account for the racial heterogeneity of antebellum Jewish societies. "Slave Judaism" was more than a means of controlling groups of potentially rebellious blacks. For the black Jews forced to accept it, it became a way of life. The questions provoked by these historical realities comprise a needed addition to contemporary Jewish scholarship. Unfortunately, these questions do not arise in a vacuum. The historical trajectories of black Jewish culture produced the situational contexts of contemporary black Jewish communities. Thus, not only does the historical study of black Jews allow one to identify these contextualizations – it also provides one with the background necessary to understand present-day cultural phenomena exhibited by both white and black Jewish groups. Below, we will examine one aspect of these phenomena: the contemporary meeting of black and white Jews.

Race and Anti-Black Judaism: Reflections on the Present Situation

Present-day American Jewish culture is saturated with peculiar behaviors when it comes to race. By attracting this or that single black Jew, a variety of Jewish

institutions have proclaimed how "open" and "diverse" they are to all different types of Jews, despite the blatant prejudice faced by the black Jewish community in a predominantly white American Jewish world. The sentiment expressed in the statement that "we welcome all people, regardless of color," is something many black Jews have encountered in their search for a congregational or occupational home. But shielded behind these grandiose proclamations may be a belief that one black Jew is representative of all black Jews. Because a synagogue may accept one black family or one black Hebrew school teacher, they convey the message that all black Jews are welcome. The single black, the token black, comes to represent all blacks. A tiny bit of blackness is enough. Do not Jews notice that the "one-drop" rule still seems to hold true, if not legally, then socially? Of even this Jewish version of the white–black encounter, psychiatrist Frantz Fanon (1967b) keeps us pointedly aware: "Wherever he is, the Negro remains a Negro." This can be most vividly seen when black Hebrews first encounter white Jews and vice versa.

During their initial interaction, both black and white Jews may exhibit an emotional closeness with each other, but because their points of departure from which to express this tacit connection are very different, the early outcome is not unusually a strained or ruptured relationship. Many white Jews are compelled to assert their views from a standpoint of assumed authority, and as a result they cannot help but ask the blacks some variation of "how did *you* become Jewish?" Meanwhile, the black Jews speak about their social condition from a perspective of racial subjugation. For them, Jews are an oppressed people, so when they meet relatively successful white American Jews, they tend to ask some variation of the same question: "how did *you* [white folks] become Jewish?" Needless to say, these responses do not usually lead to positive first impressions.

On some level, both approaches seem flawed. The white Jew's reaction carries traces of sadism, presuming the locus of all authority rests in "whiteness," while the black Jew's response embraces a form of masochism, feeding off the white's enchantment with black otherness. One interesting dynamic is that white Jews at first feel a deep connection with the black Jews – that is, until they probe a little deeper and discover that black Jews really are different types of Jews. Such a discovery merely reveals a desire to believe Jewish differences run only skin deep, and although their questions about black Jewish origins may be driven by a sincere desire to know more about other Jews, white Jewish incredulity over an African-American Judaism may also drive their interrogations. Probably unknown to the white Jewish inquirer, black Jews consider their repeated questioning and suspicious doubts not only disingenuous but also racist. And because they are not privileged to know if white Jewish inquiries are sincere or not, many black Jews respond to these initial "background checks" with a great deal of anger and hostility.

The near inevitability of this friction in the beginnings of black and white Jews' encounters highlights some destructive psychological effects on the black Jews involved. Many times, even sincere white Jews fail to seriously acknowledge

that instead of being seen as Jews, black Jews are often seen as exotic rarities – like museum displays or expensive house pets. Their perspectives as black people are usually ignored by white Jews, and even the most assimilated black Jews occasionally undergo a form of "thingification." Regarding such experiences, Wesleyan Professor Oliver Wendel Holmes testifies to his reception at white Jewish synagogues:

> Shabbat Service in 1951, and 1953, and 1955, and 1957, and 1961, in New York City, Rochester, New York, and Chicago, at Orthodox and Conservative *shuls*. They glance and stare at the young black youth wearing a *kipah* in the fourth or eighth row, accompanied by adults who are regular synagogue members; they whisper and gesture, revealing the question: "Who is the *schwarze*?"
>
> Shabbat and *hagim* services in 1965, and 1967, and 1971, and 1975, in New York City and Paris, at Orthodox and Conservative *shuls*. They glance and stare at the young black man wearing a kipah and tallit in the fourth, eighth, or tenth row; they whisper, point (for in Europe it is not always considered indiscreet to point in public). They question: "Who is the *schwarze*?" After the services it is followed by: "What are you, a sociologist?" (Rubin-Dorsky and Fishkin: 1996:313)

Although white Jews may be offended by the assertion that "blacks are the original Jews," they rarely understand why the black Jews do not endorse white Jews' interpretations of Judaism (i.e., that black Jews are not *really* Jewish or that blacks should "convert"). Along these lines, Professor Holmes has specified a subtle realization for us: *the entrance of black Jews immediately places in question the notion that a racially harmonious Judaism exists*, despite the absence of black presence. Through various signals and codes, the black Hebrew who interrupts the security of black absence felt in many white suburban synagogues is all too often made aware that he or she has come into "foreign" territory. Hence it is the recurrent experiences of black Jews' alienation that lead to their suspicion of white Jewish interpretations of religious and social reality.

Furthermore, at the mere suggestion of being racist, a peculiar psychological shift occurs in many white Jews. Whereas, at first, learning about black Jews was a novel and interesting experience, upon the black Jews' mention of Jewish racism, white Jews then marginalize the significance of race in affirming Jewish identity. "Why must there be black and white Jews in the first place?" says a prominent white rabbi, "aren't we all Jews? . . . Color should not and does not matter in Judaism!"[31]

But from the perspective of many black Jews, attitudes such as these are fundamentally corrosive to Judaism's teachings on social justice, for by avoiding the subject of racism, such persons as our rabbi make impractical any challenge to it. In addition, at the moment one ignores race in the affirmation of Jewish identity, the psychological assault on the black Jew has already taken place, for the white Jew has basically admitted the black Jew's self-affirmation is, at its root, insignificant.

This is why we must understand anti-black Judaism *as* Judaism. To call it something else is to evade the impact of racism on the lives of Jews in general. Anti-black Judaism is not presently an "abnormality" or "deficiency" in the practice of the Jewish faith. Rather, it is normal, average, and well settled in Jewish communities, often to the deep satisfaction of the Jews therein. In fact, this type of satisfaction does not need to be explicitly mentioned – that is, for example, until a black becomes the "tenth" for a morning *minyan*. It is most interesting in such cases to observe the various white Jewish responses to this dilemma. The black Jew will often be the only one asked to demonstrate his Jewishness by answering questions about genealogy. Alternatively, someone may pull into the *beit midrash* any religious-looking white Jew who happens to be walking by. (It does not matter how "religious" the black Jew appears.) On one occasion, the author witnessed white devotees literally lock the door to their *beit midrash* before allowing a black Jewish man to pray alongside them. In any case what's striking is how common these acts of discrimination take hold of and function within Jewish communities without rebuke. Usually, black Jews can get a prominent white Jew to vouch for them, but even these white Jews tend not to publicly condemn the racism that is practiced in their own communities. Far from being abnormal, Jewish racism is quite at home in these environments, and it is not restricted to the ultra-religious. Even secular or liberal Jews fall prey to its presumptions and institutionalizations. Like Jean-Paul Sartre's anti-Semite, the anti-black Jewish racist is usually

> a good father and a good husband, a conscientious citizen, highly cultivated, philanthropic, *and* in addition an anti-Semite. He may like fishing and pleasures of love, may be tolerant in matters of religion, full of generous notions of the conditions of the native in Central Africa, *and* in addition detest the Jews. (J.-P. Sartre 1995: 8)

Here, Sartre has helped us acknowledge the mundaneness of Jewish racism. Most studies of the racist beliefs, attitudes, and practices of Jews have been conducted with the assumption of racism's exceptionality. However, we have seen how racism was from the beginning a *fundamental* aspect of at least American Judaism's creation. Further and most important, Sartre reminds us of the relationship between Jewish identity and Semitic identity. In the first sentence of this passage, he mentions the liberal as an "anti-Semite." In the later sentence he says this individual could "detest the Jews." The reason why Sartre conflates Semitic identity and Jewish identity is obvious: anti-Semites are people who hate "the Jews." But in the Jewish world, this rather simplistic definition raises an interesting problem: if there are many black people who are also Semites, then *is not anti-black Judaism itself a form of anti-Semitism?*

A number of white Jewish intellectuals have by implication raised this issue. Exploring the concept of "Jewish self-hatred," they describe what happens when Jews express contempt for their own people. Usually, these studies have been

applied to cases when white Jews of a high economic class or powerful elite despise or ridicule other white Jews of a lower socioeconomic status. According to Sander Gilman, Jewish self-hatred "results from outsiders' acceptance of the mirage of themselves generated by their reference group – that group in society which they see as defining them – as a reality. This acceptance provides the criteria for the myth making that is the basis of any communal identity."

To my knowledge, no Jewish intellectual has publicly acknowledged that the most blatant forms of Jewish self-hatred occur when the black Jew comes into contact with white Jewry, or more precisely, anti-black Judaism. In other words, if the dominant non-Jewish world projected onto Jewish people a "mirage" of blackness, then the Jewish world might accept it. If so, Jews would respond to themselves in a way that somehow mimics the dominant world's response to blackness. If the dominant society hates blacks, Jews would begin to self-abnegate those aspects of themselves that are most indicative of blackness. This seems to have been what happened with respect to white American Jews' treatment of black Jews.

However, Gilman's analysis does not go far enough when its description of self-hatred is applied to the situation of black Jews. Using his formulation, black Jews would be the white Jews' "Other." Furthermore, this description would be based on a larger paradigm in which black people are white people's Other. Africa, in such a sense, would therefore be Europe's Other. This schema would not be problematic, but for the fact that the presence of the Other assumes an act of self-cognition affirming another as Other. This is not what happens when white Jews encounter the black Jew. For many (if not most) white Jews, the black Jew does not exist. This is why white Jews are so excited when they "discover" a black Jewish community. For them, the black Jew is a non-Jew, and therefore, cognition of the black Jew as Other takes place only after a rigorous epistemic shift allowing for black Jewish existence. Thus, when a white Jew encounters a black Jew, the latter is not really "orientalized." "The black" is below the level of "the Oriental." At least so-called "Oriental Jews" exist (in the mind of the white Jew). But a black Jew's existence must be irrefutably asserted before he or she is orientalized. Therefore, Gilman's concept of "Jewish self-hatred," although rhetorically useful (i.e., Ruth Landes's "orientalization" of black Jews mentioned earlier), cannot truly capture the depth of erasure taking place when a black Jew enters an all-white Jewish environment. The black Jew experiences less a form of "self-hatred" and more a type of virtual "invisibility" or what Lewis Gordon has called "denied alterity."[32] The white Jews usually do not hate the black who enters their world; for them, he or she is simply not a Jew. The psychological impact of this abnegation on black Jews can be absolutely devastating.

Although we have yet to completely understand "denied alterity's" psychoanalytical dimensions with respect to black Jews, one aspect we immediately notice is its symbolic connections to suicide. To self-negate is *de facto* an act of suicide. In various European classical and religious texts, blackness is associated

with the act of dying. Somehow, to "die" is conceived of as being in a dark place, a black place. But we should not stop here, for there is the additional question of what (or who) in the collective consciousness of white Jewry has died. It seems that Jewish resistance to a racially integrated Judaism may be associated with a cultural memory of death in European Judaism. The connections here to the history of anti-Semitism should be obvious. Jews in Europe were caricatured as black witches for centuries. The popular stereotype of the medieval *schlemiel* as well as nineteenth-century racializations of Jews as "blacks" or "Semites" provide only a few of these examples. In modern Europe, for a Jew to be called black could mean certain death; need we even speak of the relationship between the *Shoa* and modern racism?

America was one of the few places in the Western world where Jews were truly offered the chance to be white. In order to ensure their access to the benefits of whiteness (and thus emancipation), they relegated their identification with "the black" to the far reaches of their consciousness. The religious consequences of this relegation may be seen in the hundreds of black Jewish groups that go unacknowledged as Jews in the white Jewish world. The more Euro-American Jews became "white," the more they had to prove that black Jews were not related to them, that those blacks claiming to be Jews were somehow tainted, false, or essentially different from themselves. Yet not all Jews could make this transition, and evidence of Jewish connections to blackness would occasionally emerge in cultural phenomena such as Hollywood blackface, black and Jewish protests to end the quota systems in higher education, and interracial relationships, particularly those in the Communist Party–USA.

At this point it should be obvious to the reader that locating black Jews in a white Jewish world entails a great deal of critical reflection on racial construction, Jewish identity, and contemporary culture. One might go so far as to assert, with this author, that the contemporary state of race relations in the worldwide Jewish community demands a radically new understanding of Jewish history and religion. As we can see in the black–white Jewish encounters, a great deal of effort has gone into making whiteness a standard criterion of Jewish presence. This should not be so. A conception of Jewish existence that takes seriously the human dimension of Jewish identity must recognize the various human possibilities that may be created by Jewish presence. Furthermore, such opportunities for the creative evolution of Jewish humanity may religiously stand alongside, but separate from, the Talmudic paradigm. Hence a black Jewish cultural studies would entail much more than an anthropology of dark-skinned Sephardic Jews. It would highlight different aspects of *contemporary black Jewish culture*. By this I mean a multidisciplinary approach to studying the various ways black and Jewish identities become conflated and maintained. As a result, students of black Jewish culture would be able to discern (1) the various markers that distinguish black and Africana Jewish cultures from other (Jewish and non-Jewish) communities and (2) the layers of meaning that permeate contemporary black Jewish practices. Key to any articulation of these "markers" and "meanings" would be a

commitment to the scholarly exposition of black Jewish experiences, rituals, myths, laws, and traditions. It is within the multifaceted study of such processes that a black Jewish cultural studies for the twenty-first century should be most accurately located. Although here we have been concerned only with the dynamics of the black Hebrew–white Jewish encounter, other topics emerging from a study of contemporary black Jewish culture may include racializations of Jewish identity; the social psychology of black Jews; Jewish black diasporic music, such as those emerging in reggae and jazz; comparative black Hebrew religions; black and Jewish relations in America. These foci and others would give students of black Jewish culture an opportunity to reflect critically on a variety of issues related to black Jewish existence. Such reflection and its documentation raises the possibility of creating philosophical and religious texts dealing with the struggles and concerns of black Jews. We may refer to this literature as *black Jewish thought*, and it is to the creation and expansion of such thought that an African-American Jewish studies should also be committed. Toward that end, we will next explore the possibility of using black Hebrew midrash as raw material for critical reflections on black Jewish existence.

Two Cases of "Black Midrash": Suggestions for Black Jewish Religious Thought

At the beginning of this essay, we mentioned the philosophical problem of locating the black Jew in a world where Jews are not black. The reason we invoked this problem was obvious: most black Jews find themselves having to justify their existence at one time or another. Unknown to many, black Jews have produced a variety of innovative explications of their religious and philosophical thinking about this problem. Although most of these have been written in the form of popular literature such as religious tracts and pamphlets, a small number of black Jews have written academic expositions of their perspectives. The latter cover the spectrum from Dr. Yosef ben-Jochannan's *We the Black Jews* (1996) to Lewis Gordon's *Bad Faith and Antiblack Racism* (1995a). In assessing the nature and diversity of black Jewish thinking, neither the popular literature nor the academic texts can be dismissed as unsophisticated rhetoric. Rather, both streams of writings should be consulted, analyzed, criticized, and expanded.

One of the most particular ways African-American Jews have transmitted their thinking is through their development of distinctive biblical interpretations. What we will refer to as "black midrash," these commentaries on the Hebrew Bible have been transmitted through intergenerational and intercongregational religious discourse. Not having been recorded for the most part, they remain an active and vibrant aspect of the popular speech found in black Jewish congregations. Specifically, black midrash are characterized by an effort to interpret the Hebrew scriptures in a way that connects the dilemmas, struggles, and victories of black people with the similar elements in the lives of biblical characters.

Believing that by understanding the message of the scriptures they may understand their own lives better, black Jews use a variety of hermeneutical moves to make this connection. In so doing, the biblical narratives become more relevant to their everyday lives.

Given the eclectic sound of the name, one might be tempted to ask (in the tradition of the Reverend James Washington), "How black is black midrash?" Is not the very nature of midrashic exegesis indicative of a hermeneutic that remains unbridled except by the text itself – in this case, the *Torah she-bikhtav*? In other words, how can the black midrashot remain midrashic if they invoke raciality as a controlling element in their expression, an element that admittedly lay beyond the boundaries of the text-as-presented? Furthermore, in this post-Holocaust century the suggestion that racialized discourse inhabit the realm of sacred speech could legitimately evoke sharp and unintended reactions from fellow Jews. In fact, these concerns seem to transform the initial question from one of content and definition to one of justification. The question is not how "black" midrash can be, but rather if midrash can afford to be black in the first place.

The problem of justifying black cultural production has been raised in a variety of ways by philosophers of black existence as well as black theologians. But these objections usually arise from a fundamental misunderstanding of the issues addressed in the lifeworlds of black folk. That black people creatively solve their manifold problems can easily be manipulated to appear as though black people are themselves the sum of their problems.

Such thinking not only attempts to separate one's historical context from the hermeneutic act of biblical interpretation, it also fails to confront any Judaism that is based on doctrines of racial supremacy. We have already seen how the denials of a particular Jewish "race" have helped sustain racial inequities in Jewish society. After all, if there are no black Jews, then how can Judaism be against them? But if by Jewish racism we mean individual and institutional decisions that one Jewish race is superior to all other Jewish races or that only one race is supreme enough to be Jewish, then we must ask if religious definitions of Jewish identity can avoid being racist themselves. Although intuitively it seems the presence of a Jewish race does not necessarily mean it will be racist, one should take note and see if there is such middle ground here. Given our definition of Jewish racism, the religious leaders responsible for reinterpreting the central narratives, symbols and rites of the community would have to guard against any tendency to collapse the presence of races into racisms. What we notice is that black midrash is a creative tool helping leaders in the black Jewish community to accomplish this very task. Consider the following black midrash on Genesis 2: 7, God's creation of Adam:

> In order to speed along to a quick understanding, I must treat briefly the history of the sons of men, from Adam, of whom it is only necessary to say that when God decided on the necessity of man's existence, He did not choose to make a

> black man, or a white man: He simply decided to make man – not white nor black – from the dust of the earth, in whom He encased the reproductive power of all colors, all species, all shades of all races and eventual nationalities. (H. Brotz 1970: 19–20)

One need not be a scholar to realize that social and political realities are at work here. The speaker is Chief Rabbi Wentworth A. Matthews, and in this particular sermon he is constructing a genealogy of his group of black Hebrews. Interestingly, he begins in the book of Genesis with Adam. The "quick understanding" to which he is speeding along entails a history of how his congregation came into existence. Most white rabbis do not feel the need to recall their congregation's genealogy from Adam down to the present. Yet this rabbi sees the historical predicament of his congregation as necessarily connected to the original human condition. This is why he appeals to the story of Adam, the story of the original human being, in order to express his ideas. However, the manner in which he goes about describing Adam's condition seems anything but what is originally human. Rabbi Matthews is preoccupied with the first human being's *color*.

Although it would be easy for him to disregard the racializing of any person, particularly the father of all humanity, this effort seems to ignore the apparent social context of his audience. He is speaking to a congregation of black Jews that are not acknowledged as Jews because they are black. This situational context demands a theological response on the basis of the Torah. If the fundamental flaw to be addressed in present-day society emerges from race-ism, then the rabbi shows what the original human condition did *not* entail – that is, racial classifications. But simply because racial categories did not always exist doesn't mean they have no contemporary relevance.

Rabbi Matthews goes on to mention the various "colors," "species," "shades," and "eventual nationalities" that make up the human family. Articulating the racialized development of the human species by interpreting this biblical text may at first appear to be an uncharitable reading, but Matthews is not using the text as "a conspiratorial device that conceals meaning" (M. Halbertal 1997: 40). Instead, he is filling in gaps in the text, expounding details that were not apparent in the story. He never explicitly denies the plain sense of the Torah portion; he merely engages the text by using the hermeneutical context of his community. To be sure, characterizing people as "shades" and "species" does its part to reinforce concepts of race in the minds of the rabbi's listeners. But it also performs another important function. By interpolating the social and religious world of black Jews into the biblical text, the Torah becomes relevant to the community's cultural life and religious worldview.

This is not to say, moreover, that establishing the relevance of the Bible means eliminating the need to be critically aware of unintended consequences of midrashic exegesis. Quite the contrary. While informing the receptive community that a particular midrash fills in the gaps of a text, it remains vitally impor-

tant that the community knows those gaps can potentially be filled in an infinite number of ways. Such perception requires the hermeneut to be acutely aware of his or her process of (re)constructing the text. Rabbi Matthews acknowledges this by asserting the fundamental humanity of Adam, who produced "*all shades* of all races." In other words, black Torah interpretation is not the only valid form of interpretation. God gave all peoples the power to interpret. This does not belong to whites or blacks only.

Instead of evading the problem of racism by appealing to the racelessness of Jewish people, black Jews such as Rabbi Matthews have used midrashic exegesis to rearticulate the paradigm of racialized existence by asserting the fundamental humanity of being black in their interpretations. In other words, because blacks are human beings, their exercise of human enterprises should not be withheld. During slavery and Jim Crow, white Jews forbade black Jews to learn Torah or participate equally in religious life, and by so doing, they kept blacks from engaging in a basic human activity – the act of interpretation. As a result, black midrashot (that is, black interpretations) arose not simply as a black cultural characteristic, but as a people's mode of resistance to their dehumanization. We cannot ignore the implications of this liberationist trajectory in our profession of black Jews' religious and philosophical thinking.

Ultimately, much of the debate over black Jewish legitimacy stems from this question over who has the right to interpret. Do self-proclaiming black Jewish or black Hebrew communities have the right to decide for their own selves who is or is not a Jew? Or must persons outside of their communities make these judgments for them? It is difficult to see how white Jews can maintain that black Jews are not really Jewish and avoid endorsing the latter, a position that is quite paternalistic.

But does not this admission – that blacks as human beings have the right and ability to interpret – mean that one has rang the death knell for halakhic authority? For how can the Jewish community continue to grow in observance of Torah if there is not a universal halakhic standard for determining Jewish identity?

As any student of Jewish law knows, these questions are not new ones. Variations of them have been raised in every generation for centuries. What's unique about the situation of black Jews is that their leaders, like black and womanist theologians, have taken black people's experiences and used them as a source for theological and halakhic construction. Hence what black Hebrews teach about the Torah must be understood through the lens of black Jews' encounters with racial oppression. For example, consider the following midrash on Deuteronomy 30: 1–10:

> "The Old Testament of the Bible is a written history of the Black man in America . . ."
> "And as it is written," He said . . . "If when you turn back unto me," He said, "I will bring you from the lands of your captivity and put you back into your own land."

