

The Scholarship of Cedric J. Robinson: Methodological Considerations for Africana Studies

by

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Abstract

Africana Studies has waged a successful battle to extend curriculum models and course offerings to include the experiences of peoples of African descent. Forty years after this battle over course content, we see not only the legacy of Black Studies continuing (despite the initial decline of departments), but traditional disciplines and "new" disciplines offering courses that deal with Black content. The question then becomes for Africana Studies scholars, what marks us a distinct? This paper examines the scholarship of Cedric Robinson as an exemplar and considers its methodological approaches as plausible alternatives for a distinct approach to Africana Studies. It is an effort not aimed at negating previous conversations, and is purposed on contributing to some of the (re)current themes in the prevailing discourses on Africana Studies methodology.

Introduction

Africana Studies, as both an academic discipline and an intellectual space of the Africana freedom struggle, has been at the vanguard of the fight for the inclusion of the experiences of African and African-descended people in the annals and curriculum of the Western educational matrix.¹ This system has spread its tentacles throughout global society, and many of the formal educational structures in place in Africa and throughout her Diaspora represent the vestiges of the European intellectual and imperial order. Many of our forerunners, ancestors who sacrificed much in an attempt to make education relevant for Africans wherever they found themselves on the landscape of a different world, provided contributions to this

discussion that were indeed indispensable. Their claims that the experiences of African people must be included in any educational formation under which Africans were a part were formally actualized in the late 1960s on white college campuses.² Notwithstanding the circumstances that drove many Africans to these schools, the creation of Africana Studies was the logical extension of a long narrative of African thinkers fighting for the development of scholarly inquiry and academic programs that were relevant and/or accurate in terms of their treatment of the African experience throughout human history. This was, on many levels, a battle for the inclusion of content. Prior to this period, as many scholars assert, there were very few courses dealing with the experiences of peoples of African origin on American college campuses.³ Africana Studies has indeed waged a successful battle to extend curriculum models and course offerings to include many of these experiences.

Forty years after this battle over course content, however, we see not only the legacy of Black Studies continuing (despite the initial decline of departments), but also traditional disciplines and interdisciplines (ethnic studies, area studies, women's studies, etc.) offering courses that deal with these content areas.⁴ The precursors of our discipline had correctly articulated much of the Africana Studies' struggle as a battle over inclusion and content. The question for Africana Studies scholars now becomes, where is the locus of the next battle? Given that the larger academy has incorporated Africana subjects into its traditional disciplines, how then do scholars rationalize the continued existence of Africana Studies in the twenty-first century? The answers to these questions are simple, but also the beginnings of a complex intellectual agenda for *disciplinary* Africana Studies. In fact, many of the precursors to the discipline had already foreshadowed the current discussion that must continue if Africana Studies is to fulfill its purpose.⁵ The preliminary solution is that Africana Studies, having articulated itself as a content-perspective driven field, must seriously consider reorienting that drive back toward operationalizing and defining disciplinary methodological rules that govern inquiry within these Africana-based content areas. These rules must be grounded in African ways of interpreting reality, in both their historical and improvisational iterations, in order for the discipline to accurately claim an "African perspective."⁶ The quest for methodology is not a twenty-first century phenomenon in the Africana Studies tradition. However, in the legacy of our ancestors we must continue to improvise upon earlier contributions and conversations to make Africana Studies relevant, while employing "rigorous and enduring 'ground rules' that are at once accessible to the widest contingent of African people."⁷

Methodology is, essentially, the set of rules, procedures, and methods that govern a research project. It is the underlying theme or process that informs research inquiry and knowledge production. Along with these attributes, methodology also explains the context of the pursuit of knowledge as well as the distinct way in which meaning is assigned to findings in a body of research. In this way, methodology goes beyond both content and perspective⁸ in terms of how research is to be conducted and analyzed.