> And there was something else that He said. The Father said, "and then all of these plagues which have been upon you I am going to put down upon your enemies and those who have oppressed you."
> So what is that saying? If your enemy knows that when this happens, he is in trouble. When I get out of captivity my enemy is in trouble. The plagues are going to go upon him. So then my enemy has a job. He has to keep me from finding my history. He kept me [from] finding the cause. So I taught my people; I told them the cause of their captivity . . .
> I said, "what got you into captivity is that you were disobedient to the almighty God." (M. Lounds 1981: 121)

From the first statement, we notice that here we have a very different style of black midrash – that of a gentleman named Nasi HaShalom. Rabbi Matthew's midrash was genealogical and aggadic; this one is exhortative. Code words leading the reader or hearer to an esoteric knowledge through a complex of biblical images and symbols permeate Nasi's rhetoric. The Old Testament is really a "history of the Black man." This does not mean, as it might seem initially, that there is no difference between African-American history and ancient Near Eastern history. He is saying quite the opposite. It means the Hebrew Bible contains literature that addresses, records, and parallels the struggles of black people. Nasi HaShalom also assumes his audience will not always interpret his language literally. The "captivity," for example, may actually be the sojourn of blacks in America. The reader's "own land" is really the continent of Africa. "The enemy" is a code word for white racists, and biblical "plagues" may really be black people's misfortunes. Considering that we have read only a few lines, the exalted role of symbol and metaphor in this midrash probably makes the text appear conspiratorial from an outsider's vantage point. But when analyzed against the community's backdrop experiences of racism and socioeconomic exclusion, these interpretations of the biblical narrative become rather dramatic descriptions of social reality.

Despite the questions that may be raised regarding the charitability of this midrash's use of the text, the social world envisioned therein corresponds very much with Rabbi Matthew's audience. Both the readers and hearers are ultimately concerned with what the Hebrew Bible has to say about racism. However, the Bible never explicitly raises the problem of racism, and so its narratives must be adjusted by black Jewish hermeneuts in order to provide information for the listening community. Rabbi Matthews and Nasi HaShalom therefore function as translators of the biblical text, telling their respective communities what the Bible *would* say if it did blatantly mention race and racism.

What we have in these cases are premier examples of popular black Jewish religious thought. These interpretations of scripture not only reveal a considerable amount of reflection on the social conditions of black Jews, but they also demonstrate the black Jewish leaders' willingness to express their reflections through engaging the central texts of the Jewish faith.

It is unfortunate that these aspects of black Jews' religious thought have been mostly neglected by students of Jewish culture. Many black midrashot convey thoughtful critiques of American Judaism that, in their analysis of Jewish racism, far surpass most Jewish theologies currently in circulation. By using popular religious thought such as black midrash, future black Jewish thinkers will be able to create much more sophisticated theological and legal arguments about divine providence, theodicy, historical consciousness, Jewish identity, etc. As a field of inquiry, black Jewish studies would be remiss to neglect this aspect of black people's Judaism.

Summary: The Future of Black Jewish Studies

Until the present, black Jews have not been underscored as a fundamental element in the religious life of black people. However, the continued existence of black Jewish groups, the evolution of black theological consciousness, the emphasis in the 1990s on renewed black–Jewish dialogue, as well as the recent scholarship on postmodernism and Jewish identity, have produced a renewed interest in black Jewish culture. As a community, black Jews have had to live through many years of racism, rejection, and anti-Semitism. They have not disbanded, nor is there any indication of "inauthenticity" in their way of life. Their presence has served to remind the academic community of the dangers of imposing one's worldview on others. Such cultural imperialism serves only to foment disgust, anger, and misconceived notions about those who are different from ourselves. As Yvonne Chireau tells us in *Black Zion*:

> Black and Jewish religious interactions provide evidence of the eclectic strategies utilized by African Americans in the creation of new traditions. African-American understandings of Judaism were informed by the social and political orientations of black people in the United States and were often embedded in African Americans' responses to the discrimination, violence, and exploitation that they had suffered in American society. Blacks understood and experienced the Jewish faith, as they did other religions, on their own terms. They made use of Jewish traditions, drawing upon their collective historical experiences as well as their own cultural resources. (Chireau and Deutsch 2000: 44)

Although the writers of *Black Zion* could not include all of the information relevant to African-American encounters with Judaism, they have opened the door to scholarly dialogue with a religious community that has traditionally been depicted as deceitful, counterfeit, and false. Without dismissing previous writings on the subject, Chireau redirects the conversation away from theologically divisive rhetoric and instead focuses on the socio-religious conditions of black Jewish groups. By not addressing their conformity to European Jewish practices and instead showing how black Jews have appropriated "their own cultural

resources," she has implicitly laid the foundation for a systematic articulation of black Jewish religion. Aside from our discussion here, her analysis represents the most recent literary and scholarly development on the subject.

Despite commonly held assumptions, the truth is that black Jews have for a long time held an important place among the world's Jewish cultures. As evidenced by their historical presence, contemporary culture, and religious and philosophic thought, black Jews have played pivotal roles in the transformation of the Jewish world's self-consciousness. Ruth Landes notwithstanding, it is these roles that have made and will continue to make a remarkable impact on social institutions and values. Persons studying Jewish culture would do well to include them in the summation of black Jews' experiences – not simply, in the words of Graenum Berger (1978: 206), their "mythology about their origins."

Notes

1 In this essay we will critically engage a select number of passages from the canon of literature dealing with Afro-American Judaism. Out of respect for the indigenous tradition, I encourage other scholars freely to use the term "Israelites" or "Hebrew-Israelites" when describing Afro-American Jewish religious communities. Unfortunately, several questions plague our efforts from the beginning. For example, what constitutes "canonical" writing on the black Jewish subject? Do the passages chosen reflect the variety of literature available? Is one's interpretation of the writing correct, particularly if it is removed from its previous context? In an attempt to navigate around these and other unavoidable issues, we will connect various excerpts on black Jewish life, arguing that their problematic ideas and false assumptions are more or less representative of the larger canon. The reader will critically examine my own conclusions by comparing them with the ideas contained in the larger series of writings on black Jews.

2 For example, if the notion that Jews are black is an anti-Semitic idea, then what does one make of the black Hebrews who (for obvious reasons) believe it? Are they to be called "anti-Semitic Semites?"

3 "Let me reiterate my central theme: the idea of an identity named in these pages as Black and Jewish – explicitly limited by and linked to intermarriage through the logic of coupling – is thinkable as a collective being-in-the-world *only and on condition that they are brought into contact with preexisting American ideas about race*" (K. Azoulay 1997: 179–80; my emphasis). Azoulay adds: "the binary division characterizing the American racial structure facilitated the mobility and leverage of white-skinned ethnic groups, including [European] Jews, on condition that they adapt to the norms set by the dominant group, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Conforming to this model made it possible for individual Jews to aspire to and attain successful assimilation. Jews could internalize white American racism, for 'in color-conscious America,' one's pigmentation has been incomparably more important than one's religious persuasion in determining social acceptability and vocational success" (ibid: 57–8). Professor Azoulay admits that studying black Jews, therefore, has an impact on one's understanding of white Jews, *vis-à-vis* an intimate encounter with the boundaries of American Jewish whiteness.

4 The vast majority of research in Jewish culture ignores black Jewish groups on the basis that black Jews have little evidence to support their claims to be Jews. However, the need to support claims of being Jewish virtually disappears when studying European or Euro-American Jewish groups. Given the fact that many white Jews are secular, yet still acknowledged as Jews, one might be led to wonder why black Jews must be more religious than white Jews in order for

their claims of Jewish descent to be taken seriously. Academicians specializing in Jewish studies should be highly sensitive to the academic implications of these realities. The fact that millions of black people claim to be Jews, yet are ignored by the rabbinic authorities in Israel, is as significant an aspect of Jewish culture as the divisions between secular and Orthodox Judaisms. Academic studies of Jewish life should not be limited to the religious disputes between the various sects of Judaism. Few would argue that because Orthodox rabbis do not accept Reform conversions, Jews who converted under Reform rabbis should be excluded from academic studies of Jewish people. In the same respect, because ultra-religious Jews may deny the existence of black Jews in sub-Saharan Africa, scholars cannot simply dismiss black Jewish presence as culturally insignificant. To do so betrays one's scholarly commitments to accurate representations of Jewish culture(s) in exchange for what amounts to a theological/religious bias. From this observation, a slew of questions challenging the entire project of Jewish cultural studies emerges: In light of African Jewish communities (of which the Beta Israel are only one), how does one define "Jewish culture"? Is there a particular Jewish culture? If so, how does one identify it? Is such a task possible?

5 I purposely borrow this concept from Frantz Fanon, who uses it to rationalize why ontological systems are inadequate explanations for the situatedness of the black man (F. Fanon 1967b: 110).

6 "Is a Jewish identity a white identity now that Jews' ethnoracial assignment is white? I have tried to show that postwar public intellectuals sometimes came dangerously close to a 'yes' answer when they stressed the cultural similarities between Jewish culture and white bourgeois ideals" (K. Brodkin 1998: 171). "We have seen that the Jews' unwhitening and whitening were not of their own making" (ibid: 175).

7 I learned this in a discussion with Shlomo ben Levy, Chief Rabbi of the Ethiopian Hebrew congregations in New York. Even Rabbi Levy insisted that I consult Brotz's work before writing an article on black Jewish religion. Evidently, Brotz spent some time interviewing black Jewish leaders and worshiping in their congregations. After years of observing and befriending them, he published his opinions in a small book entitled *The Black Jews of Harlem* (1970). The work instantly became a classic and foundational text in the study of black Jewish culture and life.

8 Landes's discussion remains restricted to the influence of Ethiopianism on black Jewish movements in Harlem. Unfortunately, this limits her ability to see the various manifestations of black Jewish life that took place outside the political strata of early black nationalist movements. See Baer and Singer (1997: 266), in part quoting Landing (2002): "In both of these groups . . . there can be found various Jewish (as well as Christian) ritual symbols and practices . . . in Chicago alone, there are nearly twenty Black groups with titles such as 'Israelites, . . . Jews, Hebrews, Canaanites, Essenes, Judaites, Rechabites, Falashas, and Abyssinians.'" There are many questions to be analyzed besides those that connect African Israelites with black nationalism. For example, one could question what impact Afro-American Jews, called "Israelites" in various black communities, had on the black church's identification with the ancient Israel of the Bible? Unfortunately, such questions have been ignored. Like many others, Landes attempts to evade them by indicating that black Jews have been "hardly more than a curiosity" to whites. But does the curiosity invoked in white Jews upon encountering black Jews give credence to the idea that black Jews have "made no impact on [white] social institutions?" Maybe the curiosity invites legitimate inquiry into the biases of the white Jewish inquirer. The potential issues are a wellspring for academic inquiry.

9 I borrowed this statement from Lewis Gordon (1995a: 100): "We return to our first premiss of antiblack racism: the white is superior to the black. What this premiss suggests is that the white's existence is justified, whereas the black's existence needs justification."

10 Although Edward Said, the critic of Orientalism, has been in turn criticized for his essentialization of Western subjectivity, Jonathan Boyarin insists that his critique "nevertheless stands as a powerful model for a retrospective critique of the cultural and biological racism that has

been employed . . . the tendencies to essentialize self and Other, to buttress national collective identity with a fiction of majestic and pure origins, to create grand schemata of cultural history but appear in retrospect as ludicrously speculative – these were all practiced since the early modern period on various of Europe's Others, notably including Muslims and *Jews*" (J. Boyarin 1994: 427; my emphasis).

11 To highlight these subtexts, I reproduce the excerpt here: "Whites and middle-class coloured people have *condemned* them [Black Jews] generally as *false* . . . But it is possible to trace a thread of psychological sense in the *garbled* pretense of the Black Jews. The ordinary people of Harlem are originally *country folk, illiterate*, used to *intimate* neighbourly ties, and *adjusted to the lowest economic standards*. Suddenly they are *uprooted* from their centuries-old adjustments by the demands of industry, a process facilitated by the drastic decline of the plantation economy, and packed into urban centres where alterations in their traditional values *disorient* them thoroughly . . . Rural, Southern, West Indian, and West African sanctions are *crippled*, for the urban world imposes new and difficult standards that determine survival. The Negro masses grow *bewildered* and *frightened*, and like other masses in a comparable situation, they *stampede*. One flight leads repeatedly into Black Judaism."

12 Gained from a conversation with Rabbi Capers Funnye, an Israelite rabbi on Chicago's south side; also see Graenum Berger's *Black Jews in America* (1978: chs 15, 17, 18).

13 Such was the reasoning behind the Nation of Islam's publication, *The Secret Relationship between Blacks and Jews* (1991).

14 Not the least of these were *Black Jews in America* (Berger 1978) and *The Heritage Seekers* (Gerber 1977).

15 The quotations surrounding "Jews" in the article's title suggests a definition different from the word's conventional usage. Whoever these "Jews" are, they are not Jews in the usual sense of the term. In addition, the term's only modifier is "Negro." Does this title, therefore, imply that Negro Jews are not really Jews? Or is the author merely attempting to convey the expected cultural and social differences between black Jews and non-black Jews? Or could both of the prior suggestions be operating simultaneously?

16 For a systematic articulation of this theory, see M. Singer (2000). Singer's theory represents an evolution in explanations for Hebrew-Israelite identity development. He has, in effect, combined the allegory thesis with the identification thesis.

17 Fauset attempted to account for these syncretisms by attributing them to "cult" behavior (A. Fauset 2002: 76–86, 90, 99).

18 These former questions are not the only problems in Brotz's formulation. Under the lens of close scrutiny, the whole allegory thesis is found extremely wanting. At least three fundamental characteristics about African-American Judaism call such an explanation into question. The first is the proliferation of different families' oral traditions within the groups, linking them with African slave Jews and/or sub-Saharan African Jewish communities. This aspect of the Israelite community has been virtually ignored. However, only a cursory review of Afro-American Jewish testimonies needs to be conducted for one to see it as an area for potential inquiry. The famous matriarch of the black Hebrew community in New York, "Mother McCleod," has publicly spoken about the Jewish traditions passed down orally in her family. An Orthodox black rabbi in Milwaukee commented on such oral traditions in a November 2000 issue of the *Inner City* of New Haven. "[Rabbi] Butler said later that his Jewish tradition – known as Sephardic Judaism – was 'passed down from word of mouth. It's not written tradition,' he said. 'It's oral.'" This testimony (from an *Orthodox* rabbi) could give more credence to Rabbi Ford's assertion that many of the Israelites in New York were thus descended. According to Diane Shapiro, "Some West Indian blacks, [Rabbi] Ford held, had become Jews following upon the intermarriage of blacks with 800 white Jewish immigrants who fled the Spanish Inquisition and came to the Western Hemisphere" (C. Lincoln 1974: 269). Even Julius Lester, hailed as the "anti-Negro Negro" by his critics, admitted in his autobiography, *Lovesong*, that his interest in Judaism stemmed in part from the oral tradi-

tions of white Jewish intermarriage with his family – namely, his grandmother. In addition, my own family contains several similar oral traditions. About half of my aunts and uncles were "Hebrews," according to family lore, both because of some miscegenation and the existence of (African) slave Jews in the familial lineage. To emphasize these stories is not to give greater attention to them than they may deserve. My contention is simply that responsible academics should investigate the stories before dismissing them. Sometimes the extra time and energy involved in seriously engaging familial and cultural oral traditions can yield unforeseen results, perhaps fundamentally changing accepted "theories" about origins and psychological development. Until greater consideration is given to the veracity of the statements that some Israelites make about their connections with the Jewish diaspora, the dominant hypotheses for Israelite origins will continue to be suspect, particularly by members of the black Jewish communities.

The second characteristic is the multifaceted function (theological raw materials, liturgical employments, etc.) of scripture as it operates in the religious life of black Jewish congregations. One can witness such variation by attending Shabbat services of any one of Prophet William S. Crowdy's congregations. Scripture serves as the foundation of liturgy, song, and doctrine. However, extra-congregational ritual and practice have been severely influenced by cultural, rather than scriptural, conventions. More research needs to be done on this topic. The third characteristic is the seriousness with which some black Jews profess African American, as opposed to white Jewish or biblical Hebrew, identities as revealed in their foods, worship styles, and dress. (See Chireau and Deutsch 2000: 42–3; also visit the website www.blackjews.org.)

My inclusion of these signal realities in the life of black Jewish groups does not necessarily render the allegory thesis completely false. Perhaps some black Christians could have convinced themselves they are Jews. Yet responsible academic studies of Afro-American Judaism should take seriously the community's characteristics, which place the theory in a better context. Instead of assuming black Jews are Christians, one should conduct a thorough investigation of the oral traditions linking these groups to slavery and the African continent. To simply ignore them, assuming they are "invented," severely weakens one's argument to the contrary. In addition, the second and third characteristics must be weighed against the second foundational proposition of the hypothesis. This is not to say that African Americans *could not* have believed they were Jews on the basis of an affinity with scripture, only that such an assertion must be based on how black Christians utilize Christian scriptures for the relegation of African-American identity in exchange for a scriptural one. If there is inconsistency between how scripture functions in black Christianity and how Brotz and others say it is functioning, then alternative explanations for the rise of black Jews are demanded. We are not provided with testimony for any of these other possibilities. As we will see, later commentators ignored evidence that did not support their theories, ultimately denying readers an opportunity to critically engage with their conclusions.

19 The notion of the black Hebrews' bad faith is one of the main characteristics that separate the identification thesis from the allegory thesis. Under the allegory thesis, black Jews were thought to be well-meaning Christians who, despite their admiration and mimicry of biblical Hebrews, are merely too ignorant or confused to understand what religion they are really practicing (Christianity). With the identification thesis, the black Jews know they are not Jews or Hebrews, but continue to profess it anyhow. Moreover, they profess to be "true" (i.e., authentic) Jews. The allegory thesis describes Israelites as confused; the identification thesis describes them as deceptive and potentially harmful to themselves and others.

20 For example, individuals such as Captain of the Amistad Bill Pinkney, African-American philosopher Lewis Gordon, Ethiopian Jewish scholar Yosef ben Yochannan, Afro-Judaic historian Jose Malcion, Israelite Rabbi Capers Funnye, and thousands of others throughout the black Hebrew communities who also have ties with and are accepted by some in the white American Jewish community.

21 One example of such individuals was Rabbi Jehu Eaves, an Orthodox rabbi who was an elder in one of the Beth-El congregations.

22 Shapiro writes: "The first of the social influences upon Black Judaism may be observed in considering the consequences of the Negro Church's failure to fulfill adequately the needs of the black masses in the cities" (D. Shapiro 1974: 254).

23 As a rule, professional researchers and scholars are not supposed to make value judgments on culture. They may describe, (re)present, and translate culture into discursive spaces, but labeling any religious culture as "inauthentic" remains taboo in the academy.

24 For example: "The Black Hebrews have never truly identified with the Jewish people" (I. Gerber 1977: 195).

25 Called the Alliance of Black Jews, the now-inactive group attempted to offer alternative definitions of American Jewish diversity.

26 For a distillation of these traditions in written form, see R. Windsor (1969) and S. Jacobs (1976).

27 One of the best examples of this can be found in the New World Dutch colony of Surinam. The *Essai historique sur la colonie de Surinam* (written in 1788), part ii, p. 39, describes a Jewish census in which there are 1,311 white Jews and 650 mulatto and black Jews (see A. Godbey 1930: 248).

28 The status of *congreganten* was closely associated with the attempts to convert New Christians back into Judaism. Hence the Spanish and Portuguese *anousim* (returnees to Judaism) were also labeled as *congreganten*. For more information on this phenomenon, see Bernardini and Fiering (2001).

29 This aspect of how Jews were interpreting Jewish law in the context of trans-Atlantic slavery is almost always neglected (cf. M. Maimonides 1999: 681): "See *Hilchot Issurei Bi'ah* 14:9, which states that a Canaanite [non-Jewish] slave must accept the mitzvot that he is obligated to observe (all the negative commandments, and those positive commandments whose observance is not dependent on time). If he is not willing to accept those commandments, he must be sold to gentiles. He must also be immersed in the mikveh, and a male slave must be circumcised. When these steps are taken, 'he has departed from the general category of gentiles, but has not yet entered the general category of Jews' (ibid: 12:11)." Also see M. Maimonides's (1996: 247–8): "The Canaanite bondman had to be entered by his Hebrew master into the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. XVII, 12), and after immersion in a ritual bath became bound by all the Negative Commandments of the Torah, and by such Positive Commandments as had not to be performed at stated times. Thus during his servitude the Canaanite bondsman was under obligation to observe all the laws that were binding on a Hebrew woman (see Pos. Comm. 16) . . . *A Canaanite bondman became fully a Jew on being liberated*, whether his liberation was by redemption through payment of money, or by a Writ of Liberation (Kiddushin 14b), or as compensation for the loss of a limb" (my emphasis). The fact that a black Jewish community would have to emerge after slavery's abolition seems to have been one of the factors leading many Jews to support the maintenance of slavery in the states. See abolitionist Rabbi David Einhorn's speech at www.jewish-history.com/einhorn.html.

30 Rule 23, Constitution of Beth Elohim synagogue, Charleston, South Carolina.

31 That synagogues are segregated along color lines does not significantly impact this person's idea of Jewish social reality. For them, the Jewish community is *supposed* to be segregated, and this is why the marginalization of black Jews is not problematic.

32 See, for example, L. Gordon (2000b: 25). Although the concept is in *Existentia Africa*, I learned this particular phrase in conversation with Lewis Gordon while discussing the relationship between his existential writings and those of Frantz Fanon.

E By Way of Concluding: Thinking Creolization, Thinking Diaspora

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

Playing with the Dark: Africana and Latino Literary Imaginations

Claudia M. Milian Arias

> It is impossible to say to which human family we belong. The larger part of the Native population has disappeared, Europeans have mixed with the Indians and the Negroes, and Negroes have mixed with the Indians. We were all born of one mother in America, though our fathers have different origins, and we all have different colored skins. This dissimilarity is of the greatest significance.
>
> Simón Bolivar

In what follows, black, Latina, and Latino identity configurations are explored, highlighting how these relational identity formations remain discursively separated in academic approaches to African-American and Latino Studies. This examination attends to the convergences and divergences between these black, Latina, and Latino post-Civil Rights scholarly "selves," as it were, and analyzes the ways through which these "black" and "brown" existences remain highly segregated and under-examined. The aim is not to eliminate the differences of how blackness and brownness have been marked, lived, and theorized. Rather, the objective is to wrestle with the implications of how these ethnoracial experiences – albeit cultural production – have been read, envisioned, and glossed over

despite academic calls for and implementations of interdisciplinary areas of study and diasporic approaches to the Americas.

The pernicious division of blackness and brownness as literary projects paradoxically points to an academic reproduction of public discourses – in the mainstream press, with leftist publications not far behind – that formulate the intricate racial mappings of the United States in black and white. Although Cornel West admits that "Black–brown relations will continue to pose a major challenge for American race matters in the next century," analyses of these relations are often limited, if not altogether non-existent (C. West 1999: 499). The potency of what Sandy Marie Anglás Grande calls the "whitestream" is to examine present-day socioeconomic and political life continually through the black and white racial divide (S. Anglás Grande 2000). *How Race Is Lived in America*, a 2001 compilation by *New York Times* correspondents, attests to a formulaic understanding of a national, racially static situation; one in which, as a 69-question poll from that volume verifies, can only be deliberated by blacks and whites (Sack and Elder 2001). Editors at the *Times* are not uninformed of shifting racial demographics and paradigms. Joseph Lelyveld, a *Times* executive editor who wrote that anthology's introduction, insists: "I do not mean to be defensive about the failure of this series to go as deeply as it might have into all the intergroup relations that will increasingly be woven into our unfolding racial narrative" (J. Lelyveld 2001: xviii). While Lelyveld suggests that relations between "anything" that is not black and white are merely developing, his unfolding prognosis is a reality for black and brown cultural workers who contextualize their interactions and coexistence with the US social world in ways that are not limited to their respective "colors." There is hardly a vocabulary, let alone a mutual dialogue that, in addition to emphasizing "common" socioeconomic and political projects, also helps in the framing of blackness and brownness as more than races and cultures apart.[1]

I correlatively engage with the ways that these groups imagine and practice their ethnicity and localize it within the internal borders along US racial lines. Black and brown are conceived not as a shared essence, but as ethnoracial signifiers that operate in numerous arenas that mark the unknown and unfamiliar. Notions of black and brown, as changing racial states, attest to the establishment of difference. Through cultural bodies of work, these sites of being theorize variations of "that" blackness and brownness – breaking their "colored" doubt and uncertainty into the "uncolored" representational realm of politics. It remains to be said that not all degrees of black and brown invisibility *within* these discourses are synonymous with a homogeneously hypothesized black and brown collectivity. Indeed, brown critical engagement with Afro-Latino populations is, at best, embryonic. Furthermore, as Ernesto Sagás remarks in the *Latino Studies Journal*, "most Latino studies scholarship [has] concerned itself with the examination of the Chicano, Puerto Rican, and Cuban experiences in the United States" (E. Sagás 1998: 5). Sagás identifies, in the context of Dominican populations in the United States, that an internal hierarchy directs which Latino

subgroup has more visibility and legitimate claims to being institutionalized within the field of Latino Studies.[2] This absence of black Latinas and Latinos and of groups outside the Latino triad also echoes the types of "African Americanness" recognized in US discourses on blackness. Mary Waters discusses, by way of West Indian migrations to North America, that "The invisibility of the Caribbean immigrants as immigrants [points to] their visibility as blacks" (M. Waters 1997: 3). The lives of certain individuals from the Caribbean imply struggles with processes of negotiating migratory identities from the Americas; altering such identities and identifications to US-centered notions of "Americanness"; and of specifically becoming *black* Americans.

However, in the public sphere, not all invisibilities are equal. In spite of the "invisible" social status relegated to brownness in the corporate media, certain well-intentioned public intellectuals have urged left-leaning publications to include Latina and Latino perspectives. There has been an attempt to call attention to brown invisibility, without accounting for the ways that such invisibility is voiced and represented. In July 2001, Earl Shorris, author of the encyclopedic *Latinos: A Biography of the People*, declared in the *Nation*: "Unfortunately, Latino voices have been little more than a whisper in the left/liberal press . . . What must happen, in my opinion, will require some effort from Latino writers and from the national/left liberal press. The writers must make their own ideas known to the editors, and the editors must try to discern the importance of the work presented to them" (Shorris 2001: 7).[3] Seven years prior to Shorris's uncovering of Latina and Latino "non-existence" in dominant and alternative outlets, the National Council of La Raza published a report, "Out of the Picture: Hispanics in the Media." NCLR, a national Latina and Latino public policy organization founded in 1968, clarified: "As with television entertainment portrayals, coverage of issues with Latino themes is extremely rare [in] newspapers and television's public affairs programming" (NCLR 1997: 25).[4] But whether brown absence comes from the *New York Times*, which is generally regarded as the national newspaper of record, or whether a representational appeal is made in the *Nation* (America's oldest weekly magazine since 1865), blackness and brownness – when contrasted with US whiteness – are misrepresented through newsprint familiarity that positions US locatable blackness and Latina and Latino alienness with normative whiteness.

Here, I move to examine the meanings behind black and brown articulations of a racialized subjectivity. First, I analyze a blackness-in-transit and how this blackness (though not explicitly posited as such) is present in Chicana and Chicano discourses about brownness. Next, I focus on Gayl Jones's novel, *Mosquito*, because this text documents the lived interactions between black, Chicana, and Chicano subjects. Jones attends to New World diasporic representations of borders; blackness is examined through its "corresponding" connection to Africa, and to its Latin American link. The novel poses a provocative question: How have black authors employed borders, even if implicitly, to explain their location within ethnoracial hierarchies existing in US and Latin American

societies? If, as Richard Rodriguez suggests in *Brown: The Last Discovery of America*, African Americans have been unwilling "to admit brown," this study is an exploration not only of the asymmetrical ways browns admit black, but also of how blacks admit brown (R. Rodriguez 2002: 142).

My intent is to work through the bipolar oppositions of black and white. In doing so, my goal is not to invert the black and white binary with black and brown rivalry, as Jack Miles (1992) suggested in the *Atlantic Monthly*, or for that matter, to bypass blackness through the reintroduction of a brown and white binary. I interrogate how black and brown figurations augment one another across time and space and how these "disciplinary" ethnoracial categories demand a relational understanding. In summoning the idea of relational identity formations, I exercise Lewis Gordon's concept of the relational theory of race, where

> black people and white people needn't have been the historical black and white people. As long as a group defines itself as white in such a way that it becomes the standpoint from which other races are judged on the basis of the degree to which they are less white, a slippery slope downward begins until the unreal figure of blackness looms at the point beyond which there is only nothing. (L. Gordon 1995b: 95)

This study is an examination of how blackness looms in Latina and Latino brownness and how brownness commingles with African-American blackness. As *Mosquito* invites, a linking point emerges within these groups. The supposed impossible nothingness of (un-relational) blackness becomes a possibility, a joining shade of solidarity. Relational identity formations, then, point to larger conceptualizations of a politicized "self" and her connection to sociopolitical landscapes. In the words of theorist and cultural critic Paula Moya, "differences are relational, our ability to understand an 'other' depends largely on our willingness to examine our 'self'" (P. Moya 2000: 67–8).

This revisiting of intellectual projects that house black, Latina, and Latino identities enables us to reconceptualize two foundational models that – from the beginning to the closing of the twentieth century – incited, influenced, and guided the theorizing of multiple markers of difference. That is, the Chicana- and Chicano-specific borderlands, as posited by Gloria Anzaldúa, and African-American duality in W. E. B. Du Bois's configurations of double consciousness. These two figures are coupled because their states of consciousness are predicated upon the assembling of their plural selves that discuss darkness, but paradoxically omit how this darkness also operates within Chicana, Chicano, and African-American inquiries of the self in relation to US structural life. My intentional use of categories as black and Latina and Latino throughout this essay gestures the presumed closure, if not assumed rigid situatedness, of black to mean monolithic, US-blackness, and Latina and Latino to fixedly connote brown, *sans* the black figure in the Americas, much less whites from the Southern cone. I apply these categories to accentuate moments of close relations within black

and brown. These moments illustrate the inner and outer workings of these two groups where they know each other's color lines. These instants echo the observations of the main character in *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man*, who mentions: "It is remarkable, after all, what an adaptable creature the Negro is" (J. Johnson 1989: 153). The tensions in the adaptability of brownness, in African Americanness, and the in-adaptability of *lo negro*, in Latinoness, are this essay's propelling points of departure.

The borderlands and double consciousness both have as their socially activating footing the countering of normative Americanness. Whereas border cultures emphasize identity aspects not so readily apparent in double consciousness like gender, sexuality, and brown Chicananess and Chicanoness, double consciousness accentuates a black outsiderness that is not the result of, nor specific to, one particular US geographical location. Yet these concepts are the ongoing mediation for what Du Bois discussed in his essay "Sociology Hesitant" as "the evident rhythm of human action," to which one can also add the undeterminable rhythm of human interaction (W. Du Bois 2000b: 41). Du Boisian double consciousness and the Anzaldúan borderlands balance off one another; they meet not only through comparative approaches that inspect the racial and national aspects that inform their particular consciousness. Together, they intensify the call for a different grammar, externally and internally, that goes beyond the facile popular perception of brownness as exclusively Spanish-speaking and blackness as solely English-speaking. The borderlands and double consciousness demand an alteration in the ways these subjects are heard, seen, positioned, and interpreted.

I now turn to a more detailed discussion of these two concepts.

The Black and Brown Color Lines: Du Bois, Anzaldúa, Latina, and Latino Identities

> They that walked in darkness sang songs in the olden days – Sorrow Songs for which they were weary at heart. (W. E. B. Du Bois)

> I am an act of kneading, of uniting and joining that not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings. We are the people who leap in the dark. (Gloria Anzaldúa)

In the centennial edition of *The Souls of Black Folk* David Levering Lewis writes: "The genius of *Souls* was that it offered a third way by affirming the rightness of opposites. Henceforth, the destiny of the race could be conceived as leading to neither assimilation nor separatism but to proud hyphenation" (D. Levering Lewis 2000: xvii). Whereas in one of his autobiographies Du Bois notes that the South advanced his Negro consciousness ("henceforward I was a Negro"), this hyphenated awareness impels a black subject to discern the location, meaning,

and experience of that blackness (W. Du Bois 1997: 108). This proud hyphenation is one where the realities of being black and American are still negotiated and enacted. The in-between space of that blackness leads to future interactions that are black-and-white and other shades in between these two seemingly fixed categories (W. Du Bois 1996b: 3). This hyphenation – in effect, a double consciousness – is black-specific and is activated through the repetitive declaration, not so much of being, but of living as an American Negro. Du Bois's exploration of this reigning motif in black cultural and intellectual thought echoes a type of awareness that surfaces from the US color-line. Yet as Du Bois explained on fictional, but applicable, grounds in *Dark Princess*, what lies within black migrations and social interactions at home and abroad are "shadow[s] of a color-line within a color-line" (W. Du Bois 1995b: 22). Blackness and Americanness are to be understood as open signifiers. They are migratory meeting points that demand an understanding of how lines of color surface within and beyond the United States, how one knows or inhabits them, and what one can contribute to that prophetic problem of the color-line identified in *Souls*, but thoroughly delineated, studied, and presented, in 1899, through *The Philadelphia Negro*.[5]

Rather than exclusively situating Du Boisian double consciousness in a rigid US context, I locate this duality of a blackness-in-transit, one that becomes a controllable public face that subdues a supposedly uncontrollable blackness, through the exploration of discursive blackness in relation to the brown social world. Brownness, of course, influences blackness, as amply manifested throughout US black literature, whether through motifs of ethnoracial passing as white, or as a member of a particular Latino nationality, or through variations of brownness lived through blackness. Here, we need only consider brownness as one that has been documented through the rubric of "colored" – one that suggests blackness as a mixture invariably pointing toward different shades of brownness.

My evocation of black and brown, which is intentionally cited in lowercase to point to the reification of racialized descriptions, does not mean that these "colors" are fixed foundations for "recognizable" African-American, Latina, and Latino phenotypes. These designations overlap within these diasporic and mixed populations. Nella Larsen's novel *Passing* (1986) centers on the tensions that exist for two women, Irene and Clare, whose mixed blackness facilitates an entry toward "whiteness." Their ability to pass highlights issues about interchanging identities, power relations, access to the dominant culture, and the contradictions that emerge from such desires. At the same time, a subtext in *Passing* is how blackness does not only lead to whiteness, but also to Latinaness and Latinoness. Irene is invariably read as "an Italian, a Spaniard, a Mexican, or a gypsy. Never, when she was alone, had [white people] even remotely seemed to suspect that she was a Negro" (ibid: 150). Irene's mixtures illustrate that racial hierarchies exist within these labels, but also signal a Latina or Latino figure coexisting in a color-line that is not racially or geographically fixed. Du Bois's novel from 1928, *Dark Princess*, characterizes the protagonist, Matthew Towns, as a black figure

who can also be read as English, French, or Spanish (W. Du Bois 1995b: 10).[6] Other fictional examples include Paule Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, which certainly alludes to the variations of blackness, as does Shay Youngblood's novel *Black Girl in Paris*, which describes the (black) main character as brown. The narrator in James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* notes that his mother's "skin was almost brown" (J. Johnson 1989: 18). The various racial degrees of blackness are also present in Toni Morrison's *Sula* (1982), where the different shades of the three Deweys in the narrative dialogue with presumed homogeneous blackness.[7]

On non-fictional fronts, Du Bois, Audre Lorde, Richard Wright, and Malcolm X, to cite but a few figures, allude to the shifting boundaries of blackness. This theme is apparent, as well, in Langston Hughes's autobiographical project, *The Big Sea*, where he distinguishes himself and his family by saying: "I am brown. My father was a darker brown. My mother an olive-yellow" (L. Hughes 1993: 11). Hughes also details his color as one of a "copper-brown complexion" (ibid: 50) and calls himself an "*americano de color*, brown as a Mexican" (ibid: 78). Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s memoir, *Colored People*, connotes a dialogue with brownness through the filters of blackness. The flexibility of these two shades, from Gates's identification, indicates a "browned blackness," as it were, that has yet to dialogue with Latina and Latino brownness. Upon first meeting his paternal relations during a family gathering, Gates writes: "It came as a shock to realize that these mythic characters in Daddy's tales were actual brown and tan and beige people" (H. Gates, Jr. 1994: 69). These variations of blackness engage with a black mixture conversing with brown *mestizaje*. As Du Bois proposes in his study *The Negro*: "In general the Negro population in the United States is brown in color, darkening to almost black and shading off in the other direction to yellow and white, and it is indistinguishable in some cases from the white population" (W. Du Bois 1988: 185).

On Latina and Latino cultural fronts, autobiographical works such as Piri Thomas's *Down These Mean Streets* depict black and brown racial dynamics in a Puerto Rican and Cuban family. A glossary at the end of Thomas's work defines five different categories to register black, dark brown, almost black, and dark-skinned textures (P. Thomas 1967: 333).[8]

Esmeralda Santiago's *When I Was Puerto Rican* (what is she now?) retells her first coming-of-age narrative through her nickname, "Negi," an abridged version of "*Negrita*" (E. Santiago 1993: 13).[9] Román de la Campa's life story, *Cuba on My Mind*, raises a telling observation that elaborates how "white" (Cuban) *mestizaje* subsumes ("non-Cuban") blackness. Cuban ideology, de la Campa explicates, is infused with a white interpretive lens that initiates and stands for blackness. He comments:

> White Cubans do not doubt the distinct African profile of their music, religion, dance, mode of speaking, and other features, but they see themselves as translators, interpreters, or perhaps guardians of such a cultural legacy. It is a way of

> acknowledging that African influences define the national culture while continuing to speak for it from the perspective of Cuban creole whiteness. (R. de la Campa 2000: 11)

Junot Diaz's fictional compilation of short stories, *Drown*, indexes the conception of blackness as an imported trait via the Dominican Republic's blacker neighbor, Haiti. Subtly and intricately mapping out how blackness plays out within insular brotherly relations that signify larger national practices, Rafa, a main character in the story "Ysrael," pesters his brother with insults that have more to do "with my complexion, my hair, the size of my lips. It's the Haitian he'd say to his buddies. Hey Señor Haitian, Mami found you on the border and only took you in because she felt sorry for *you*" (J. Diaz 1996: 5; original emphasis). By way of brown *mestizaje*, Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, and Richard Rodriguez call our attention to the polemics surrounding the light, or dark, sides of a Latin American and US Latina and Latino brownness that is not generally conceived as black. My application of black and brown certainly details the limitations of how these terms operate. But such utilization also functions as an imprint prompting toward a larger process that encourages new pedagogical approaches and assesses the social environments and realities of these groups. Finally, my application of black, Latina, and Latino denotes the particularities of these ethnoracial peoples – that is, their separation and representation within discourses that overlook their associative realities in North America.

From the beginning of *Souls* the reader understands that Du Bois's pointed concerns center on the meaning of blackness. I argue that this meaning of blackness wrestles with a distorted self in relation to three New World locations: (1) white America; (2) the dispersed New World (black) subject in the Americas; and (3) the New World Latina and Latino subject in the Americas resisting blackness. I contend that the meaning of problematic blackness resonates in US Latina and Latino literature as well, but that Latina and Latino brownness, in the context of Chicana and Chicano letters, is darkened not through blackness, but through Indianness. This move toward Indianness erases the pejorative meaning of blackness (thus eliminating the transportation of blackness to the New World), and inscribes a dark Indianness that can be undarkened and relatively whitened. This relative whiteness – derivative whiteness – does not pass for white; rather, as incisively posited by Rodriguez, it passes among white (R. Rodriguez 2002: 4). Such manipulation of shades is a Latina and Latino concealment that avoids Du Bois's compelling articulation of the "real question" required of blackness: "How does it feel to be a problem?" (W. Du Bois 1996b: 3–4).

In these pages, I introduce the idea of an open double consciousness to activate the opening of a double consciousness that has been fallaciously closed to any applicability that is not strictly US black and white. Open double consciousness allows the mixture of blackness to correspond with brown *mestizaje*, alongside the mixture of ideologies that shape these figurations via gender, class, and sexu-

ality. Traces of open double consciousness and its applicability to the dark races of the world are visible in Du Bois's *Dark Princess*. The first part of that novel, "The Exile," is based on Matthew Towns becoming, as it were, a student of comparative race studies on an international scale. His acquaintance with Egyptians, Indians, Chinese, and Arabs forces him to untangle his distinctly American Negro (double) consciousness in global terms (W. Du Bois 1995b: 18–27). The insertion of Latina and Latino brownness to an open double consciousness accounts for the investigation of a parenthetical, hypervisible blackness in US Latina and Latino literature. Double consciousness becomes, in a US context, a negotiating mechanism for those that remain, to the external normative world, unknown and unnamable by virtue of a knowledge that is invariably amplified by structural asymmetries. Double consciousness embraces itself in its unstable, autobiographical "I" – what it is, what it is not, and what it can be – a fused first-person pronoun that also suggests ensuing interactions of what is to come and what is to become. The open double consciousness that I advance is, admittedly, not removed from Du Bois's premise. It moves discursive blackness to its other persistent and informing geographical shadow that is within the United States and south of the US South – that is, Latin America. I account for another black Atlantic – *el Atlantico negro* within and outside the United States – that is also imbedded with linguistic tropes like mulatto and negro (in Spanish, of course, the feminine pronoun is added to these identifiers). These signifiers elide black citizenry from the project of the nation, and paradoxically perpetuate the (racially) crude signification of all things black, *lo negro*. In this perpetuation, *lo negro* and *lo prieto* are subdued: they suggest an amalgamation of both blackness and darkness that precedes the category and location of the dark (presumably non-black) Indian. *Lo negro* points to a racially loaded – if not fixed – location one does not want to inhabit. Indianness accents a racializing process that can be manipulated, one that may eventually catch up with the rest of the (whitened) nation.

I couple my extension of Du Boisian double consciousness – open double consciousness – with the current theorizing of the borderlands, particularly as it has been postulated by Gloria Anzaldúa. As I have clarified elsewhere, life on the US–Mexico borderlands can be broadly summarized as: (1) the tracing of Chicana and Chicano lineage to indigenous cultures; (2) the mixing of languages, including English, Nahuatl, Spanish, and Spanglish; (3) the claiming of Mexican and US ties as political rhetoric and policies represent Chicanas and Chicanos as a questionable, problematic population; (4) the confronting of issues as labor exploitation, alongside social and cultural inequalities; (5) the inhabiting of various unevenly deployed geographical spaces; and among other factors (6) the insertion of queer and feminist configurations in heterosexual- and masculine-centered constructions and assertions of Chicanoness (see C. Milian Arias 2002: 362). While the term double consciousness does not appear in Anzaldúa's narratives, her articulation of the violent divisions between first and third worlds

and her identification of a distorted racial and gendered existence, by way of a US *bordered* reality, moves her to the formation of an alien consciousness. This formulation alludes to a Chicana-specific Du Boisian framework of a national discourse that considers "the inhabitants of the borderlands transgressors, aliens – whether they are Chicanos, Indians, or Blacks" (G. Anzaldúa 1999: 25). Du Bois's awareness stems from being "between me and the other world" (W. Du Bois 1996b: 3). For Anzaldúa, this state of being a New World Chicana subject in the United States must account for "all three cultures – white, Mexican, Indian" (ibid: 44).[10] It is "*the pull between what is and what should be*" (G. Anzaldúa 1983: 208; original emphasis). Just as Du Bois must maneuver the "two unreconciled strivings" of being black and American, Anzaldúa interrogates her state of being in "perpetual transition," since "the *mestiza* faces the dilemma of the mixed breed: which collectivity does the daughter of a darkskinned mother listen to?" (G. Anzaldúa 1999: 100). Open double consciousness and the alien consciousness of the borderlands illustrate that the summoning of a critical, heightened consciousness (in a Du Boisian sense) and the struggle to transgress social and political borders (in Anzaldúan terms) are not mutually exclusive.

While Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* largely depends on the articulation of a *mestiza* consciousness – as manifested in the book's subheading, "The New Mestiza," and in her concluding chapter, "La conciencia de la mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness" – I want to involve more actively the idea of an alien consciousness. This concept is mentioned in Anzaldúa's last chapter. Its identification unfolds from José Vasconcelos' concept, in 1925, of *la raza cósmica*, the cosmic race. Anzaldúa construes Vasconcelos' theory as "a fifth race embracing the four major races of the world. Opposite to the theory of the pure Aryan, and to the policy of racial purity that white America practices, his theory is one of inclusivity" (ibid: 99). Although Vasconcelos embraces diverse racial compositions, he does account for the materiality of Indianness and blackness given their peripheral locations in Mexican and Latin American everyday cultural practices. For Vasconcelos (1882–1959), who served as Mexico's minister of education, Latin America demonstrates greater promise in the development of a new age because of the region's *mestizaje*. This new age is propelled by aesthetic ideologies, creative endeavors, and racial mixtures that will bring into fruition a new (Latin American) humanity.

Vasconcelos who, in 1929, ran for president in Mexico and lost, advocates *mestizaje* as a central prerequisite for a Latin America period where "the material, the intellectual, and the aesthetic" rule over reason (J. Vasconcelos 1997: 40). His creation of humanity emulates a white European model. Implicit in the cosmic race, which Vasconcelos conceived during his travels through Europe, the United States, Puerto Rico, Turkey, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, is the reproduction of hierarchical forms that valorize white normativity. Vasconcelos declares: "We accept the superior ideals of the Whites, but not their arrogance" (ibid: 25). He finds that the exceptional standards of white Europeans and Americans bring civilization and organization to Latin America, explaining: "Latin America owes

what it is to the white European, and it is not going to deny him. To the North Americans themselves, Latin America owes a great part of the railroads, bridges, and enterprises" (ibid).

The notions of Vasconcelos, a contemporary of Du Bois (1868–1963), radically differ from Du Bois's insistence on the project and concreteness of black humanity. For one, Vasconcelos' "visionary" conception of a new racial project moves toward the elimination of blackness. He writes: "In a few decades of aesthetic eugenics, the Black may disappear, together with the types that a free instinct of beauty may go on signaling as fundamentally recessive and undeserving" (J. Vasconcelos 1997: 32). Vasconcelos' cosmic race appears more like a proclamation, in bad faith, of what Latin America will be like without blacks. A critical response to Vasconcelos' aversion to blackness can be juxtaposed with Ralph Ellison's take on the US "notion of purging the nation of blacks" in his remarkable essay, "What America Would Be Like Without Blacks" (R. Ellison 1998: 104). Vasconcelos' manifestations of "free instinct," alongside his emphasis on "personal taste [and] curiosity," retain elements of racial fantasies that inscribe political pathologies to those that differ from "white" (J. Vasconcelos 1997: 27). Through what he calls "the faculty of personal taste," the quest to eliminate "ugliness" emerges. "The very ugly will not procreate," Vasconcelos instructs.