The creation of methodologies in Western contrived academic life has been embarked

upon in ways that essentially deny the humanity of the *other*. In other words, Western academic methodological tools are often developed such that they disallow anyone other than the researcher to apply meaning to his or her research.⁹ As such, these tools of inquiry have formulated norms that essentially privilege as well as extend Western philosophical views of the world.¹⁰ This tradition has found its way in the humanities and social sciences, which are most pertinent to this discussion. These knowledge categorizations have, most commonly, been brought to bear on Africana Studies content areas, even though their genealogies date back to Western philosophical and scientific foundations.¹¹ The research framework of the social sciences and humanities was transferred to Africana Studies as it entered into the Western academy as an autonomous multidisciplinary structure. This initiated a paradigm shift in the university over the next forty years, whereby it incrementally became “the norm” to intellectualize African-based subject matter. With the academic movements engendered by this transfer, work on particulars of the African experience then reverted back to the domain of mainstream disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, political science, and history, with Africana Studies being the departmental covering for these areas of inquiry.¹² Given the issues with methodological approaches and the philosophical assumptions embedded in these disciplines, it becomes clear that an autonomous or truly *disciplinary* Africana Studies must develop its own distinct methodology. How we approach knowledge production in disciplinary Africana Studies should be one of the main foci of theorists in the discipline moving forward.

The late 1980s-early 1990s saw the last productive attempts to (re)imagine methodological rules and theory construction in Africana Studies, along with the advent of the concerns about the influence of the social science/humanities content incorporation and the first graduate programs in the discipline. Beginning primarily in 1987 with the publication of "Africology: Normative Theory," Lucius T. Outlaw ponders how scholars can generate norms out of the varied experiences of African people that would inform the direction of Africology, without the sacrifice of stringency.¹³ This work responds primarily to the work of Molefi Asante and Maulana Karenga; the former published perhaps his most important work three years later. Asante's *Kemet, Afrocentricity, and Knowledge* posited that Africana Studies must essentially break from the West and create categories and ordering of knowledge based on African realities.¹⁴ The work of Asante was crucial to this era for it framed the approach to the creation of the first doctorate program in the discipline in 1988.

Important articles appearing first in *The Afrocentric Scholar's* initial volume in May of 1992, essentially ask the question of the best way to move forward in Africana Studies given its very recent institutionalization and the creation of paradigms that were in some ways sufficient, and others ways lacking. These two crucial articles were Daudi Ajani ya Azibo's "Articulating the Distinction between Black Studies and the Studies of Blacks" and James Stewart's "Reaching for Higher Ground."¹⁵ Another important work of this period included Terry Kershaw's "The Emerging Paradigm in Black Studies," which views the struggle for methodology in Africana Studies as largely the need for a distinct paradigm, echoing Maulana Karenga's 1988 article, "Black Studies and the Problematic of Paradigm: The Philosophical Dimension."¹⁶

Many of these conversations have been reawakened in recent years. Greg Carr's 2006 article, "Towards an Intellectual History of Africana Studies" adds that methodological training in Africana Studies should come with an understanding of the genealogy of the African intellectual tradition.¹⁷ Carr's most recent contribution to this conversation speaks directly to the framing and understanding of intellectual genealogies in Africana Studies. "What Black Studies is Not" proceeds to define the discipline's parameters after outlining five dominant approaches to the examination of African intellectual genealogies and nine "points of discursive departure" between Africana Studies and the traditional areas of inquiry.¹⁸

Along with these works, the recent special editions of *The Journal of Black Studies* (May 2006) and (January 2007), *The International Journal of Africana Studies* (Spring/Summer 2008), *Journal of Pan African Studies* (June 2009), *The Western Journal of Black Studies* (Summer 2010) and *Socialism and Democracy* (March 2011) all attempt to work out disciplinary issues.