> They will have no desire to procreate. What does it matter, then, that all the races mix with each other if ugliness will find no cradle? Poverty, defective education, the scarcity of beautiful types, the misery that makes people ugly, all those calamities will disappear from the future social change. The fact, common today, of a mediocre couple feeling proud of having multiplied misery will seem repugnant then, it will seem a crime. (Ibid: 30)

Perhaps because Vasconcelos' stance seems to contradict Anzaldúa's concept of *mestiza* consciousness, Anzaldúa remarks in a footnote that her spin on Vasconcelos is a "'take off' on José Vasconcelos' idea" (G. Anzaldúa 1999: 119). Anzaldúa does not outline how she takes *off* Vasconcelos' notion, but she diverges from Vasconcelos in that "abnormal" or repulsive elements – both culturally and physically – act as agents while *mestizas* and *mestizos* negotiate and reformulate their identities. These negotiations signal an alien consciousness different from Vasconcelos. This awareness contests white supremacy not through an undarkened (and hence non-black) brownness, but by working within the nuances of all that is alien, repulsive, and abnormal. Anzaldúa's heightened knowledge is aligned with a woman's and an alien consciousness offering "numerous possibilities" (ibid: 99–101). She maintains: "Every increment of consciousness, every step forward is a *travesía*, a crossing. I am again an alien in new territory. And again, and again . . ." (ibid: 70).

Through the coupling of the borderlands and double consciousness, I strive to bring into view a more comparative approach to African-American Studies

and Latina/o Studies, a dialogue that is margin-to-margin, instead of margin-to-center. The point here is not whether Du Bois, by virtue of his writings, is Latino, and conversely, whether Anzaldúa is black. This essay, rather, analyzes how the idea of problematic blackness (for African Americans) and problematic darkness (for Latinas and Latinos) is seen, measured, and represented by the subjects who identify the roots of their estrangement from a US (unfulfilled) democratic project. Specifically, I explore the following questions: How do blacks, Latinas, and Latinos enter the ideological terrain of Americanness? In what ways do Du Bois and Anzaldúa wrestle with the discursive meanings of problematic blackness in an Anglophone context, and problematic darkness in a Hispanophone realm?

In examining a problematic blackness commonly perceived as unsettled in the Americas and unsettling to a brown domestic sphere, I strategically utilize Chicana and Chicano autobiographical works because in situating the reader in a commonplace, the home, these life stories foreground race in the construction of the personal. The autobiographical narrators account for what becomes a human life exhausted by darkness as they seek to provide coherence to the ideological (racial) incoherence reproduced at home. Their self-awakening takes us to the ways their identities are represented outside the intimate settings that mold them. The revisiting of particular moments by figures such as Anzaldúa, Moraga, and Rodriguez points to the reevaluation, during adulthood, of formative – yet troubling – instances during childhood where darkness was to be concealed, erased, and silenced. These writers show that the ethnoracial categories applied at home expose the legacy of Spanish colonization in Latin America and how such differentiations are not just imbedded in Latina and Latino North America, but wedded to the dominant ideologies of New World whiteness. As Martha Menchaca has delineated in her study of the racial history of Mexican *mestizaje* in the US Southwest and Mexico, black slaves, Indians, and *mestizos* fell, at the time of the conquest, under a racialized order known as "the *casta* system" (M. Menchaca 2001: 62).[11] When the United States annexed the US Southwest, Menchaca observes that "diverse forms of racial discrimination" were instituted on white Mexicans and Mexicans of color "depending on their racial phenotype" (ibid: 277). Attending to forms of Chicana and Chicano darkness opens the possibility of expanding our understanding of blackness for Africana and Latino populations that are not assumed to be exclusively situated in the Afro-Caribbean.

The Dark and Indigent Complexion: On the Dirty, the Queer, and the Abnormal

Du Bois writes in *Souls* that the history of the American Negro is jarred with being "an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled striv-

ings, two warring ideals in one dark body" (W. Du Bois 1996b: 9). Consequently, "The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife." The pejorative location of blackness in the United States, Du Bois proposes, is a *historical* creation that depends on the birth of the white nation. The internal strife that surfaces for the black subject is predicated by how one views the external dividing line – the veiled hyphen attached to double consciousness – and one's awareness of the need to negotiate "the vast problems of race and social condition" (ibid: 14). This (raced) individual situation, coupled with the sociohistorical conditions that create what Du Bois identifies as a "handicapped" people, mirrors the nation's and the black subject's peculiar problems and limits (ibid: 9).

Whereas "The Forethought" in *Souls* works as the foresight, the foreknowledge that prompts the othered world to excavate the meaning of living in the color-line while living and striving for something else, the subsequent chapter, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," introduces an augmented afterthought, a double consciousness that responds to American ideologies that distort blackness. Du Bois's well-formulated and reasoned answer to this situation is propelled, as he adds in *Dusk of Dawn*, by adopting "the designation 'Negro' for the race to which I belong" (W. Du Bois 1997: 100). But Du Bois's reception to the Negro category is not simply locked in the color of blackness. It calls attention to the deployed meaning of Negro, as insisted in his seminal article from 1898, "The Study of Negro Problems." There, Du Bois argued that an adequate – if not an intelligent and truthful – study of the Negro body is long overdue in relation to "the basis of a mass of theory" that adds sociocultural weight to (black) phenotype and the ways that "physical unlikeness" is utilized for political value (W. Du Bois 2000a: 25). Yet Du Bois is keenly aware that "race and race mixture in America" is under-studied. There is "nothing unusual about this [American] interracial history," he states. "It has been duplicated thousands of times; but on the one hand, the white folk have bitterly resented even a hint of the facts of this intermingling; while black folk have recoiled in natural hesitation and affected disdain in admitting what they know" (W. Du Bois 1997: 103–4).

The intimacy of what black and white America knows resonates with what brown America knows about questions of *mestizaje* – mixture – and the hierarchical value not of mixed brownness, mixed Indianness, or mixed whiteness. Simply: the guiding general concept is, as Cherríe Moraga succinctly observes in her essay "La Güera" (The Fair One), "No one ever quite told me this (that light was right), but I knew that being light was something in my family (who were all Chicano with the exception of my father)" (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983: 28). As Moraga alludes to the unarticulated, but inherently known convictions of her household regarding whiteness, there is, simultaneously, an explicit view of what can be identified as an inhabited raced category that is classed. Chicana and Chicano thus become the signifiers for fieldwork and manual labor, as in "'braceros,' or 'wet-backs'" (ibid: 28). These categories, while inflated with racial darkness, as it were, can be altered and corrected through economic and

racial mobility. Lower-class darkness maintains its dark tone at the field, so to speak, though the raced subject, through class inequality, must be overcautious in guarding the navigable elements of a dark brown complexion.

In his first autobiography, Richard Rodriguez devotes a chapter to Mexican preoccupation with dark brownness. Blackness, a synonym of darkness, is a silenced marker. It is easier to lighten darkness than it is to "shed" blackness. Calling the fourth part of his book "Complexion," Rodriguez fluctuates between related parenthetical and non-parenthetical admissions. He declares in his introductory paragraph: "My complexion is dark. (My skin is brown. More exactly, terra-cotta in sunlight, tawny in shade. I do not redden in sunlight. Instead, my skin becomes progressively dark; the sun singes the flesh)" (R. Rodriguez 1983: 113). Like Moraga, the motif of lower-class darkness operates also in Rodriguez's narrative. He writes:

> My mother would see me come up the front steps. She'd wait for the screen door to slam at my back. "You look like a *negrito*," she'd say, angry, sorry to be angry, frustrated almost to laughing, scorn. "You know how important looks are in this country. With *los gringos* looks are all that they judge on. But you! Look at you! You are so careless!" Then she'd start in all over again. "You won't be satisfied till you end up looking like *los pobres* who work in the fields, *los braceros*." (Ibid)

The fear of blending into *lo negro* exposes a personal and familial dread evolving around the fear of being deprived of white-like benefits that are organized along racial and economic lines. As Langston Hughes mentions in *The Big Sea*, "On many sides, the color-line barred your way to making a living in America" (L. Hughes 1993: 86). The reminder that Rodriguez looks like a *negrito* elucidates the employment of this problematic diminutive of negro. It is made strategically smaller. Through a mother's loving tongue, *negrito* does not offend. Applying negro instead of *negrito* would otherwise seem more direct and irrevocable. Rodriguez recreates another poignant moment, where (racial) dirtiness can be washed and contained. "My mother would grab a towel in the kitchen and rub my oily face sore when I came in from playing outside. 'Clean the *graza* off of your face!' (*Greaser*!)" (R. Rodriguez 1983: 119). Rodriguez sketches out his engagement with the politics of *lo negro vis-à-vis* seemingly secondary revelations. Though encased in parentheses, these disclosures are far from parenthetical. They are part of Rodriguez's dark brown, open double consciousness, affirmed in his third autobiography via the assertion: "I think I probably do. (Have brown thoughts.)" (ibid: 47). These brown thoughts – immediate first and second thoughts – allow the reader to take note of the author's break and continuation of an inner dialogue with the self, coupled with his outer responses.

Rodriguez proceeds to describe the different shades of his family, what in an African-American context is read as "colored" because of the variable degrees of blackness. In Rodriguez's household, the diverse spectrum of brownness is

mediated through the sorting out of a language that somehow exonerates culpable darkness. He states: "There was affection and a kind of humor about these matters. With daring tenderness, one of my uncles would refer to his wife as *mi negra*. An aunt regularly called her dark child *mi feito* (my little ugly one)" (ibid: 116). The reference of *mi negra* (my black one) summons a possessive pronoun, where Rodriguez's uncle guards and contains his wife's (deprecatory) blackness within the familial and spousal domain.

Outside the home, Rodriguez is not exempt from the social deployment of racial slurs for dark brownness. He recounts an incident where strangers would yell, "Hey, Greaser! Hey, Pancho!" and "I pee on dirty Mexicans" (ibid: 117). An undesired dark brown complexion is best synthesized through what Rodriguez suggests, in his second memoir, as *lo indio* – Indianness. He observes: "In private, in Mexican Spanish, *indio* is a seller of Chiclets, a sidewalk squatter. *Indio* means backward or lazy or lower-class" (R. Rodriguez 1992: 14). Indian, Rigoberta Menchú explains from a Mayan context, means being measured between combinations of "very dirty" (R. Menchú 1994: 3), as was the case with her father, and "filthy" (ibid: 92), as was her case. The locations of these problematic dark and dirty Indian markers are what Anzaldúa introduces in her essay "La Prieta" (the Dark One) as the "images that haunt me" (G. Anzaldúa 1981: 199). For Anzaldúa's "sixth generation American" family of Mexican descent, it means examining the body from the moment of birth so as to privately wrestle with the meaning of what is detected before the racially unspecified body is publicly presented to the outside world (ibid: 198). Anzaldúa opens her essay with the disclosure: "When I was born, Mamágrande Locha inspected my buttocks looking for the dark blotch, the sign of the indio, or worse, of mulatto blood" (ibid). Anzaldúa's dark racial signifier in babyhood, as inspected by the elder matriarch, extends beyond the buttocks, as the family's worst fear is confirmed. Later, Anzaldúa's mother bemoans her daughter's skin color – "morena, *muy prieta*, so dark and different" – and instructs her daughter on the ways to maneuver the problem of the Mexican, Indian, and American color-line: "Don't go out in the sun . . . If you get any darker, they'll mistake you for an Indian. And don't get dirt on your clothes. You don't want people to say you're a dirty Mexican" (ibid).

Darkness is grasped as Indian, not as black. It is a secretive darkness of sorts, a problematic and undesirable one that can only be known and recognized through Indianness. Yet, as Cherríe Moraga notes in *The Last Generation*, "in this country, 'Indian' and 'dark' don't melt" (C. Moraga 1993: 57). The Negro problem, in Du Boisian singular or plural terms, may not be dealt with truthfully, critically, and intelligently, as Du Bois himself prompted in venues such as sociology, political science, autobiography, fiction, and journalism. It is suppressed into dark Indianness. The politics of blackness are indeed present in how Chicananess, Chicanoness, Latinaness, and Latinoness are initially understood within the realm of the familial and then modified outside the household. Anzaldúa is first measured in the domestic realm. Her double consciousness follows as one that is sorted out through the internal values along racial lines and gendered alliances.

In the eyes of her mother, she admits, and "in the eyes of others I saw myself reflected as 'strange,' 'abnormal,' 'QUEER.' I saw no other reflection" (G. Anzaldúa 1981: 199). Unlike Du Bois, the measuring of Anzaldúa's dark brown self does not come by way of the other (white) world. Her open double consciousness, despite being bordered through the confines of the female household, first conceives itself outside repressive matriarchal limitations. In showing her mother's response to having a *prieta* for a daughter, Anzaldúa catalogs how brown mothers internalize the betrayal of *la raza* – the Chicana and Chicano race that, to summon Moraga's phraseology, "dissolves borders," since this identity can also be constitutive of "Quichua, Cubano, or Colombiano" (C. Moraga 1993: 62). In not adequately improving or bettering the race, Anzaldúa's mother offers the world another undesired dark presence.

Anzaldúa thus shows that the politics of the nation stretches out to the home. The reader sees how Anzaldúa's body – lacking in whiteness, lacking in a shade of tolerable brownness, and lacking in an acceptable form of normative sexuality – participates in a Du Boisian process of darkness that, as revealed in *Souls*, leads to "the facing of so vast a prejudice" that brings out "inevitable self-questioning, self-disparagement" (W. Du Bois 1996b: 10). Du Bois's color-line, born out of a material social context, applies to Anzaldúa, specifically at a time when, as Lewis Gordon describes in *Existentia Africana*, the color-line extends to "the race line as well as the gender line, the class line, the sexual orientation line, the religious line – in short, the line between 'normal' and 'abnormal' identities" (L. Gordon 2000b: 63). This color-line, intermingling with Anzaldúa's borderlines, demands national accountability and inserts a reasonable subject of color into unreasonable American systems that abandon people like them. The space that Anzaldúa molds, the borderlands, thus counts as its inhabitants: "*Los atravesados* . . . the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the 'normal'" (G. Anzaldúa 1999: 25). Alien consciousness is in tandem with an open double consciousness because it is mindful of specificities that counter the normative. In this light, the color-line and the borderlines cannot be reduced to the dividing line between distorted human and white society. Rather, what is emphasized is the thrusting of the human spirit into inhumane nationalist projects. As Du Bois suggests, the white nation also has a double bind. Although he finds that "The Nation has not yet found peace from its sins" (W. Du Bois 1996b: 7), by the end of his project, he strives for "infinite reason" (ibid: 217).

Lo Prieto and *Lo Negro*: The New World and the Human Spirit of Blackness

Du Bois grounds the black human spirit to both the United States and the New World. Stepping outside the confines of white America, Du Bois asks in *Souls*:

> Your country? How came it yours? Before the Pilgrims landed we were here. Here we have brought our three gifts and mingled them with yours: a gift of story and song – soft, stirring melody in an ill-harmonized and unmelodious land; the gift of sweat and brawn to beat back the wilderness, conquer the soil, and lay the foundations of this vast economic empire two hundred years earlier than your weak hands could have done it; the third a gift of the Spirit. (W. Du Bois 1996b: 214)

Du Bois's three gifts invoke Christopher Columbus's three ships – the *Pinta*, the *Niña*, and the *Santa María* – that led to back-and-forth migrations of subsequent slavery. He solidifies, if not indigenizes, the presence of blacks in the Americas from the time of the conquest. Du Bois speaks to a necessary investigation of the hierarchical structures that inform and uphold US hegemony and the reliance on immigrant labor, from which this country has benefited "before the Pilgrims landed." The illegitimate inhabitant of the New World, in this sense, is not the Negro but the erroneous legitimization of America at the expense of transported peoples, whom, in the context of the mid-twentieth century, Du Bois later references, in his last autobiography, as "The Pawned Peoples" (see ch. 3 in W. Du Bois 1997: 22–8). Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*, much like Du Bois's *Souls*, seeks "a grain of truth" from white America (W. Du Bois 1996b: 1). She instructs the nation: "Admit that Mexico is your double, that she exists in the shadow of this country, that we are irrevocably tied to her" (G. Anzaldúa 1999: 108). Knowing that there cannot be an adequate response from a white population resistant to what Anzaldúa lists as "the breaking down of paradigms [that] depend on the straddling of two or more cultures," Anzaldúa strives for a "massive uprooting of dualistic thinking" (ibid: 102).

The equation in this dualistic thinking cannot be presented as American plus something else. It is the inevitable development of where brown, in the dark Indian sense, meets black, in all its brown – "colored" – manifestations. For Anzaldúa, black and brown existence, complex realities, and what she calls "life in the shadows" are put in the service of revisioning, rearticulating, and recontextualizing dominant distortions of those on the margins (ibid: 19). She notes: "There is an exhilaration in being a participant in the further evolution of humankind, in being 'worked' on. I have the sense that certain 'faculties' – not just in me but in every border resident, colored or non-colored – and dormant areas of consciousness are being activated, awakened" (ibid: 19). The "peculiarity" that Anzaldúa works on activates, strives for, and lives through a critical consciousness of what comprises or should constitute the human. The alien, then, is not from the outer world. It is a product of the national home and emerges from within, from the guiding ideologies that comprise the nation. These belief systems contribute to processes of "alienization," where variations of national, racial, and cultural marginalizations signify not so much resistance to assimilation or acculturation. Alienization points to a greater awareness that surfaces because of the distorted locations of a denied humanity.[12] For Anzaldúa, it is a state of drawing on sociopolitical distortions, where in her estimation, "I

felt alien, I knew I was alien," and initiating an alien consciousness that supplements an open double consciousness (ibid: 65).

A pressing concern of which Du Bois was developing a critique in 1903 – "What shall be done with Negroes?" – persists as an incitement to the inhabitants of the permeable color-lines and the porous borderlands (W. Du Bois 1996b: 14). The question – in black, brown, and combinations thereof – becomes: What shall be done with this imposing American present that still necessitates contemptuous narratives of blackness (in African American, Latina, and Latino forms) to elevate a hegemonic set of white folk?

On the Road with Mosquito: Where the Ugly and the Co(s)mic Intersect

If double consciousness and the borderlands separately indicate the forging of black and brown discourses, Gayl Jones's *Mosquito* (1999) documents a previously muted world of Latinas, Latinos, and blacks in relation to the US–Mexico border and double consciousness. Jones stakes out an emergent ground that aligns the nuances and experiences of how lives and theories intersect among the Americas – expanding on the notions of what blackness and brownness constitute.

Jones's undertaking magnifies the problems of the color-line to the intersection of borderlines through the contours of ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, religion, migration, and class. These borderlines are confronted through the meanings, alliances, and transformations of blackness at the end of the twentieth century. *Mosquito* recreates and repositions the task of Du Bois's "Gentle Reader" in *Souls* as making sense of dominant approaches to a dehistoricized and deracialized multicultural America. Jones's America initiates a dialogue where New World identities are not limited to facile and rigid positions and expectations of being black, Latina, or Latino. Situated lives – and not "inhabited" ethnoracial categories – solicit responses from the America Jones's protagonist calls an "experiment" (G. Jones 1999: 79). This experimental America relates to the multiple Americas that are not only written about, but also lived. *Mosquito* urges us to take note of the ways that (brown) borders are articulated as they also interact with a (black) double consciousness.

Mosquito carries undocumented migrants *within* US borders – converting the Gentle Reader to Gentle Listener as well as Gentle Border Crosser. The reader, listener, and border crosser must be patient with the digressions of the novel and engage in intertextual movement echoing the non-linear, uneven, and complicated existence of neocolonial subjects. Just as Mr. Talliaferro in William Faulkner's *Mosquitoes* believes that "Conversation – not talk" centers on "admitting as many so-called unpublishable facts as possible about oneself," so too does the amassed knowledge of Jones's *Mosquito* – presenting multi-varied approaches to storytelling (W. Faulkner 1997: 9–10).

Jones proposes a reconceptualization of Latin American border crossings, building on undocumented migrations as part of "the new Underground Railroad." Contemporary migrations to the United States function as part of a sanctuary movement for Mexican refugees, and by extension, immigrants from throughout the Americas. The sanctuary movement referred to a religious and humanitarian effort during the 1980s that assisted certain Central Americans in entering the United States without documentation. Supporters would shelter Central Americans from deportation by US immigration authorities, under the belief that these migrants fled persecution, torture, and death due to US support of repressive governments in this region. The political activism of Mosquito, the main character whose full name is Sojourner Nadine Jane Johnson, shows historical parallels with black women's activists like Sojourner Truth (1797–1883). Truth, a former fugitive slave, linked abolitionism and feminism in struggles for black women's emancipation from the authority of black men and the dominion of white supremacy.

Mosquito renders undocumented migrations the product of both US economic exploitation and foreign intervention. From the beginning, Mosquito informs us that she used to haul "electronics, apparel, [and transport] for the shrimping industry" (G. Jones 1999: 1). Jones affiliates the novel's narrator with the labor of "illegal aliens" through the commodification of transported goods, as Mosquito carries ("illegal") people – that is, workers who assemble electronics and clothes. The interconnection with illegal aliens becomes more definitive as Mosquito aids Maria Barriga, a pregnant, "twentyish woman with longish black hair" gain sanctuary in the United States (ibid: 26). Mosquito, a truck driver, or an "independent contractor" who does not "give orders" or "take them" (ibid: 31), facilitates the Mexican woman's migration. Her actions signify more than extending a helping hand to secure Maria's entry into the first world. A connection between Mosquito and Maria is established, particularly as Mosquito declares astonishment at seeing "One of them dark-skinned Mexicans, not them televised Mexicans or even them Mexican movie stars, though I seen me some true Mexicans on a soap opera once, and hair as kinky as mine" (ibid: 29). Jones decodes the tendency by mainstream Mexican cultural producers to privilege whiteness, Hollywood style, and to distort the racial complexities of that nation by exporting those images. The reductionist dyad that indigenous mixed with Spaniard equates *mestiza* and *mestizo* is rewritten by accentuating its corresponding blackness.

Maria, Mosquito continues, "look[s] as much Indian as Mexican though and maybe even a little bit Chinese, but them Mexicans they's supposed to be the cosmic race. Like all the talk about multiculturalism. We's just a cosmic race. 'Cept nobody want to identify with the African in the cosmos" (ibid: 27). Mosquito proceeds to reference bitingly Vasconcelos' notion of "the comic race" (ibid: 120). In underscoring the tensions in the cosmic race, Mosquito departs from a rhetoric that motions a new (Mexican and Latin American) humanity at the expense of (brown, "Latino") darkness and ("African-American") blackness.

Forming continuities and disjunctions with US racial discourses, Mosquito goes "beyond" the black and white binary by relocating these polar oppositions from within. Mosquito strives to record how women of color, across racial, economic, and national lines, dialogue with one another. This dialogue does not only occur within the United States; it is a hemispheric exchange. Mosquito pronounces: "we's all Americans. We's the Americas, so we's all Americans" (ibid: 28). Jones echoes José Martí – poet, essayist, and chronicler of political, social, and literary events, as well as three-time delegate of the Cuban Revolutionary Party (1892–5) – where in his momentous essay "Our America" he announces: "Nations that do not know each other should quickly become acquainted" (J. Martí 1999: 111). Such international acquaintance begins with women; Jones engenders a border consciousness.

If blackness is, as Fanon suggests in *The Wretched of the Earth*, a characterization signifying subhuman status, Mosquito's blackness is then the *human* premise that questions the traditional ways of knowing, seeing, doing, and being. Blackness functions as a transgressive commonality for those who live in the United States due to the desperate economic and life-threatening situations that have brought them there. *Mosquito*'s transgressive commonality plays with the ways through which black and brown impurities meet. US blackness, Patricia Williams has observed, "has always represented the blemish, the uncleanliness, the barrier separating individual and society" (P. Williams 1991: 198). The deployment of brown for Mexican, Chicana, and Chicano populations is not far removed from the pejorative distinction that underscores pure, sanitary whiteness. Rodriguez states: "No adjective has attached itself more often to the Mexican in America than 'dirty' – which I assume gropes toward the simile 'dirt-like,' indicating dense concentrations of melanin" (R. Rodriguez 2002: xii). Jones implies that (impure) brown migrations to the United States do not only interact with whiteness. *Mosquito* reconfigures how black and brown dirtiness meet; how this transnational untidiness looks; and how these two disheveled black and brown presences speak.

Since Mosquito is a truck driver with an auditory memory who speaks in black vernacular as well as Spanglish, she may be regarded as an "unreliable narrator" (G. Jones 1999: 474). Mosquito's multiple stories connect – transnationally and diasporically – with black women and disenfranchised groups. When recounting the "simple stories" of black people, they are strategically read out loud in the novel as an act of collective memory, or remembrance (ibid: 437). This act of remembrance follows up on Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*. "My 'stories' are acts encapsulated in time," Anzaldúa observes. "I like to think of them as performances and not as inert and 'dead' objects (as the aesthetics of Western culture think of art works). Instead, the work has an 'identity,' it is a 'who' or a 'what' and contains the presence of persons" (G. Anzaldúa 1999: 89).

Jones and Anzaldúa investigate the function of papers, documentation, and historical records. Black women in the novel – or most specifically, the Daughters of Nzingha, a black diasporic international group of "womenfriends" – are

affiliated with illegal migrations because they lack documentation. Membership requirements for the Daughters of Nzingha include: to "be seekers after knowledge, wisdom, and learning, including self-knowledge"; to "have the facilities to maintain an archive"; and to "have a long memory" (G. Jones 1999: 426). The Daughters of Nzingha's working-class worldview is a link between North and South as well as beyond these geographical points. Set in a south Texas border town, *Mosquito* remaps the US Southwest by interpreting Aztlán – an area generally associated with Chicanas and Chicanos – and refashions it, in a pan-American context, through the lens of black culture. *Mosquito* thus probes America's internal racial lines. In the "real" world, one could speculate that such exploration would look like a scene from a rally reported on in the *Christian Science Monitor*, where Haitian and Puerto Rican flags were interspersed, alongside "protest signs demanding an end to police brutality" (A. Marks 1999). To this announcement, one need also consider Ed Morales' claims in *Living in Spanglish*. Although his finding necessitates further elaboration, his point is nonetheless worthy of note. He writes: "Salvadorans have become the dominant Latino group in South Central, but are establishing Puerto Rican-like ties with African Americans in that majority black city" (E. Morales 2002: 217).

Jones concretizes the above points in literary terms and recreates a geographical and perceptual space that takes on the various ways that third world people are in discussion with one other. By forming a crossroads with the borderlands and double consciousness, *Mosquito* provides a viable lens, if not model, by which to relate the borderlands to multiple border consciousnesses that bring everyday signifying practices of the border to "informal" non-academic settings. Jones amplifies our understanding of the borderlands and double consciousness by carrying out the pluralities of these concepts to corollaries that lead them to additional points of convergence. The borderlands and double consciousness are thus rehoused with new memories – or, "the stories of our consciousness," as Leila Ahmed deems them (L. Ahmed 1999: 15) – new passages, loss, and remembrances not necessarily replacing or competing with "old" black and brown experiences, but engaging with occupants reshaping what has been cited elsewhere as "America as a living border" (Flores and Yúdice 1993).

Discursive Realities, Interwoven Trajectories

The shifting of plural identity negotiations, coupled with the identification of multiple oppressions as tools for social change, allow black and brown populations to labor collectively and critically to disseminate a wide variety of practices that question notions of self, origin, home, nation, and distance. This "coming together" of double consciousness and the borderlands, more than familiarizing and synthesizing these concepts, reshapes the ways that black, Latina, and Latino lives remain falsely segregated in black, Latina, and Latino intellectual and cultural thought, even though their everyday interchanges do not reflect such

interpretations. It is imperative to expand the efforts of US-based cultural workers like Jones, whose novel serves as a starting orientation toward an understanding of New World differences not so much as oppositional, but as relational.

Darlene Clark Hine has observed that "the rapid proliferation of knowledge" in African-American Studies requires institutional flexibility to "develop new courses, experiment with different methodologies, and adopt nontraditional texts, just as quickly as new knowledge is being produced" (D. Hine 1997: 11). While border theory and double consciousness are not necessarily new sites of knowledge and cultural production, their merging needs to be further explored and broadened so as to give legitimacy to the diasporic dimensions and implications of these theoretical contributions. The intent, of course, is not to universalize these concepts, but to bring together a comprehensive approach, interdisciplinary objectives in Afro-Latino Studies, that span and bridge the wider landscape of "the Americas" – the Caribbean as well as North, Central, and South America.

Notes

1 Although interconnections between black and brown populations may be presently evolving from the US side, cultural workers from the Hispanophone Americas have engaged with the seemingly distant, and hence unrelatable, diasporas of the Anglophone and Francophone black Atlantic. Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén grounded a necessity to advance Latin American literary practices – *vis-à-vis* an exchange linking Latin American and US socioeconomic and political struggles – in works such as "Little Rock," "The Governor," and "School Work." Guillén, as a public intellectual poet, illustrated a Pan-African and Pan-American consciousness at work through the evocation of a Marxist-Cubanized *Négritude* poetic form that also manifests alliances with activists and praxis intellectuals such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Angela Davis. His homage to the latter, in the poem "Angela Davis," operates as an open letter to Davis employing a "let's talk about life" conversational tone that conceptualizes and grounds its urgency from radio and newspapers so as to address the problems of the time (N. Guillén 1972: 187). Guillén's black and brown exchange debunks the Cuban proverb of being "juntos pero no rebueltos" (together but never mixed). This proverb is cited in Flor Fernandez Barrios's (1999) autobiography. Barrios points out that, despite its claims to the contrary, Cuban society was still affected by segregation after the 1959 revolution. She comments: "I was aware that the Revolution, with its promises for equality, had not changed the attitudes of whites towards blacks much. In school, the idea that all people were equal was pounded into our heads, but outside things were different. The Cuban proverb juntos pero no rebueltos (together but never mixed) was as real as black beans and rice. Even when all the restrictions on blacks had been removed, white Cubans would still think twice before they sat next to a black person on the guagua" (ibid: 84).
On the US side, Tanya Katerí Hernández has identified the following moments of black and brown political alliance: "the successful 1983 Chicago election campaign of Harold Washington for mayor; the Los Angeles bus riders' strike; the creation of the Figueroa Corridor Coalition for Economic Justice in Los Angeles; joint projects of Puerto Rican community groups in the Bay Area of San Francisco and Oakland with the Black Panther Party and other Black organizations; the Young Lords alliance with the Black Panthers and the formation of the Rainbow Coalition" (T. Hernández 2003: n. 10). These moments of coalition building support Roberto

Rodríguez-Morazanni's comments on the ways that, from the 1940s onward, blacks and Puerto Ricans experienced "unemployment, housing discrimination, police brutality, racial violence, and racial devaluation via academic and popular portrayals" in cities such as Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, and Trenton (R. Rodríguez-Morazanni 1998: 145). Rodríguez-Morazanni finds that "much of the literature of the 1960s and 1970s in the social sciences concerning Puerto Ricans compares and contrasts their situation with that of African Americans." While Puerto Ricans may be incorporated into certain discussions on blackness, a dominant US national grammar of ethnoracial, linguistic, and national difference positions this group, despite their US citizenship through the 1917 Jones Act, as un-American. In 1996, for instance, an inside-the-Beltway newspaper reported that, following a Puerto Rican pride march at the Capitol, Representative Luis Gutiérrez (D–IL) was harassed by a Capitol police officer (A. Stoddard 1996). The official instructed Gutiérrez, who was described in this article as a "native Puerto Rican who is a naturalized citizen [*sic*]," that he and "his people" should return to the country from which they came. The *Hill* retracted this inaccurate assertion a week later, admitting that Puerto Ricans "are American citizens" ("Corrections," *Hill*, April 24, 1996, p. 3). Juan Gonzalez, a columnist for the *New York Daily News*, relays the "un-Americanized" otherness attributed to Puerto Ricans. He notes: "I am perpetually amazed at the lack of basic knowledge that most Americans have about Puerto Ricans" (D. Barsamian 2000). Most recently, Ecuadoran American pop star Christina Aguilera sings about her first love, "a full blood Boricua," who "comes from a foreign place, an island far away" pointing to Puerto Rico (Christina Aguilera, "Infatuation," in *Stripped*). So that certain distinctions around Puerto Ricans inevitably signal a reinforced misconception of them as immigrants. In referencing this brief list of black–brown relations, I do not suggest that socioeconomic and political tensions among Africana, Latina, and Latino populations are resolved, nor that Latina and Latino attitudes about blackness have been transformed.

2 Literary theorist and novelist Arturo Arias has introduced a refreshing and rigorous interrogation of Central American cultural and political representations and the paradoxical cultural and political invisibility attached to Central American populations in the United States. This Central American invisibility is apparent within dominant Latina and Latino discourses and the US mainstream. For further elaboration, see A. Arias (2003).

3 Having served as an editorial intern at the *Nation* in 1995 and published various op-eds through Knight/Ridder Tribune News Service since then, I decided to test this magazine's intentions, after Shorris's appeal, by submitting an opinion piece. An embarrassing salutation accompanied the rejection. "Dear *Mr*. Claudia Milian," the note started, "The editors regret that it does not meet our needs at the present time. Thank you for thinking of the *Nation*" (my emphasis). The argument, of course, is not about time but relevance. As in: Are Latinas and Latinos intellectually and culturally significant – in effect, are they "needed" – in a US leftist present?

4 The Washington, DC-based NCLR first published this report in August 1994.

5 *The Philadelphia Negro* provides a precursor to the idea of black people as sociological peculiarities, and the idea of embodied blackness as a continual *American* problem. Du Bois begins chapter 2 with the passage: "4. The Negro Problems of Philadelphia. – In Philadelphia, as elsewhere in the United States, the existence of certain peculiar social problems affecting Negro people are plainly manifest" (W. Du Bois 1996a: 5). The multiple meanings of Negro problems here relate to the difficulties Negroes confront in Philadelphia, and to the ways the black population also embodies the sociological difficulties of this city. The reader begins to see the foundation of Du Bois's preoccupations, as later expressed in *The Souls of Black Folk*, through the study of the social environments of black people, alongside the political weight added to the signification of blackness.

6 Upon first encountering Towns, Princess Kautilya both asks and excitedly declares: "Ah – Are you English? I thought you were French or Spanish!"

7 *Sula* designs the community in "the Bottom," which is located at the top of a hill in Medallion, Ohio, as inhabited by residents like Helen Sabat, the daughter of a black Creole (p. 17); Dewey one, a "deeply black boy"; Dewey two, "light-skinned with freckles everywhere and a head of tight red hair"; Dewey three, a "half Mexican with chocolate skin and black bangs" (p. 38); and "white" Irish families (p. 53).

8 The list of racial terms Thomas defines, in alphabetical order, are: "*mi negrito*: my little black one"; "*morenito*: little dark brown one"; "*moreno*: dark brown, almost black"; "*moyeto*: Negro, black man;" and "*tregeño*, *tregeña*: dark-skinned" (ibid: 333). Although the last two terms are not amended in the 30th-anniversary edition of *Down These Mean Streets* (1997), I gather that Thomas perhaps means *trigueña* and *trigueño*.

9 Santiago's glossary defines *negrita* or *negrito* as "Endearment, little black one" (ibid: 273).

10 Anzaldúa explained in an interview that there is no clear separation in the interplay of the white, Mexican, and the Indian elements that inform her subjectivity. She commented: "I think that 'us' and 'them' are interchangeable. Now there is no such thing as an 'other.' The other is in you, the other is in me. The white culture has been internalized in my head. I have a white man in here; I have a white woman in here. And they have me in their heads, even if it is just a guilty little nudge sometimes. So, when I try to articulate ideas: I try to do it from that place of occupying both territories: the territory of my past and my ethnic community, my home community, the Chicano Spanish, the Spanglish; and the territory of the formal education, the philosophical educational ideas and the political ideas that I have internalized just by being alive. Both of these traditions are inherent in me. I cannot disown the white tradition, the Euro-American tradition, any more than I can disown the Mexican, the Latino or the Native, because they are all in me" (quoted in A. Lunsford 1999: 52).

11 Menchaca notes that in this hierarchical racial structure, "*Mestizos* enjoyed a higher social prestige than Indians, but were considered inferior to the Spaniards" (ibid: 63). As for blacks in Mexico, Menchaca explains: "Free *afromestizos* were accorded the same legal privileges as the *mestizos*. Because they were of partially Africana descent, however, they were stigmatized and considered socially inferior to the Indians and *mestizos*" (ibid: 64). Under US expansion in the nineteenth century, Menchaca comments "state governments prevented 'American-born' racial minorities from exercising their citizenship rights under the Fourteenth Amendment. Anglo Americans argued that the spirit of the Fourteenth Amendment applied only to Blacks and Whites and that therefore Asians, American Indians, Mexicans, and 'half-breeds' were not entitled to its protection." *De jure* racial segregation applied to non-white Mexicans who "were legally excluded from public facilities reserved for whites" (ibid: 287).

12 The following articulations of a denied humanity emphasize a particular humanity "of color" as a project that must be continuously planned, designed, and molded. This larger inquiry into the self assembles its awareness in relation to an alien consciousness. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon tells us: "Because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: 'In reality, who am I?' " (F. Fanon 1963: 250). Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* postulates: "I am an invisible man . . . I am a man of substance of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids – and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me" (R. Ellison 1995: 3). In asserting his invisibility, Ellison's protagonist – in relation to white hegemony and supremacy – asks, "What am I?" At the same time, *Invisible Man* also insinuates concerns like: "Who is that?" "What is that?" And: "What does *that* [blackness] mean?" Miguel Arteta's film *Star Maps* (1997), like *Invisible Man*, plays on the notion of Anglo familiarity with the "brown" or "black" subject. None of the Latina and Latino characters in *Star Maps* – Carlos, Pepe, Maria, Letti, Juancito, and even Cantinflas – have a last name, indicating that the United States still has much more to learn about "those brown people."

Some women of color, however, express doubt about notions of the "human" in relation to struggles along gender lines as well as social movements. For example, while Cherríe

Moraga aims to move beyond fixed modes of identity, she expresses uncertainty about the concept of "humanism" because the specificity of woman is subsumed. "The nationalism I seek," she contends, "is one that decolonizes the brown and female body as it decolonizes the brown and female earth. It is a new nationalism in which la Chicana Indígena [the indigenous Chicana] stands at the center, and heterosexism and homophobia are no longer the cultural order of the day. I cling to the word 'nation' because without the specific naming of the nation, the nation will be lost (as when feminism is reduced to humanism, the woman is subsumed)" (C. Moraga 1993: 150). Moraga references the relationship of women of color to the nation via subordination, low incomes, and minimal control of political, economic, and social resources. The insistence on the particularisms of "woman," Moraga suggests, allows for the investigation and reframing of normative, heterosexist understandings of race, class, ethnicity, "the family," and other national as well as cultural identity affiliations and concerns. Yet Moraga does not sufficiently interrogate further notions of humanity and its relationship to women of color. As Fanon argues in *The Wretched of the Earth*, colonialism's racist conditions and structures deny the humanity of native, enslaved women and men. Fanon's perspectives offer a framework by which to investigate the subhumanity relegated to colonized peoples. They become part of what Fanon calls the "social background" (F. Fanon 1963: 250). Men and women, in other words, are mixed with the natural resources of a colonized nation. Jamaica Kincaid further develops this premise in *A Small Place*, where colonized peoples become capital, "like bales of cotton and sacks of sugar" (J. Kincaid 1989: 36). As a native's body almost exclusively becomes a site for physical labor, some are compelled to question, in the words of Elvia Alvarado, "Could it be that we Indians are idiots?" (E. Alvarado 1989: 26). Needless to add, Alvarado offers a resounding "no" to her concern. Still, she presses the need for the recognition of her humanity, clarifying that: "We're fighting so that we, too, can share our nation's wealth. We're fighting so that we, too, can live well . . . Aren't we human beings?" (ibid: 27). Anzaldúa adds rather compellingly: "As a person, I, as a people, we, Chicanos, blame ourselves, hate ourselves, terrorize ourselves. Most of this goes on unconsciously; we only know that we are hurting, we suspect that there is something 'wrong' with us, something fundamentally 'wrong'" (G. Anzaldúa 1999: 67). Finally, Du Bois appropriately synthesizes dominant constructions of a hierarchical humanity either through US structural practices at home, or for capitalist purposes abroad, so as to justify racist structures and domination. As permanent outsiders, he elaborates, blacks are relegated to subhuman status. Whites claim not just humanity, but encompass what Du Bois calls a "super-humanity" (W. Du Bois 1999b: 21). The idea of super-humanity and its goals, Du Bois affirms, is rationalized thus: "everything great, good, efficient, fair, and honorable is 'white'; everything mean, bad, blundering, cheating, and dishonorable is 'yellow'; a bad taste is 'brown'; and the devil is 'black'" (ibid: 25).

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

Africana Studies: The International Context and Boundaries

Anani Dzidzienyo

Introduction

In this essay I attempt to elucidate some of the abiding questions that have framed my research interests in the Latin American dimensions of Africana Studies. In the process, I introduce some of the scholars whose work has contributed to the development of the field and make some suggestions for future directions. I offer here some working definitions: in the context of this essay, "Africana" refers to the entire African diaspora; "Afro-Latin America" designates all regions of Latin America where significant groups of people of known African ancestry are found. These include not only the obvious cases of Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Panama, but also Uruguay, the Buenos Aires region of Argentina, the Caribbean coastal areas of Central America, including Costa Rica, and the Hispanic Antilles – Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico (see P.-M. Fontaine 1980).

A useful starting point would be to pose the question: What are some of the perspectives on the relationship between Africa and the diaspora? Several scholars – for example, Leslie B. Rout, Jr., Vincent Bakpetu Thompson, Darien Davis, J. Lorand Matory, and Isidore Okpewho – have explored the complexities of the relationship between "Mother Africa" and people of African descent in the Americas. Vincent Thompson (1992, 1999) sought to examine Africana communities from the point of view of the diaspora in the Americas: how the slave trade contributed to the establishment, in the New World, of communities of Africans, as well as communities of people of mixed descent; and how their experiences conditioned their attitude toward the mother continent as well as toward the American societies in which they happened to find themselves. There were conflicting tendencies conditioned by both environmental factors and by an insight into the meaning of their degradation in the Americas. Consequently, a kind of Pan-African tradition was manifested in several ways: by an attempt to recreate the mother continent in the imagination; by the persistence of movements promoting African return and redemption; by an emphasis on a separate

identity *vis-à-vis* the Euro-American world which dominated every aspect of their lives; by religious expression and a desire to become missionaries to Africa; by a return to the continent individually or in groups; by intellectual movements that, from the second half of the nineteenth century, had as their objective the rehabilitation of Africa in every sense of the word, through research demonstrating the African roots of and contributions to European civilization.

Isidore Okpewho has noted the emergence of "essentialism" as a condemnatory tag to be attached to any tendency to see the imprint of the African homeland and ancestral culture in any aspect of lifestyle or outlook of African-descended peoples in the Western Atlantic world. He recognizes that those who chose not to go to Africa had good enough reason: if you had never been to Africa, it was just as risky to abandon yourself to the uncertain myth of a glorious homeland as to abide with horrors that had become all too palatable and familiar. But does "pride" in Africa necessarily imply an abandonment of the empirical reality in which one lives? Is it a question of direct formal contact with Africa? Should Africa as source, inspiration, not be perceived with pride – and without negating a specific national context?

Darien Davis's (1995) discussion of Pan-Africanism in Latin America identifies certain problems that complicate Afro-Latin American participation. The politics of racial identity represents the most formidable enemy of Pan-Africanism in Latin America. *Mestizaje* and color codes act as a bar to solidarity. Color consciousness plus an insistence on national identity, rather than any forms of transnational solidarities, have problematized Afro-Latin American participation in Pan-Africanist activities. This does not mean that Afro-Latin Americans have been derelict in denouncing racism, prejudice, and disenfranchisement. The work of Larkin and Nascimento has spoken directly to Pan-Africanism such as it has existed in Latin America and the efforts of some Afro-Latin Americans to be actively engaged in Pan-Africanist activities against the odds.

Colin Palmer (1996) has argued that demographic variation and the size of an Africa-descended population is a factor not to be ignored in American societies such as those in the English-speaking Caribbean and Brazil. But these populations do not constitute a monolithic group. Numbers *per se* tell us nothing about how people of African descent conceive of their Africanity in societies where Africa has been associated with slavery and a lack of prestige. It is thus not surprising that some individuals have sought to distance themselves from African roots and African-derived connections.

J. Lorand Matory (1999) argues that diasporas are studied as if things remain unchanged in the homeland, "as though time had stopped." Construction of original cultures and classical origins is always ideological, regularly subject to the changing interest of contemporary interlocutors. This recognition of changeability, then, is a critical aspect of the studies pertaining to Africana at home and abroad.

Having always understood that Afro-American/Africana Studies is multidisciplinary and international in its philosophy and empirical practices, and that

"Afro-American" is not restricted to the United States, I find nothing particularly new in recent discourses that envisage Africana as moving in transnational and diasporic directions. The opportunity to develop and contribute to a diffusion of such an internationalized perspective, in my case, grew out of the intersection of personal history and education.

"Africana" conceptualized as all things related to Africa – history, culture, people, ideas – has the advantage of encompassing both continental Africa and the African diaspora, with particular attention to the Americas' dimension of this worldwide diaspora. Africana Studies thus embrace cross-disciplinary interrogations of these interconnections, which in turn provide a framework for scholarly studies and general discussions. Africana in this usage acknowledges the continental African provenance, but does not imply any particular privileged status *vis-à-vis* the diaspora. By the same token, there is an implication that Africana studies is not interchangeable with diasporic studies, although there is an incontrovertible connection. That some scholars are increasingly moving in a diasporic direction from a North American base is a welcome addition, but one that does not necessarily imply a radical transformation, particularly for those who have consistently approached the study of Africa at home and abroad as a transnational and multidisciplinary project (see Patterson and Kelly 2000).