The preceding were some of the representative discussions dealing specifically with approaches and methodologies in Africana Studies. The first step in this long process is to deal effectively with these and other works that suggest the creation of a distinct methodology and assess the sufficiency of their approaches given the realities of the pervasive Western assumptions within dominant approaches to Africana-based content. Based upon these concerns, this article will look at the scholarship of Cedric Robinson as an exemplar and consider its methodological approaches as plausible alternatives for Africana Studies.¹⁹ This effort does not aim to negate previous conversations, but it is purposed to contribute to some of the (re)current themes in the prevailing discourses.

Cedric Robinson: Articulating Methodology

Cedric Robinson is a scholar of Black Studies and a product of the nationalist movement of the mid-1960s. After becoming involved in the Afro-American Association and the Revolutionary Action Movement in his undergraduate years at Berkeley, Robinson completed his graduate studies in political theory at Stanford University. Currently, Robinson is a professor of Black Studies at the University of California-Santa Barbara.²⁰ His work centers around understanding and contributing to the historiography of radicalism in the African world community as well as an understanding of the surrounding manifestations of European global domination. Robinson is the author of five books and a number of scholarly articles. His books include: *The Terms of Order: Political Science and The Myth of Political Leadership* (1980), *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (1983) [republished by UNC Press, 2000], *Black Movements in America* (1997), *An Anthropology of Marxism* (2001), and *Forgeries of Memory & Meaning: Blacks & The Regimes of Race in American Theater & Film Before World War II* (2007). His articles range from discussions on race, political theory, and culture to biographic reflections on thinkers such as Amilcar Cabral and Oliver Cromwell Cox. The three main texts that provide some methodological thrusts for Africana Studies are *Forgeries of*

Memory and Meaning,²¹ *Black Movements in America*,²² and *Black Marxism*.²³ *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning* is a cultural examination of the representative images in the theater and film industries. Robinson's analysis traces the construction of the "negro identity" as far back as Elizabethan England up until the American film industry's extension of this European intellectual heritage. Robinson's investigation involves exploring European ways of acknowledging the *other* and examining how film became a powerful force in that process. *Black Movements in America* essentially tracks the continuity of African movements for political change in America. The text traces different forms of resistance employed by black communities, and shows the evolution of movements from seventeenth century Virginia to the present. Lastly, *Black Marxism*, perhaps the text most pertinent to this conversation, is a study in radicalism that explores the ways Blacks articulated and executed resistance, in ways that distinguish it from the origins of European radicalism. Robinson traces both Black and European traditions, showing that the most prolific progenitors of Black social and political movements were indeed carriers of a longer tradition, based upon cultural group-derived epistemological antecedents. An examination of Robinson's work reveals six key methodological considerations for Africana Studies:

1. Understandings of Western ideas and institutions proceed with a critical, thorough, and historically-sound assessment of the genesis of that idea within Western civilization.
2. Broad understanding of the imposing social structure gives clarity to the ways in which African resistance and/or acquiescence is meted out as well as their continuities which spring forth from African understandings of reality (i.e. their *own* governance structures).²⁴
3. The Africana community writ large is the object [origin] of inquiry; it is the methodological impulse which informs how knowledge is *ordered*.
4. Genealogy contextualizes chronology; relationships between individuals and groups are privileged over historical "time."
5. Exemplars as a heuristic device: models of theoretical ideas are produced to support theoretical claims about African peoples.
6. "Bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh": The scholar is participant/descendant-observer.

While many of these considerations are evident in Robinson's work that has appeared in various periodicals, this article will focus primarily on the three aforementioned works.²⁵

It is clear that Robinson's approach to knowledge finds resonance with what has been termed African-centered knowledge production. An examination of these ideas will bear this out. For now, let us return to Greg Carr's work, which defines the approach Robinson and others employ as "the Black radical tradition approach." This approach is inherently centered upon accessing the character of African ways of knowing for it

links the ideas of 'African cultural unity' to the material contexts

and circumstances of Western racialization and racial hierarchy. These various contexts are seen as informing the meaning-making and social movement of African people as they emerge from a relatively common, long-view (meaning pre-European encounter) set and range of epistemological and axiological assumptions.²⁶

The assumptive posture, which informs much of Robinson's work, is geared towards allowing African people to have theoretical anchoring in their own ways of acknowledging themselves, others, and their ideas without sacrificing our understanding of Euro-modernity and its imposition of various particularities. It is from this foundation that we can extract methods for framing our engagement with the Africana experience. A brief discussion of his work will explore how this posture has manifested in the scholarship.