Increasing public acceptance of hitherto repressed Africa-derived, -connected, and -associated traditions, while evident in the Americas, has no clear implication for political participation and empowerment. It is the possibility of transforming the "nationalizing" of historical Africa into an engagement of African descents with present-day national structures that constitute a major challenge for Africana Studies in its interrogations of Latin American history, culture, and politics today. To the extent that American societies now accord national honor, public acknowledgment, and even public participation by members of elite sectors must be assessed in relation to benefits from these changes for Africa-descended individuals and groups who have been historically disenfranchised.[1]

Transformations in national attitudes are most notable in the area of Africa-derived religions in specific American countries. Thus the critical issue is not so much how salient the cultural manifestations are, but the extent to which they can influence political participation. Assessments of Afro-Braziliana, for example, that emphasize the importance of individual recognitions of contradictions in race relations discourses – recognitions that do not translate into group political action – constitute a fitting subject for further exploration.[2] There are complicating factors, of course. In the context of Brazil, we may ask: To what extent are Afro-Brazilians any more or less predisposed to organizing politically, in a political, social, and cultural context that invariably confronts them with the presumed inviability of racial politics? And, more generally, can the case be made (a) that every situation in the Afro-Americas is discrete and unalterable, (b) that historical dispossession and present-day political powerlessness cannot and must not be situated within a broader comparative framework, and (c) that the Civil Rights Movement and the emergence of Black politics in the United States, the rise of

independent states in continental Africa, African liberationist movements, and the emergence of continentals in the world arena, should be of no interest or consequence to Afro-diasporics who rightly resist any attempt to straitjacket all Blacks, continental and diasporic?[3]

Culture and politics, especially within the Africana world, are much less mutually exclusive than they are coexistent under specific conditions, depending on individual political ideology beyond shared blackness or racial solidarity, predisposition to political party activity, interest in and identification with a remote African past waiting to be recreated, or a more recent past of anticolonial struggles leading to the emergence of new nations in which Africans are major political actors.[4] Such desire for identification cannot be overestimated, especially on the part of Africa-descended folks throughout the hemisphere who continue to live in societies and polities of Black invisibility. The 1995 Minority Rights Group's volume *No Longer Invisible* was an important contribution in focusing attention on Afro-Latin Americans. The increase in availability of recent studies on Afro-Latin Americans is good evidence of the greater visibility of Afro-Latin America, which should deepen our analyses in Africana Studies.

Perhaps the reading and interpretation of all race relations/societal orders depend, to a certain extent, on a mixture of individual formation and a certain opposition to or support of politicization. If part of the agenda is not only to describe or account for the present state of Africana communities, but also to analyze and maintain an interest in the creation of the kinds of conditions that will enhance further analyses and search for amelioration in the predicament of Afros that, hemispherically speaking, can only be described as dismal, then the lack of political salience is an issue to be contemplated critically.

Rather than emphasize the overwhelming lack of receptivity that has greeted intermittent attempts at mobilized political activities among Afro-Latin Americans, a more heuristic approach would involve an effort at explaining why, under the gravity of the odds militating against identification with things African, demographic visibility or not, some of these movements emerged in the first place.[5] Kevin Cokley (2002) struggled with the problematics of Black identity. Troubled by the "essentializing" of blackness and the rigidities it imposes on individual action, he suggested embracing the ethnicization of blackness under which culture (rather than racial origin) would be salient for the individual.[6] It remains unclear how such ethnicization plays out within a historical and cultural milieu in which cultural nuances are attenuated, generally speaking, as far as individuals of unmistakable African descent are concerned.

The enduring negative perception of Africa and things related to Africa, and the disinclination, at times in militant form, to be associated with it, has yet to be fully confronted in Africana research and scholarship on Latin America. Although Africana-USA and Africana-Brazil dominate comparative studies, Afro-Hispanic America is more visible in the United States. When he published his comprehensive study of the political economy of Afro-Latin America at the beginning of the 1980s, Pierre-Michel Fontaine (1980) noted that Brazil,

perforce, occupied a disproportionate part of his study. The exponential growth in studies of Afro-Brazil since then is testimony to Afro-Brazilian prominence. But not even this increase in academic production has provided a clearer picture of the convoluted discourses on the slippery nature of Brazilian race relations. Surveys of households, census data, anti-discrimination measures, tentative forays into affirmative action, and disputations about affirmative action and quotas have the collective significance of forcefully answering complaints of the lack of data voiced in the 1960s, 1970s, and even in the early 1980s. Whether or not the field is any richer in its understanding of the Brazilian conundrum and the role therein of Afro-Brazilians is another matter.[7] The field has benefited in the past from observations and analyses of Afro-Latin America offered by North Americans and Europeans; missing here were reciprocal initiatives on the part of Latin Americans and Afro-Latin Americans whose socioeconomic conditions militated against such undertakings. In view of the increasing migrations from Latin America to the United States, we are likely to see more research initiatives which will provide a Latin American counterpart to studies of North American race relations undertaken by Afro-Latin Americans. A parallel development would be a more active engagement of continental African scholars with the Africa-Americas in critical dialogues and encounters. But neither the idea of such encounters nor the practicalities of their occurrence can be presumed to be tension-free.

In concluding his landmark study *The African Experience in Spanish America, 1507 to the Present* (1976), Leslie B. Rout observed that while Afros in Latin America and the United States were engaged in parallel struggles, Afro-Latin Americans were more concerned about acquiring inside plumbing and electricity; engagement with Black history and aesthetics was of secondary concern. Furthermore, he notes, hemispheric Blacks might come to recognize their shared commonalities before any Pan-Africanist linkages are contemplated. The delinking of the Afro-Latin American predicament and continental Africa implicit in this observation is surprising, for Rout appears to pull back from the path of his own analysis of the remote and recent past and the reasons for the Afro-Latin American predicament.

J. Lorand Martory (1999) has written about the "live" dialogue between Africa and the Americas, noting the conflicting images of African Americans in Africa – expectations of welcome, African misapprehensions and confusions about the varied complexions and status among Black Americans stretching the meaning of blackness for Africans. The presence of continental Africans in US cities in some measure can be linked to earlier transoceanic dialogues between West Africans and African Americans. Continuing cultural initiatives, matched, perhaps, by the presence of continental Africans in academic and other institutions and sites within the United States is evidence of active continental-diasporic relations. Dialogues have not always produced Pan-Africanist harmony, he adds, but they have produced significant transformations of identity and religious practices.

Patterson and Kelly recently observed that scholars were rushing to embrace the field of diaspora studies; Black internationalism, they noted, did not always come out of Africa, nor was it necessarily engaged with Pan-Africanism or other kinds of Black-isms. To those who have always recognized the complexity of Black internationalism, this would come as a great surprise (Patterson and Kelly 2000: n. 7). But perhaps implicit in Patterson and Kelly's observation is the idea that not coming out of Africa might obviate a continental African connection. Constructions of Africana thought and action that focus on political action might have their limitations, but it is not at all self-evident that the increasing emphasis on cultural issues and present-day cultural expressions provides any more of an answer to the African conundrum in the Americas. But, then again, diaspora studies, to which these scholars are "rushing," are not *ipso facto* incompatible with Africana Studies.[8]

Interest in, identification with, and study of Africana communities are matters of choice. It would be naive to assume that all people of Africa and African descent are naturally inclined to engage with this field of study. We also know that both historically and at the present there are many scholars who are neither African nor of African descent who are intimately involved in this field of study. It is precisely this kind of cross-fertilization that continues to excite some of us.

Configuring Africana Studies as an internationalized philosophical and intellectual enterprise has been an integral part of my research and teaching. A major advantage of this conceptualization has been to center Africana Studies and enable other disciplinary approaches to cross-fertilize with them. To have inserted Latin American issues (Hispanic and Brazilian) was an important innovation that challenged colleagues and students to broaden their perspectives on "Black America."[9]

In practical terms, the challenge was to create an intellectual setting which provided a unique opportunity for discourses that attracted a wide range of students who came to Africana Studies because of the distinct possibilities for border crossing and engaging with multiple perspectives pertaining to a broader conceptualization of the Americas and Africa. Perhaps the most remarkable result from the experiment is the emergence of a group of young(er) academics who work in history, political science, anthropology, and comparative literature, whose disciplinary specializations have been conjoined to Africana Studies.[10]

While there was no conscious or continuous discourse on the exigencies of geographical transbordering and internationalization, the very practice became an indicator of its epistemological commitments, which combined with the internationalized project by faculty and an intellectual environment in which Africana Studies was not a site for students merely to fulfill a multicultural requirement.[11] A commitment to interrogating multiple dimensions of historical tropes, such as the Du Boisian "double consciousness" in the other Americas, Cullen's "What does Africa Mean To Me?", the ambiguities and complexities of homeland

diaspora relations explored by Skinner, the significance of historical Black institutions and their relations with continental developments over the last century, and the introduction of texts from the other Americas, such as Abdias do Nascimento, Nicomedes Santa Cruz, Zapata Olivella, Manuel Querino, and Adalberto Ortiz, characterize the continuing growth of Africana Studies.[12]

Equally significant would be the coming to terms with Haiti, during and after the Revolution, in ways that conjoin Haitian intellectuals with continentals to help fill the gaping hole in the continent about the significance of Haiti for the entirety of the Africana project.[13] The foundational role and significance of Haiti and situating of Haiti in the center of Africana Studies and Latin American studies is an important feature of my conception of Africana Studies.

That geographical border crossing can only continue is both axiomatic and uncertain, precisely because of the uncertain times in which the institutional climate and support cannot be taken for granted. However, the multiplicities of philosophical and programmatic developments that characterize the field and the recognition of the interchangeability between center and periphery, depending on the political/economic situation, access to language, and the subjective resolutions of specific identities, fluidity notwithstanding, all redound to the benefit of Africana Studies.

There are obvious challenges, such as Ngugi wa Thiongo's original challenge for "decolonizing the mind," which do not require elaboration here. Perhaps in the next phase there will emerge multiple biographies, critical studies, and reconsiderations of historic actors, present-day political developments, and their import for Africana scholarship. That might very well be the path which leads away from the existing interminable discourses pertaining to what I call the racism scoreboard – more or less racism in the Americas, more or less authenticity, continentally and diasporically, the uses and limitations of cultural and religious expressions as impacting on the incontrovertible disadvantaged status of Africans and people of African descent, and, most importantly, the transformation of the findings from the above disputations to the African(a) pluriverse and other pluriverses, discussions that would recognize the pressing exigency for continental diasporic cross-fertilization.[14]

Recognizing the contributions of the pioneers in the field of studying the Hispanophone and Lusophone Americas, as a way of exploring the significance of their contributions, should inevitably inform the direction of future scholarship on the Afro-Americas. J. Melville Herskovists, Fernando Ortiz, Nina Rodrigues, Charles Boxer, Gilberto Freyre, Manuel Querino, Roger Bastide, to name some of the better known pioneers in the field,[15] are due for reconsideration with a view to repositioning them within evolving discourses of Africana people's multiple vectors.[16] The major problem is not the paucity of sources but the difficulties of reaching even those sources that have been available. Frequently, the dreaded designation "out of print" has been applied to many foundational texts. Rout's *The African Experience in Spanish America, 1760 to the Present* (1976) is a

case in point. Within less than a decade of publication, it was impossible to find, thereby depriving a whole generation of students of the benefit of engaging with this text.

An approach that has distinctly important possibilities for contributing to the field is the conceptualization and production of studies focusing on transnational issues, thereby liberating us from exceptionalist considerations. By analyzing Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, and Puerto Rico as a unit (which does not in any way obviate the necessary recognition of individual national histories and developments), there is the possibility of interrogating *issues* which transcend national borders and provide a broader base for researching and assessing Africana in the Americas. The better known cases like Brazil and Cuba and the kind of scholarly and popular attention devoted to them for similar and different reasons is noteworthy.

A perennial difficulty is the unavailability in English translation of texts originally published in Spanish or Portuguese. To the extent that there continues to exist this serious gap, both sides are seriously disadvantaged. A practical solution to this problem would be the fuller integration of Spanish and Portuguese into the curricula of Africana Studies so that, from an early phase in a course of studies, students acquire reading and speaking knowledge of these two languages, thereby enabling them to engage more fully and more effectively with the broader comparative Africana world.

Are we then confronting a problem that is essentially mechanical or methodological? The answer to the question is decidedly "no." Preceding any methodological reason is a fundamental philosophical issue; that is, to what extent are the collective contributions of Afro-Latin Americans considered to be an essential part of academic inquiries and attempts to present a full account of Africa in the Americas?

Conceptualizing the subject transdisciplinarily provides an opportunity for raising pertinent questions and endeavoring to answer them. For example, by opting for an approach which focuses on the subject of Blacks in Latin American history and society, a choice of textual readings from history, geography, anthropology, and literature opens up discursive issues which help to pinpoint the intersections of the production in these disciplinary areas with historical and contemporary Black Latin America. A recurrent trope in this discussion is the extent to which the USA wields a disproportionate share of influence in all aspects of inter/intra American issues.

What is to be done about this imbalance? If the political economy and sociology of the production and dissemination of knowledge remain as presently constituted, it is axiomatic that any radical "transformation" in the production and dissemination of knowledge in African-American Studies involves a direct engagement with histories of colonialism and neocolonialism. Emerging discourses in lusophone Africa provide new extensions to the whole issue of colonialism, struggle, and liberation, and produce images of triangulation, which will complement existing discourses in anglophonia and francophonia. The end

product will be a new terrain for intellectual and political discourses, enriching the content and reach of African-American Studies.

When the dyad "dynamic" and "frozen" Africanity was postulated in the 1970s, there was no intention of suggesting a non-living entity which stood in total opposition to it. "Frozen" implied a certain absence of dynamism, a situation which could be reversed through active political participation. Such participation was contingent upon the availability of ideological and programmatic plans of thought and action. "Dynamic" and "frozen," therefore, can both be contained within any given order; they can complement each other. Frozen can be unfrozen through specific political actions. Hence, the recognition of historical, familiar links to the continent, as well as the negation of such linkages, neither fully affirms nor disavows the African connection (A. Dzidzienyo 1978).

In the 1970s, envisioning an international, diasporic field of study was perhaps best exemplified by the seminars, symposia, and conferences emanating from Queens College of the City University of New York (1973, 1975, 1980).[17] An equally significant yet relatively little known gathering took place at Harvard University in April 1973: "Black Brazil," which brought together Abdias do Nascimento and Guerreiro Ramos as the major articulators of theory and praxis on Afro-Brazil. In hindsight, the Black Brazil gathering could not have been more historic. At the 1977 LASA/ASA (Houston, Texas) panel, George Reid Andrews and John Lombardi introduced Afro-Brazil and Afro-Venezuela to an enlarged community of LASA/ASA. The 1980 UCLA Conference on "Race, Class and Power in Brazil" turned out to be another landmark, focusing on Brazil but invariably bordering on Afro-Latin America as a whole.[18] Outside Brazilianists interacted with Brazilian activists, specifically Lelia Gonzalez, whose insertion of the racial/class/gender mixture into the disputations provided a major breakthrough. Gonzalez became known to the world outside Brazil as the first Afro-Brazilian woman to combine political activism and intellectual engagement with Brazilian race relations as part and parcel of an internationalized system without according Brazil exceptional privileges. Her ability to communicate in Spanish, French, and English meant that she was able to participate directly in such transnational dialogues.[19]

A major challenge facing Afro-Brazilian/Afro-Latin American Studies is the need to expand the base from which Afro-Latin American articulators "take off" (both as activists and intellectuals), thereby preventing the perpetuation of a small coterie of individuals who are already inserted into the universe of non-governmental organizations with direct access to transnational organizations and their funding sources. The proliferation of NGOs and their work with specific sectors of Afro-Latin America should not become the sole measure of the role of Afro-Latin Americans within their respective societies. Transnationally, there is benefit accruing to the intellectual assessment of historical and present day Afro-Latin America. Afro-Latin Americans and their organizations have the double task of projecting their under-represented histories without falling foul

of the nationalist discourses that have functioned as national umbrellas and thereby rendering contrary discourses *ipso facto* as anti-nationalist (see R. Rodrigues 2001). All the rhetorical assertions and extolling of the talismanic qualities of race mixture and hybridity notwithstanding, there are new challenges to the uniformity of national integrationist discourses, offering an unexpected opening for deeper intellectual interrogation of the historic assessments of Afro-Latin America.[20] Critical as the tropes of dependency, internal colonialism, globalization, and new social movements are for explaining the Afro-Latin American predicament, none of them on their own has been sufficient to account for the riddle.

Ultimately, a combination of all of the above, bolstered by an effort to assess present-day access to and participation in the polity, will be the critical indicator of a dynamic Africana. That the migrations of people of African descent has continued apace and, in fact, increased dramatically, especially within North America, is noteworthy. There are possibilities here for further studies of the African-descent populations within the growing Latin American-descended populations in the United States today. The emergence, growth, and future of this population require and imply a (renewed) commitment to interdisciplinary, transnational, transpolitical evaluations, and re/evaluations of both the history and context of the actual relations within the population, including a fundamental and uncomfortable reality – the less than positive assessment of and identification with Africa, for whatever reason.[21] Not to want to recognize the connection to Africa, historically because of shame or anger at the negative associations of slavery, oppression, and distance from "civilization," may be understandable where individuals with limited or no knowledge are concerned. When such negativity becomes societal or national practice on a grand scale, it becomes a different matter. St. Clair Drake (1975) observed decades ago that throughout the Americas there are individuals disdainful of the African connection to their ancestry. Unfortunately, his insight is still valid. Thus, one task of the internationalizing of Africana Studies is to confront such contradictions. But Pan-Africanist identification and practice are not, as Kwesi Prah (1998) has eloquently stated, a matter of religious belief whose adherents meet periodically to renew their faith. By the same token, no program can mandate those individuals or groups to join it who are fundamentally disdainful of or opposed to Africana peoples.

In the matter of Afro-Latin American engagement with Africa, pride of place goes to Abdias do Nascimento, who has not only proudly and uncompromisingly maintained aloft Africa before it became either publicly legitimate or fashionable, but also battled for more than half a century to institutionalize studies of Africa in Brazil. No national borders, language barriers, or distances have constituted an obstacle to his commitment to propagating Africana Studies. The irony is that he has insisted that he is an activist who is not embroiled in academic disputations, whereas, in fact, his contributions to the field are immeasurable. From historical evaluation, to journalism, to theatre and painting, he has continued

to challenge those in the field to seek to transcend national and linguistic boundaries.[22]

A conspicuously weak link in the development and continuing evolution of the field in its international reach and outreach has been the paucity of continental African engagements and contributions. Literature has provided one of the few areas in which continentals' profile is readily perceptible. The late Josaphat Birkunu Kubayanda is a case in point.[23] On the whole, though, continental Africa's relative absence remains noticeable.[24] Arguably, the above lacuna is intimately related to the lack of centrality of the Luso- and Hispanic Americas and the intellectual formation of continental African diplomatic relations and commercial relations of independent African countries. Never having fully disentangled themselves from European colonial orbits and the Euro prejudices that inform their policies, the intellectual possibilities of the Luso/Hispano Americas do not readily emerge and become part of continental African consciousness. The very suggestion of the relevance of the other Americas, outside of the United States of America, is not readily acknowledged. What is particularly fascinating and ironic is the convergence of elite Latin American and continental African thought, or the paucity thereof on the marginality assigned to the relationship. A clear challenge facing the field, then, is the development of new models of thought and intellectual exploration that transcend episodic discussions of commercialization and massification of transatlantic, diasporic African music and styles to take in the much longer tradition of the celebration of the endurance of African religious and cultural traditions in specific areas of the Americas.[25]

Vibrant discourses about Atlanticism, hybridity, and essentialism can be considered as an expansion of the Africana conundrum.[26] Perhaps the two most conspicuous venues for outing the internationalization of Africana communities on a large scale are the World Cup and the Olympic Games, courtesy of worldwide television. How the field builds up on the implications of these images beyond the simplistic acknowledgment of the situationality of nationality (see, for example, the Polish, English, French, and Ecuadorian teams in the World Cup 2002) is relatively uncharted territory. Perhaps there is a good case to be made for the establishment of a major research project to illuminate and tackle the obvious and covert dimensions of the continuing evidence of internationalized Africana communities and their consequences for Africana Studies.[27]

To be a continental African studying Afro-Brazil and Afro-Latin America in the early 1970s made for a particularly privileged but no less complex position. Not "double" but quintuple consciousness is an appropriate descriptor:

1 The weight of having to account for "sending us here under the circumstance of slavery."
2 Fulfilling dreams and visions of a "Living African" from the "source," hence omniscient about continental African religions and cultural traditions.

3 A faithful practitioner of specific religious cultural traditions and, hence, the expectation of fulfilling an "interpreter" role.
4 The continuing living representative of the problems and degradations of the continent as relayed by the international media and its local outlets.
5 As an enigma who shares the commonality of blackness, but who can avail himself of specific advantages linked to language and nationality separate from those of Afro-Latin Americans.[28]

All the above notwithstanding, interest in continental African issues is routinely manifested in discussions across age, gender, and class lines in the African Americas. It has yet to be established that such inquisitiveness is perceptible on the other side. If the ties that bind can also choke, and sheer carelessness in handling an egg can easily lead to its breaking, there is, then, a pressing case to be made for constant reflectivity in Africana Studies.[29]

There are surprising occurrences which demand careful and consistent analysis. The Afro-Colombian child who had been called "Lumumba" in derision by her classmates in the early 1960s, and who learned from her mother that Lumumba was a very important African leader, subsequently showed interest in the concept of Africa and its significance in her own life education. This discovered interest in Africa led to studies of Afro-Colombia's relations with Colombia, the nature of racial and color exclusions among Latin Americans, and relations between Afro-Latin Americans and Afro-Americans-USA.[30]

A critical area of increasing significance for the field is Black–Latino relations. On the popular level, discussions focus disproportionately on the misadventures of Black/Latino interpersonal relationships, petty prejudices, and a recurrent trope, the great fear of being taken for an African American, with all the negativity that entails such a mishap. Ironically, perhaps it is precisely this fear which poses a major challenge for an imagined Pan-Latino community, by imposing or encouraging a response to color. If the project contemplated is one which is predicated on the maximization of coalition-building to strengthen shared political influence in competing against Euro-American power holders, the demands and expectations of such a political relationship would appear to be different from the individual relationship.[31] African Americans (USA) have shared common space, cooperated, and been in conflictual relations from Harlem to Florida.

The view of shared commonality on non-whiteness unduly simplifies complexities within Latino groups. An inevitable question arises: Why is a Black–Latino united group any more "natural" or more likely to produce positive political results than alternative alliances between Latinos and Anglos, or African Americans and Italian Americans? Attempting to answer these questions inevitably involves reexamining the history and nature of race relations and racial politics within the United States, as well as race relations and racial politics within the communities in Latin America where Latinos' origins are to be found. Furthermore, it does not sufficiently account for regional differences and national groupings within the United States.

Notwithstanding these problematics, the case has yet to be made for the inevitability of African American and Latino solidarity and joint action. Considering the multiple vectors within Latinismo, there is the need to examine the specific contexts of the relationship. Perhaps for those Latino communities with historical Black components in the countries of origin, the case would appear to be more obvious than those without such Black components. Such differences are real and have not disappeared or been rendered irrelevant simply because of the emergence of a Pan-Latino community. In the absence of readily identifiable leading voices from either side articulating the desirability for such union, without being blindsided by the specter of censorship from within or without, the subject has floated around. It is intermittently broached but never fully developed, either in intellectual or popular discourses. If Pan-Latinismo as idea and praxis is fraught with difficulties and runs the risk of ignoring critical internal borders which must not only be recognized but whose integrity must also be valorized, does any privileging of Black Latinos in the Black-Latino order run a similar risk? Can it be taken for granted that Black Latinos necessarily accept such a responsibility?[32]

Do African Americans and Latinos share a common political agenda? In the absence of a well-articulated political discourse on the history and future of common action and the diffusion of such positions among Latinos and African Americans, there is the likelihood of the propagation of assumptions without firm bases in either community. Africana Studies can make new contributions to Latin American studies, Latino studies, and African studies by focusing thought and analyses on the above issues (see Dzidzienyo and Oboler 2005).

Having always proceeded from an international base in which multiple languages and cross-cultural, transnational issues were considered imperative, and not having conflated Africana (intellectual) interrogations with subsets of existing disciplines (though the two are not mutually exclusive), the suggestion of Africana Studies suddenly stampeding into a broader diasporic framework is both puzzling and encouraging. The term "Africana," by definition, is connected to Africa. But let us hasten to add that this connection does not imply a prior set of advantages accruing to continental, as distinct from diasporan, issues. Nor can it be presumed that all diasporans necessarily choose to honor or be intellectually associated with continental issues. If there is an abiding cautionary tale from this particular purview, it is the need for a modicum of humility and circumspection, an avoidance of oracular-like pronouncements, and an appreciation of contradictions recognized as positive evidence of a dynamic and international pluriverse with a continental source but numerous intersecting or divergent branches.

An important development for the field at the present historical juncture – one which augurs well for the future – is the increase in source materials for research teaching and discourses. It appears less likely to be met with quasi-hostile interrogations such as "How come you teach 'Blacks in Latin American History and Society' within Afro-American Studies?" "Do you have enough scholarly mate-

rial for such a course?" "What is Haiti doing in a course on Blacks in Latin America?" "Are you not imposing US race relations paradigms on Brazil with a course title like: 'Afro-Brazilian Polity?' "[33]

There is, however, an enduring question: What is the role of "language" in Africana Studies? Since there is no ready-made solution, two arguments can be made. First, a language requirement could rule out students who might have become sufficiently motivated to undertake a study of the language as a result of their exposure or immersion in the course, subsequently moving into advanced studies with the language advantage. Second, even in the absence of a language requirement, students with such a facility have the option of reading texts in the language for research purposes or in sections of classes where discussions are conducted in the language. A long-term objective is the possibility of inserting continental indigenous African languages into Africana studies. That a young Nigerian undergraduate has produced a senior thesis entitled "Portuguese Yoruba Bilingualism in the Candomble of Bahia" is indicative of the historical role of language studies as living entities in the field. The kind of seminal work being produced by the Center for Advanced Studies of African Societies in Cape Town under Kwesi Prah augurs well for imaginative research and the need to break free from monolingualism.[34]

If the notion that Latin Americanization of the United States invariably augurs well for the quality of race relations (simply because such a process would introduce the more benign Latin American paradigm into the United States) were posited more as an interrogation than as a statement of fact, our discussions of comparative race relations in the Americas would be enriched. Latin Americanization conceptualized as a potential contribution with no guaranteed promise of amelioration of US race relations is a much more promising concept. At the minimum it provides a shield against the oversimplification of Latin American race relations patterns, which are being triumphantly transported across the border, ignoring, thereby, contradictions within Latin American race relations orders.[35]

Richard Jackson's work underscores a critical distinction between objectivity and subjectivity without in any way suggesting or implying that the only legitimate discourses about Blacks in Latin America are exclusive to Black articulators. His point is that silencing Black voices under a generalized nationalistic umbrella and its homogenizing tendency deprives us of a critical Black perspective. In addition to Jackson, the invaluable contributions of Marvin Lewis, William Luis, Roberto Marquez, and others (through the Afro-Hispanic Studies Association) have ensured a welcome continuing production of knowledge on Afro-Hispanica (see Jackson, Lewis, and Luis 2002).

Developing a critical perspective on Latin American Pan-Africanism, its efforts to participate actively in Pan-Africanist movements worldwide, in spite of enduring practical difficulties superimposed on ideological and nationalistic constraints, could prove heuristic in unraveling some of the confusions and oversimplifications which have crept into discussions of the Latinization of the

United States. Recognizing that there are no Latinos in Latin America, that not all Latin American societies contain significant populations of African descent who are automatically or invariably taken into political consideration by national or regional leaders, would make a fitting point of departure, compelling both serious academic analysts and casual observers to confront the variety extant in Latin American historical formation and its consequences for national identity prior to transplantation to the United States.[36]

That there does not exist a comprehensive list of distinguished individuals who can be readily summoned to exemplify the kind of pioneering "border crossing" associated with Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, whose personal efforts and collection resulted in the creation of the world's premier research institution for Black history and culture of African American-Latino relations, is a constant reminder of both past achievements and present and future challenges.[37]

A mediating role for Afro-Latinos, while possible, cannot be assumed to be inevitable given race relations' realities and practices such as they are in the United States. The ability to be either Latino or Black, or to be both simultaneously, is not self-evident, given its potential for destabilizing identity patterns in both communities. The intensification of racial consciousness over national identity arguably emerges as a consequence of migration, causing fractures within national groups. By the same token, that very racial identity, coupled with different linguistic and cultural signifiers, can also expose another set of fault lines among Anglophonic Blacks uneasy with non-English-speaking Blacks.[38] Herein, precisely, resides the need for internationalized Africana Studies to interrogate these contradictions; to include them in its articulation of intellectual musings, programmatic endeavors, academic exchanges, and leadership discourses; and the possibilities for translating the above interactions into subjects of meaningful political discussion. Successful internationalization demands more than merely bringing together representatives of internationalized constituencies. Overcoming historical prejudices, undertaking new ways of learning about Africa and the African connection, and the articulation of comprehensive programs of thought and interpretation which are conscious of the international political and economic order, replete with the contradictions extant, provide a more promising framework for analysis and growth than interminable disputations about the meaning of the term "Africana" for individual subjectivity.

Benedict Anderson's (1983) contribution to the way nations are conceptualized and discussed is incontrovertible. However, there are uncertainties in the application of the concept of "imagined communities" to Africana nations. If we take the example of Ghana birthed out of the colonial Gold Coast, it is clear that what transpired was not so much imagining a new community as the acceptance of a new name, of a historical national entity whose borders were not contiguous to the existing Gold Coast. Nor was there any expectation that independence cancelled out fault lines in multiple and sometimes conflicting political, cultural, and religious identities. The written word could not have been depended upon to connect Ghanaians. The radio, propaganda vans of political

parties, road transport, and commerce, paired with political activity, and the strong articulation of new identity formation based on concrete knowledge rather than imagination are, arguably, responsible for forging and articulating Ghanaian identity. If this "knowledge" and "proximity" were successfully transformed into an even broader common identity, once again, credit must be given to direct and indirect contact through migration, trade, and commerce.

Présence Africaine's 1973 special issue, "Hommage à Kwame Nkrumah" ("Homage to Kwame Nkrumah"), began with a tribute by Amilcar Cabral. There were no Ghanaian contributors, a reflection of political realities in Ghana at the time. Reconceptualizing from the vantage point of the present implies a serious process of interrogation of the original historic moment, and superimposing on it the benefit of scholarship and things produced since then would be instructive. In the middle to late 1970s, Nkrumah's rule, overthrow, exile, post-exile writings, and death were still subjects of disputation. Not enough distance existed between events and the assessment of Nkrumah. It bears emphasizing that three decades later there is still a puzzling reticence about tackling the Nkrumah heritage, comprehensively and critically. Was it Nkrumah's desire and tendency to cross boundaries (specifically, intellectual and political boundaries) that rankled? Interminable debates about his philosophical pretensions, whether or not he actually authored his books, whether or not he was fully committed to Marxism, or whether or not African "socialism" was a lazy way out of "real" socialism, wafted through the air. Even his Pan-Africanism was considered problematic because there was the suggestion that an active interest in influencing the course of political and cultural developments implied "getting out of place." An uncomfortable question may be raised: Was it really the case that Ghana of 1957–66 was an unambiguously Pan-Africanist country? Or was it more the case that Kwame Nkrumah was somewhat ahead of his time, both internally and externally, a difficult position to be in, almost guaranteeing a disjuncture between leader and his national constituency? That in the aftermath of his overthrow there was general incomprehension in continental circles, to the point of expressions of open hostility toward Ghanaians for their audacity in betraying the most palpable example of Pan-Africanist thought and action at the time, remains a cautionary tale. The lesson to be drawn from the gap between Ghana's Nkrumah, Africa's Nkrumah, and the Black world's Nkrumah is that political perception and assessment of continental and diasporic leadership is not necessarily contingent upon any more or less objective measurement of success or effectiveness of specific projects at the micro level, but much more on the assessment of symbolic and inspirational leadership. In this sense, the inspirational and the symbolic are endowed with an ontological and teleological value.

How well is Nkrumah known in Afro-Latin American intellectual and political activists' circles? When the African–Latin American world is contemplated and an attempt is made to identify those who have insisted on the continuing relevance of continental Africa to the historical identity and present-day political thought and activities of peoples of African descent, there is arguably no

individual who comes even close to Abdias do Nascimento, who since the 1930s has insisted on the viability of this connection both as an idea and as lived experiences which then reenergize thought. That there are not many like him is, perhaps, a function of what Richard Jackson characterized as the extra effort required on the part of those individuals who strove to identify and publicly and consistently articulate Africanity in polities and societies whose insistence on the exclusivity of national identity is only paralleled by the insistence on the lack of relevance of transnational identifications, especially where Africa is concerned. In the late 1970s, at a time when groups of young Afro-Brazilians, in a clear challenge to convention, sported well-crafted "Afro" haircuts or "Cabelo Black Power," listened to and displayed influences of Afro-USA – James Brown, Motown modes – an older group of well-known Afro-Brazilian musicians released a song which stressed that they were not "Africans," nor "North Americans," but "Brazilians." The easy slide into evoking African and/or North American identity as a criticism and anti-nationalism is recurrent in everyday situations in Latin America. This reaction parallels the more intellectualized variants as enunciated by Gilberto Freyre, stating flatly that "negritude" was of no relevance to Brazil, the citadel of miscegenation (R. Jackson 1998). But who is to say?

Manuel Zapata Olivella (Colombia), physician, writer, activist, whose interest in continental African linkages goes back to the late 1940s, when a young resident, did not consider pride in his Colombian nationality and culture as mutually exclusive with a clear recognition of African roots. His explorations of African mythologies and worldviews and their resonance in the lives of Afro-Colombians speak to both a historical and contemporary Africa.[39]

A notable direct identification with continental Africa is manifested in the identity and literary production of the Panamanian writer Carlos Guilherme Wilson, whose penname is "Cubena." The special position of the Panamanian of Anglo Antillean descent and the historical and continuing negotiations with history, language, and culture offer promising ground for further Africana research.[40]

What Klein characterized as the increasing interdisciplinarity of knowledge and border crossing becoming a defining characteristic of the age, irrespective of the definitions of boundary – from demarcations of science from non-science, to divisions of geographical and political power – can be appropriately applied to developments in Africana Studies. "Border" and "area" both apply to the term Africana. "Border" and "area" name fields of geographic location. They are also powerful metaphors of interdisciplinary study. They offer a comparison at strikingly different levels of scale. Area studies is border studies writ large on the map of the world – confronting common issues of critical mass, identity, and synthesis (J. Klein 1996: 101).

Rediscovering Nkrumah and his visions of Pan-Africanism as theory and praxis will help focus attention and intellectual energy on growing Africana

Studies and reenergize both boundary and area, geographically, transnationally, and intellectually.

It is to be hoped that the field will move towards postulating an Afro-Latin America whose connection to contemporary Africa is dynamic and active; a relationship that impacts both the dominant societies and Afro-Latin Americans themselves and that transcends symbolic religious and cultural universes to enter the political and economic realms. Furthermore, one looks forward to more robust interrogation of religio-cultural practices, and critical assessments of the consequences of "nationalization of blackness" and Africana for the totality of American societies. What are the political and sociological consequences of the emphasis on individualized mobility? What, especially, is to be made of an emphasis on agency that denies the viability of Black political organizations?[41]

After much reflectivity, there is the recurrent imagery of a Procrustean bed on which the conundrum of Africa in the Americas has been located for years. No matter which region in the Americas, no matter the size of Africa-descended people in the population of specific countries and societies, it has been difficult to break free of Procrustes because of an impossible demand: the only way to leave is to deny the limits to common nationality. But common nationality, articulated in public documents and in the public sphere, has never been a sufficient guarantor of equal rights and access to spaces for governmental participation, the abolition of prejudices and discrimination harping back to the earliest encounters of Africans and their descendants in the Americas. The critical differences in the efforts to bring idealized notions in line with empirical realities pertain to the extent to which contesting these idealized notions as not sufficiently reflecting existential realities is considered part of legitimate public discourse.

In all the Americas, Procrustean adjustments are perceptible. What used to be considered the template of the United States race relations order appears to be undergoing refitting. "Clarity," "binarism," is being adjusted simultaneously as what used to be considered incontrovertible virtue in the other Americas, the supremacy of unalloyed nationality which trumped all other identities, especially of the racial variety, though for some inexplicable reason race and color considerations were considered to inhabit separate universes. So, perhaps, Procrustes is dying, but the Procrustean mode still has life in it.

Far from this being a pessimistic view, I believe it provides a requisite framework for reconfiguring the relevance of Africa – complex Africa, not exclusively jubilant Africa or craven Africa – which continues to challenge and nourish Africana Studies and, by implication, other fields which intersect with Africana Studies. Perhaps the most palpable lesson from this discussion is that "No condition is permanent," as is said in West Africa. But, like all such sayings, there is a riposte: "Some conditions are relatively more or less permanent than others." There is an Africana research project in that.

Notes

1 See R. Moore (1997). The Afro-Brazilian (Afro-descendente) intellectual Muniz Sodré has observed that the ideology of whitening coexisted with "racial democracy" and that "racial democracy" was not about facts *per se*; hence, new facts *per se* could not change ethical suppositions. Conciliation and synthesis were roads to discrimination. Syncretism comes to denote pluralist harmony and hides discrimination.

2 In a twist on "nationalization," Sodré quoted another well-known Brazilian intellectual, Hélio Jaguaribe, who argues that there does not exist an autonomous Black culture in Brazil in language, syntax, and religion. Western culture was influenced by Africa with minimal indigenous influence. Any Brazilian can dance samba, from the most Germanic Southerner who eats Afro-food, upwards to those in the Northeast.

3 The "Americanization" tag is one which Afro-Brazilian movements and organizations have sought to avoid historically.

4 Identification with independent Africa goes back to the early 1960s. See A. Dzidzienyo (1985). On cultural politics and the politics of culture, see M. Hanchard (1994) and Minority Rights Group (1995).

5 In other words, why Afro-political movements emerge in the first place under hostile circumstances. See Minority Rights Group (1995), S. Walker (2001). Walker's concept of "Afrogenics" as an interpretive method, used by African and African diasporic scholars as a result of their roles as community members and scholars who bring fresh perspectives and who contribute to telling the full story, is a welcome addition to the discussion.

6 See also Nascimento and Nasciemento (1992).

7 The sheer profusion of publications on Afro-Braziliana is noteworthy. The era from the 1980s to the present contrasts sharply with the preceding decade, when the scarcity of data on race relations was often cited. Recent writings by Antonio Sérgio do Silva, Jacques D'Adesky, and Kabengele Munanga are examples.

8 Kim Butler (2001) discusses the need to develop conceptual constructs that address the specific concerns of African diaspora studies differing from a more generalized concept of Black Studies specifically focusing on the diaspora group.

9 Broadening perspectives on Black America by opting for Black *Americas* to highlight hemispheric usage of "America" has become more commonplace than was the case in the early 1970s.

10 New generation of scholars with roots in Brown's Africana Studies include Melissa Nobles, Ollie Johnson, Christopher Dunn, Rachel Harding, and Deborah Thomas.

11 Africana at Brown reaches across disciplinary units and surprising combinations of courses in an open curriculum.

12 For the meanings of the African connection, beyond Du Bois, Countee Cullen, and present-day articulations by Abdias do Nascimento et al., see E. Skinner (1999, 2000). N. Santa Cruz (Peru) was expressing "solidarity" with the South African brethren battling the apartheid regime in the early 1970s. See also J. Harris (2001), R. Jackson (1979).

13 The sheer invisibility of Haiti in political discourses from the Gold Coast to Ghana is impressive. The presence of individual Haitians such as Moirisseau Leroy at the Ghana National Theatre and Dr. Laurent in the ministry of health did not necessarily mean that there was a general consciousness, even in "educated" circles, about Haiti's place within the Black world. The 1958 visit of Emile Saint Lot, who was Haitian ambassador to the UN at the time, is a rare example.

14 That is to say, moving beyond the scoreboard approach of awarding points on the basis of "more" or "less" racism, in which the real issue of the roots and operations of race relations orders is not fully explored and their consequences for present-day politics, society, and culture are minimized. In this scoreboard approach the fundamental issue of the inbuilt advantages for "whiteness" are not fully challenged.

15 Such pioneers continue to be critical for Africana Studies. See P. Wade (1997, 1993); Torres and Whitten (1998).
16 Present-day contributors include Abdias do Nascimento, Manuel Zapata Olivella, and the ALCALA group. Such a direction does not imply any denial of critical differences, but simply draws attention to a broader range for interrogation beyond the better known courses of Brazil and Cuba. Abdias do Nascimento, Lelia Gonzalez, and Carlos Moore all spoke at Brown University in the early 1980s.
17 Queens College Africana Studies under W. Ofuatey-Kodjoe's leadership was a pioneer in organizing these conferences.
18 The Latin American Studies Association (LASA) and the African Studies Association (ASA) held a joint meeting in Houston in 1977. The UCLA Center for African American Studies organized "Race, Class and Power in Brazil" in 1980, from which emerged the book of the same name (P.-M. Fontaine 1985). Also present at the Harvard conference were Michael Mitchell, Michael Turner, Angela Gilliam, Pierre-Michel Fontaine, Jane Malinof, Anani Dzidzienyo, and David Haberly.
19 Gonzalez participated in conferences and seminars around the world at a time when Afro-Brazilian presence, especially Afro-Brazilian women's presence, was not a common sight.
20 Recent challenges to *mestizagem* as a panacea focus on the fact that *mestiçagem/mestizagem* neither obviated color hierarchies nor constituted a fundamental challenge to the advantages and disadvantages which redounded to individuals within specific race relations orders depending on their phenotype. See Wade and Smith (1996). What is the meaning of Blackness in a self-proclaimed mestizonation where the public enunciation of blackness or claims to African connection can be (mis)interpreted as a negation of nationalness? See England and Anderson (1998).
21 Circular migrations (from and to) of Latin America-descended populations are noteworthy. In circular migrations individuals become the bearers of crisscrossing influences between the homeland and the diaspora. Do Oboler, Torres, and ongoing discussions about Latinos in the United States contribute negatively to the changing race relations orders in countries of origin with their importation of American (US) models of race relations, discourses, and perceptions? See J. Duany (1998), S. Torres-Saillant (1998).
22 Nascimento's breadth and reach in the matter of people of African descent in the Americas, critical perspectives on the role of race in Brazilian and Latin American societies, and the creation of public spaces for diaspora and continental Africa discourses, is unique. He founded the Black Experimental Theatre in Rio de Janeiro in 1944; he has been a university professor, playwright, actor, painter, senator, and State Secretary for Black Affairs (see Nascimento and Nascimento 1992: 104–17). Pan-Africanism in our time should be an action-oriented, rationally engaging reality with the objective of changing the world. The challenge is to organize democratic institutions for the emancipation and development of mass society. Pan-Africanism has never been espoused as a tool for dominating others or for the political exclusion of non-African peoples.
23 See Jackson (1998: 169–70).
24 Recent continental African engagement with Latin America can be found in the activities of some scholars in Afro-Latin American literature. Josaphat Kubayanda (Ghana), Lemuel Johnson (Sierra Leone), Rex Amuzu Gadzekpo (Ghana), and Fola Soremekun (Nigeria) were pioneers. Recent contributors to the field are Femi Ojo Ade (Nigeria), Niyi Afolabi (Nigeria), Gabriel Abudu (Ghana), and Komla and Aggor (Ghana). Samuel Bodi-Siaw at Cape Coast University (Ghana) works on Brazilian-African relations.
25 See L. Sansone (1999). While this is an insightful book, consistent with Sansone's focus on Black youth culture and its transformations, it does not sufficiently address political participation and possibilities for political change.
26 See Law and Mann (1999). Also, J. Thornton (1992), J. Matory (2001), M. Echeruo (1999).

27 Not to put too fine a point on it, the emergence of continental Africans (as distinct from African descendants) in European football teams has yet to be analyzed. In the 2002 World Cup, for example, the fact that there was a Nigerian-born in the Polish team, a Ghanaian-born in the German team, and a Congolese-born in the Belgian team, provides an opportunity for research on nationality, race/color, and identity in the Africana world.

28 The challenges of continentals styling diaspora is due for an in-depth discussion. Several projects can be contemplated, starting with early twentieth century encounters. It must be noted that there has been considerable change from the early 1970s to the present. Salvador Bahea and other Brazilian cities provide examples of this change.

29 Continuing interest in Africa has been manifested by Afro-Latin Americans for as long as this writer has been engaged in Afro-Latin American research. "La Palavra" Africa, contrary to what I had been told, was not one to be avoided. Its frequent reiteration was an indication, perhaps, that Afro-Latin Americans related to the word differently in the presence of "Africans," which is not to suggest that all Afro-Latin Americans operated this way.

30 The Afro-Colombian Aida Redondo subsequently graduated from Brown University, worked and lived in Nicaragua, and pursued graduate studies in Brazil. Her theorizing of blackness in Colombia and in Latin America is richly informed by these encounters.

31 Black–Latino relations is a fascinating subject, one which needs to be clarified in order to avoid the pitfalls of rendering blackness and Latinoness as mutually exclusive. That there are Latinos who are both Black and Latino and who are pulled in both directions is testified to by several individuals. Such pull and push factors provide invaluable opportunities for critical interrogations of national idealized images of race relations and realities when Latinos are face-to-face with North American race relations and rituals. It cannot be assumed that all Black Latinos or all African Americans respond in a uniform fashion to the Black–Latino conundrum.

32 See S. Oboler (1995). Oboler's careful exploration of the connection between country of origin, time of immigration to the United States, the official "construction" of a "Hispanic" category, and the grassroots response with a "Latino" designation as variables in emerging Pan-Latino discourses and projects has direct implications for the way the racial factor (especially in relation to specific countries dealing with it) affects the position of Blacks within Latino communities.

33 I can personally testify to what I would characterize as the attenuation of "hostility" to the broad(er) conceptualization of Africana Studies, especially the insistence on conceptualizing America hemispherically, with no advantages for any of the components.

34 Ebun Ogunsanya is the daughter of a traditional diviner. Her fluency in Portuguese and knowledge of Yoruba religion made her a sought-after person in Salvador Bahia in the summer of 1970. It was unforgettable to listen to her in conversation with Senhor Eduardo Mangabeira (Eduardo Ilesha) in "Nâgo." By Ogunsanya's account, Mangabeira's ability to converse with her was unsurpassed. Though there were other individuals who could use "ritual language," his was very different. He kept a map of Ilesha in his living room, was the very model of generosity, and served as fatherly advisor and guide to young West African sojourners. See H. Capo (2000).

35 I am fully aware of the kind of hackles which are raised at the temerity of comparing Latin American to North American race relations. For an insightful take, see D. Hellwig (1992).

36 Who is Black in Latin America? It is a personal, political, and situational question with no fixed address. Changes in the political climate, social discourses, and individual consciousness all factor into the most tentative answers. It could be more or less safely averred that the Brazilian television personalities do not, to the best of this writer's knowledge, claim the "Afro-descendente" designation, just as no one seriously argues that Pelé is White. The antipodes provide a hint, but do not offer a full answer to the question. See Beltrán and Pollak-Eltz (2001).

37 For more on Schomburg, see W. James (1998: esp. ch. 7). See also L. Gonzalez (2001).

38 Misadventures are frequently publicized on websites, in newspapers, and stories of personal encounters. What is missing is a consistent theorizing (and publicizing of such theorizing) of joint concerns, modalities of action, and clear evidence of ongoing cooperative endeavors by both leaders and the general public.

39 Zapata, as a young resident, was summoned to the bedside of a dying continental African seaman at a Colombian hospital, who had indicated that he had final words he wanted to entrust to another Black person by pointing to and touching his skin. (Personal communication with Zapata.)

40 See R. Jackson (1998: 143–67), in which Jackson discusses writers who are active in South and Central America and the Dominican Republic. Kobina and Kwabena both denote a male child born on Tuesday in Ghana's Akan language. Kobla is the Ewe variant.

41 Olabiyi Yai (2001) argues that what is critical in the definition of nation in Africa and the African diaspora is not so much the place of birth as the set of values this place stands for, or the set of values invested in it by its conscious agents. "That is why Africans may claim or desire several nations without any sense of contradiction" (ibid: 252). Reducing the African concept of nation to politics (African *homo politicus* is a colonial construction, is his view) (ibid: 251), Yai leaves unresolved the issue of the consequences of belonging to the non-bordered nation for the political nation. Compare Yai's view to Prah's. The latter considers the primacy of African identity not as a negation of politics but as a transcending of politics. "The right to return belongs to the whole African nation, even if the majority of diasporans 'have no wish to return' " (Prah 1998: 105). While I share Yai and Prah's ideas about belonging to the African nation for global Africans, I believe that a more robust discussion of the empirical political and national implications has yet to be undertaken.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

Africana Thought and African-Diasporic Studies

Lewis R. Gordon

There are two fallacies that dominate much intellectual work with regard to black people. They are (1) the appeal to reductionistic experience and (2) the retreat to disciplinary decadence.

Reductionistic experience undergirds the study of black people with the credo of black people offering experience whereas white people offer theory.[1] The impetus for the turn to experience is not in itself insidious. After all, for a long time there was the denial of black inner life, of black subjectivity; the notion of a black person's point of view suggested consciousness of the world the consequence of which would call for dynamics of reciprocal recognition. Thus, it made sense to point out blacks' experience *of* the world, and ethnographic approaches to the study of black folk prevailed. When the question of philosophy emerged in the study of black experience, the result was the well-known appeal to "ethnophilosophy," the unanimistic notion of black collective philosophical worldviews.[2] There are, however, obvious problems with such an approach to the study of black folk *as the primary approach*. The obvious problem is experience itself. We have all had the experience, for instance, of trying to figure out our experience. In such cases, we seek the interpretive support of others: "Something just happened and I can't quite figure out what it was . . ." It is not enough to have an experience; it is also important to interpret it. If black experience relies on white thought, then the relationship would be one of dependency. Beyond the obvious insult of suggesting that black people should not *think*, such a view affirms, as well, a relationship of bondage, of epistemic colonization. What's more, to collapse black existence only into the realm of experience and to present white existence as the interpretive resource for its rationalization renders that existence a problematic one. It would be to effect the fallacy of which W. E. B. Du Bois warned in *The Souls of Black Folk* at the dawn of the twentieth century: Don't confuse black people with the problems they face.[3] It is important, then, to transform such relations by liberating blackness from simply the realm of experience and advancing a black role in the *interpretation* of that experience. Black emancipation also requires liberation in the world of ideas.[4]

The disciplinary fallacy emerges in two forms; the first is methodological. Method, Frantz Fanon observed in *Black Skin, White Masks*, is for "botanists and mathematicians" (F. Fanon 1967b: 12). By this, he meant that it is easier to develop a method when one is studying realities that don't think, don't feel, don't suffer. To study a reality that is also the studier requires questioning method itself. If, for instance, rationality is to be questioned, what is the status of the question if rationality can be held suspect? Fanon, like Du Bois, knew that the study of black people was often done without rigor, although the methodologies often appeared "valid." Something at the heart of method was missing, and it was often the radical questioning of the method itself. In characteristic irony, Fanon added: "There is a point at which methods devour themselves" (ibid). Could there be something about the subject matter of racism and colonialism that challenges the scope and relevance of the method deployed? Could racism and colonialism lurk at the level of method and the logic of that method ("methodology")? Is not such also a level at which we could also find colonizing epistemological practices? The disciplinary fallacy, which I call *disciplinary decadence*, is a consequence of such methodological limitation. Disciplinary decadence is the treatment of one's discipline as an absolute reality. On the level of criticism, it often takes the form of criticizing other disciplines for lacking one's disciplinary point of view. The tendency is familiar: Literary theorists who criticize social scientists for not being textual or literary; social scientists who criticize literary theorists for not being social scientific; natural scientists who criticize the humanities for an absence of natural scientific rigor; historians who criticize everyone for lacking historical analysis; philosophers who criticize nearly everyone for not being sufficiently philosophical. Relating to black people, and specifically the Africana Studies approach to their realities, we could see immediately a disciplinary reason for the difficulties faced by such study in the academy: Africana Studies challenges disciplinary decadence by demanding a rigorous *coordination* of methodologies. This is because, at least in the tradition that emerges out of Du Bois and Fanon, the focus is on the *problems* faced by black folk, not black folk as the problems.[5] Such problems include how black folk are studied, which makes every disciplinary approach suspect or subject to criteria that are not wholly situated in those disciplines.

A consequence of rejecting the two fallacies is the recognition of the importance of Africana *thought*. Before we look at such thought, however, it is important to articulate our general position on thought. The first thing is that thought needs genuinely to address its epoch. At the end of the twentieth century, much thought has been devoted to the conflict between its eighteenth and nineteenth-century legacies. From what is considered the failure of Hegel and Marx's legacies, Adam Smith is often advanced (eighteenth century) or Nietzsche is advanced (nineteenth century). Genuine twentieth-century thought was a rarity, at least with regard to theorizing the social world. The obvious exceptions include W. E. B. Du Bois, who saw the scope of the color-line and impact it would have on the formation of social reality in world politics; Max Weber, who recognized

the important role bureaucracy was going to play in the transformation of capitalism and socialism; Antonio Gramsci, who saw the cultural transformation of capital in his theory of hegemony; C. L. R. James, who saw the growing impact of massism on the conception of class and the need to theorize creative universality; Frantz Fanon, who saw the reflexive and constitutional significance of social reality and the dialectical role that would emerge between the semiotic and the material in struggles for liberation; and Sylvia Wynter, whose poststructural work brought into question what she calls the need for the human after man. A common feature of many of these theorists, among other noteworthy figures squarely rooted in the twentieth century, is their recognition of the problem of theorizing through a condition of fundamental incompleteness. Subject matters such as the human being and the social world are not such that one simply demonstrates a formula and goes home to apply it to them with the confidence of a closed affair. They require the complexity of negotiating one's intellectual resources through a multitude of theoretical standpoints. We see this happening today as uniquely twenty-first-century modes of inquiry emerge. Fields such as genetics and geography, or even physics and history, are going through transformations that require the utilization of insights from many other disciplines. The twenty-first-century thinker is one, that is, who works not in the humanities, the social sciences, or the natural sciences, but instead one who breaks down the gap between each of them and their subdisciplines. In such fertile terrain, the result is a renewed need for grand theory.

Grand theory has received a negative rap during the growth of positivism and postmodern theory. The former regards grand theory as too metaphysical; the latter regards it as metaphysical, essentializing, and totalizing. Both see epistemological limitations in grand theory; it is easier and safer and (in their view) only possible to know anything on a small scale. Now, we should bear in mind that there have always been thinkers who advance theories on the limitations of what we can know and on what we can do. The ancient Greek philosopher Zeno demonstrated that motion wasn't possible; another Greek philosopher, Parmenides, demonstrated that change wasn't possible as well. I have yet to see either's theories translate into our going nowhere or new realities not coming into being. We could think, as well, of the difficulty of demonstrating, by way of physics, the flight of the bumble bee. After observing the bee having done what has been demonstrated as theoretically impossible, a challenging role is left for thought in figuring out *how* the bee flew and continues to fly. Our times need more creativity for the initial intellectual work to emerge, and there has yet to be an instance in which great leaps have not required taking on that which is grand in scale and expectation.

Thinking grand in scale and thinking about thought itself are philosophical projects. We should, however, reject some of the clichés of philosophical thought, especially in its concrete social realities. Here, the prejudices regarding black folk tend to emerge in a peculiar way. For instance, when one thinks of white philosophers, one never thinks of the rural. White philosophers are sought in places

such as London, Moscow, Berlin, Denmark, New York City, Boston, and Sidney. If not in these cities, they are located on university or college grounds in regions nearby. The idea, however, of seeking great white philosophers in the most remote, rural regions is considered folly. Yet, when it comes to seeking black philosophers, and especially those in Africa, there is a tendency to seek them out in the most remote rural regions. Why not in such places as Accra, Addis Ababa, Johannesburg, or Nairobi? Philosophical thought has always been urban-centered. Even if the philosopher is from the rural region, the road to national recognition requires some contact with the urban. Thus, it is vital to deal with the complexity of the rural–urban divide in one's treatment of knowledge. How the rural relates to the urban and vice versa will have an impact on the type of thought that emerges.

All this brings us to Africana thought. The history of Africana thought predates the modern period of conquest and colonization, but it is since the epoch of colonialism that much of its preoccupations have been geared toward creative theorizing of grand thought, the rural–urban divide, and the fundamental dimensions of the human question. The reasons for these concerns are obvious. The reality of Africana peoples has been such that Freedom and their identity as thinking beings have been essential; their stratification in rural regions at one time and then their cluttered convergence in urban regions in another have been essential; and the impact of racism, which denies their humanity, makes the question of a human being paramount. One need simply look at the body of literature from Wilhem Amo and Quobna Ottobah Cugoano (both from the eighteenth century) through to Martin Delany and Frederick Douglass, Alexander Crummell, Anna Julia Cooper, and W. E. B. Du Bois (nineteenth through early twentieth century) to see the centrality of these questions. Even disparate groups such as black modernist liberals, black postmodernists, and black progressive revolutionaries cohere on these questions. It is not only Fanon, but also Angela Y. Davis who would like to see a new humanity – new modes of human relations – come into being.

At this point, I should like to spell out some questions raised by turning to these considerations, especially the human question.

The first question is raised by the premise of the human question itself: oppression. Oppression not only contextualizes the reality of Africana peoples in the modern world, but also stands as a site of philosophical investigation itself. A dimension of oppression is its distinction from victimization. Although some victims are oppressed, it is not always the case that oppressed people are victims; nor is it the case that all victims are oppressed people. The theoretical task is spelling out these distinctions. Consider, for instance, the insight of Richard Wright at the end of his novel *The Outsider* (1953), where the antihero, Damon Cross, laments his only regret after committing many crimes, including murder: that he was dying with an unresolved feeling of innocence. The claustrophobic environment created by oppression affords little space for human assertion. Wright's insight is that human emergence depends on responsibility (without which, one is always "innocent"), but that responsibility is such that limited

options in a society can intensify one's situation into an ongoing, inward-directed suffering. Oppression affects the conditions through which mature, responsible beings could live.[6] It affects, as well, how mature, responsible beings theorize and practice their theory.

The reality of oppression creates demands along lines of liberation and identity. The liberation demand is obvious, unless one does not consider it pathological to submit to oppression. In philosophical terms, this demands addressing teleological or purposeful dimensions of reality. In more specific terms, it means addressing not only the fact that black people live the reality of structural oppression, but also the fact that a serious threat to black existence is the modern possibility of genocide. European expansion led to the reduction of the Native North American to 4 percent of their numbers by the end of the nineteenth century. The heap of black bodies that mark the modern era indicated a similar fate. That contemporary world demographics reveal that Africa is inhabited by only 8 percent of the earth's population raises questions about the fate of the black diaspora (who have "minority" status in most regions save the Caribbean). But such concerns require the identification of Africana and black peoples. In effect, then, the identity question emerges symbiotically with the liberation question. The identity question pertains to what and who we are. It is a question about definition and being. In philosophical terms, it is an ontological question. The connection between ontological and liberatory questions is one of the unique motifs of modern Africana philosophy.

The liberatory and identity questions tend to take on what Paget Henry has described in *Caliban's Reason* (2000a) as "historicist" and "poeticist" dimensions. The former, often Marxist and revolutionary, hopes to change the world for black people, which would indeed be a historical achievement. The latter tends to focus on the inner life and cultural reality of black people, who we are and what we hope to *become*, and such work tends to focus on the signs and symbols through which the identity of subjects of liberation emerge. Henry argues for the fusion of these dimensions in the struggle to articulate the humanity of the black self. Its relevance to the discussion at hand is obvious.

Studies of the black self require an understanding of the complexity of the human being as a meta-stable subject. What this means is that since the study is self-reflective and self-reflexive, the human being is constantly posited as an object of study while being the changing subject. There is, then, not *the* black self but black *selves*. In different terms, the human being cannot be understood in terms of the type of absolute generalizations one seeks in the exact sciences. The human being lives a sloppy, changing reality, a reality guided by principles that fall short of notions of completeness, closure, absoluteness, or laws of nature. This is not a feature of the human world that should be regarded as something to be overcome; after all, if our reality wasn't capable of change, liberation would not only be hopeless, but meaningless.

Although our reality is incomplete, it does not mean that there are no limitations imposed upon it. The physical limitations are easy. More difficult, as

pointed out in our reference to Fanon, is the complexity of self-imposed limitations. Here, we see the complexity of culture. Fanon argued that society, unlike biochemical forces, is created by human beings; but still, human beings are subjected to society. There are many aspects of the social world that are *real* and as such have consequences on a par with physical forces. We need to develop ways of bringing human agency to the fore in the transformation of human-created phenomena.[7]

Theorizing culture requires understanding the complexity of being bound by culture on levels that challenge the sacred–secular divide. Think of Edward Blyden's famous observation in *African Life and Customs* (1908) that it is much easier to change the theology of a people than their religion. Religion refers to those bound forces that adapt and reemerge in the course of everyday life. The study of religion across the African diaspora reveals, for instance, the constant reassertion of traditional African religions, even though the theologies advanced may be Euro-Christological. But more, the sacred–secular divide is more than a religion–science manifestation; it affects, as well, the humanities–science divides. Rejecting such a divide is, as we have been arguing, an important step toward *twenty-first-century* ideas. Blyden's insight also has an impact on the peculiarly postmodern approach that dominated the last quarter of the twentieth century. There the prevailing view was that thought must be sanitized of any remnant of the sacred; in its Nietzschean strain, this amounted to ridding thought of all idols and recognizing the idolizing aspect of appeals to theistic valuations. Blyden's conception of the religious suggests, however, that we find in postmodern secularism a level of zeal that binds one to the secular in a way that renders secularism religious. In effect, modern and contemporary religions become "science" and "postmodernism."

Recognizing the ideological aspect of postmodernism requires a more critical relation to some of its familiar tropes. For instance, one cliché that has dominated postmodern analysis is the rejection of "binaries." This in-advance rejection fails, however, to distinguish the consequences of one set of binaries versus others. The logic of sequences that constitute computer programs, for example, is binaries that work. But more, there are cases where the charge of "binarism" or the use of a binary logic is unleashed when the cases themselves are not binary. Binaries pertain to kinds; what do we do when we are comparing differences that are not in similar categories of kinds? The difference between what there is and what there is not is not a binary, since the former could be finite whereas the latter could be infinite. Moreover, there is often the confusion of collapsing terms into references. Two terms could, for instance, refer to a single reality, which means that a dualism or a binary is not present. Think of the terms "freedom" and "unfreedom." Since the latter is a reality premised upon freedom (freedom hiding from or denying itself), there is in fact one reality here with two modes. In an area of Africana thought known as critical race theory, the error tends to emerge in the so-called binary of black and white. The reason this is an error is because the "and" suggests symmetry of two terms. The reality of black and

white, however, is one of asymmetry, since white is normative. In a world where color emerges as a fall from whiteness, then the number of non-white terms is potentially infinite and functions as a negative. The "and" could only work where there are two sites of normativity. Since we are speaking of a reality that is a kind and one that is not (that is why blackness can afford maximal numbers of mixture and remain black), rejections on the basis of binary logic do not apply. But even where the ascription of binaries is accurate, there is still a reason to reject the objection on the grounds that such claims encourage lazy thinking. What is needed is the difficult task of working through the contradictions as well as developing alternative conceptions of reality. It is rare, for instance, that a genuine alternative is ever offered for the rejected binary, which is an indication of a position that, in the end, goes nowhere.

If postmodern*ism* is rejected, then explorations of such concepts as "universality," "creativity," and "teleology" have renewed significance.[8] The role of creative universality in projects of historical transformation becomes an important focus of intellectual labor. Harking back to Paget Henry's work, this means looking at how such concepts relate to reason in black, which amounts to the "de-Prosperizing" of reason. For too long, reason has been embodied by Prospero, the colonizer in Shakespeare's *Tempest*. The black world has been Caliban's lot, the colonized. In Prospero and Caliban, one finds correlative notions of theory and experience, which were discussed at the beginning of this chapter. The world of ideas has been dominated by reason as Prospero Studies. Africana Studies' current lot is as a form of Caliban Studies. Something imaginatively new needs to emerge as reason moves beyond the limitations imposed upon Caliban. Not rejecting that such a task has teleological potential means, simply, to admit that imaginative deeds need not be without purpose.

This last point about transcending the limits imposed on Caliban and aiming for the transformation of reason requires more than an insight. It requires taking advantage of the *de facto* geography of blackness and reason. Think of the Mercator map, which places Europe and North America and Asia "up" North and Africa, the Caribbean, Central and South America, and other regions South "downward." As is well known, the ancient world looked "up" to Africa; Upper Egypt was, after all, South. Similar issues pertain to East and West. We know that modern maps are functions of modern empires, just as medieval and ancient maps were the same. All empires, however, leave traces, sometimes in the form of literal roads and aqueducts, as did the Roman Empire, or trade routes, as did the Arabic Empire. Modern Europe left triangular routes along the seas and a geography of routes that could surely function to the African diaspora as the Roman's had functioned for the Christians. This does not mean that we attempt to repeat history. It means, instead, that before us is a geographical outline of reason (including reason as understood by disciplinary roadways) through whose paths new relations could be formed that challenge the hegemony of European cultural capital. If this observation is accurate, then within our grasp is the pos-

sibility of the semiotic-material fusion of the praxis through which to set afoot the revolutionary potential of reason in black.

Notes

This chapter is a slightly revised version of a talk entitled "An Africana Philosophical Perspective on Africana Diasporic Studies" presented at the "Transcending Traditions" conference at the African Studies Center of the University of Pennsylvania in April 2000. It was subsequently published as "Africana Thought and African Diasporic Studies" in *The Black Scholar* (2000), listed in this volume as L. Gordon (2000c).

1 For a developed discussion of the fallacy of reductionistic experience, see L. Gordon (2000b: ch. 2). See also M. Merleau-Ponty (1964, 2002).
2 For a summary of ethnophilosophy and the views of some of its critics, see B. Hallen (2002: 50–5). For a discussion and criticisms of unanimism – the notion of a single collective consciousness, unanimous in every axiological detail – see K. Gyekye (1995).
3 W. Du Bois (1903). For a developed discussion of Du Bois's views on the problematic study of black folk and an exploration of their implications for human study, see L. Gordon (2000b: ch. 4) and the special issue of the *Annals of the American Academy of Social and Political Science*, 468 (March 2000).
4 There is nearly no college catalog, for instance, in which the word "black" is not accompanied by the word "experience," often with the definite article as "the black experience." What often follows is a general attitude of Black Studies as a subjective enterprise dominated by "feeling." Black scholars researching on racism are condescendingly referred to as articulating their "feeling of racial discrimination," which undermines the validity of the truth claims they make about American society. The point here is not that there are no black experiences of such phenomena. It is that experience alone is not enough for the kinds of knowledge claims needed in a scholarly arena and for objectives of social change.
5 I have written elsewhere that a viable response to such decadence is what I call "a teleological suspension" of one's discipline. It is where one does not take one's discipline too seriously, (i.e., being so enmeshed in its presuppositions that one loses sight of the initiating purposes of inquiry). Philosophy, for example, seems to be philosophy when its practitioners subordinate it to one of its subfields such as epistemology. Paradoxically, most (if not all) great philosophers were those who did not worry about whether they were doing philosophy or not. For some time, I did not refer to my own work as philosophy, but instead as "radical humanistic thought." But in 2000, during a presentation for the postcolonial studies workshop at Harvard University, a colleague, Charles Shepherdson (to whom I am very grateful), challenged my position by pointing out that most of the work that I produced without concern for them being called philosophy or not turned out to be the formation of new philosophy. It struck me that my situation was ironic, and I immediately thought of Søren Kierkegaard's thought on the relation of universality to faith and of the Africana "writer," an intellectual whose works contribute to many fields without a unique commitment to any one. See L. Gordon (1995b, 2001a, 2006).
6 I refer to this phenomenon as "implosivity." See L. Gordon (2000b: ch. 4). See also Poussaint and Alexander (2000) for a similar view.
7 For more discussion of these concepts of sociogenesis and human agency, see L. Gordon (1995b, 2000b) and S. Wynter (2001).
8 This critique of postmodernism does not entail a retreat into modernism. Africana philosophy goes *beyond* such a divide, which means that resources from each epoch or epistemic regime could be appropriated as "tools" instead of "ends." Among the many ironies of modernity, for instance, are, as Foucault has observed, a conception of freedom that makes us do the dirty

work of constructing our own prisons and, as Irene Gendzier, Sylvia Wynter, and many others have shown, conceptions of development and the human being that lead, consistently, to denigrating models of social life (see M. Foucault 2003, 1995; I. Gendzier 1995; S. Wynter 1996; P. Henry 2002–3).

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