***Forgeries of Memory and Meaning:*²⁷ Africana Studies and (Re) presentation**

Forgeries is Cedric Robinson's latest contribution, and it is his first book-length study of the nexus between arts/culture and socio-political oppression. Here, we see Robinson present a number of key themes in the study of representation and cultural/social identities. His intent is to show the presence and saliency of racial regimes and their use of cultural forms to reinforce themselves.²⁸ One of Africana Studies many disciplinary objectives is the development of ways for understanding how Africana peoples have been (re)presented and/or misrepresented; *Forgeries* couples that long view concern with how African people were able to counter these (re)presentations.²⁹

This particular text is a cultural and historical examination of the film and theater industry in America, but it uses these cultural forms as a point of departure to explain the formation of racial identities in European cultural consciousness as well as African American resistance to these identities.³⁰ Thus, in order to explain these convergences, Robinson first takes us to the root of American racial ideas: the British construction of the *other*.

The beginnings of racial ideas can be found throughout European locales. But according to Robinson, the most influential evidence for the evolution of racial thought in North America can be found in British society. In fact, the construction of English national identity, according to Robinson, was built on racial terms.³¹ Here, we see the results of analysis that elucidate the first methodological consideration.

The thorough understanding of a Western genealogical construction of "otherness," serves as the springboard for an analysis of race that goes beyond categorical analyses that date its beginning with the slave trade.³² This type of analysis in many ways allows for a more complete understanding of the reasons behind and consequences of "inventions of the Negro."³³ In general concordance with this perspective, Robinson traces the emergence of ideas about how

the African was to be represented from its origin up until the Shakespearean play, *Othello*. The play features an African protagonist, Othello, and for Robinson, represents an important historical marker for ideas about African representation in European cultural forms.³⁴ The first chapter traces these genealogies toward the American context (as well as to other areas of Europe). Robinson shows how integrated Euro- American societal structures were able to "invent" the Negro through various devices such as race science, written works, cartoon drawings and artwork, and, even, famous expositions and world's fairs at the turn of the twentieth century.³⁵ Robinson suggests that these devices were components of a system of racial representation that prominently found its way on the stage in the nineteenth century and the silver screen in the twentieth. These racial representations served as the foundation and support of a global economic system rooted in African labor. The majority of nineteenth century representations of the African were directly purposed at supporting or opposing the system.³⁶ By 1915, their transmutability to other forms of entertainment was firmly entrenched as this time period ushered in a "robust industrial society."³⁷ Robinson takes us to that year and the historical and intellectual trends that circumstanced the film, *Birth of a Nation*. Comprising the balance of the second chapter, this conversation is framed as a film history that recognizes the long currents of racialized imaging (and imagining) in Europe and America. After re-establishing white supremacist imaginations, or what Robinson terms "rewhiting history"³⁸ the work of Griffith was able to serve as the "midwife" for the

[...]birth of a new, virile, American whiteness, unencumbered by the historical memory of slavery, or being enslaved, undaunted by the spectacle of racial humiliation so suddenly manufactured by the shock of poor white immigrants arriving in the cities, a European war which settled into the slaughter of a generation, and the taunts of the Black giant, Jack Johnson. No force in the world was its equal. No moral claim would dare challenge the sovereignty of race right.³⁹

The rise of Jack Johnson and the reawakening of the Ku Klux Klan were not coincidental occurrences. For Robinson, *The Birth of a Nation* mirrored the realities of early twentieth century America, which were characterized by the development of American nationalism on the world stage with its antithesis, the African, as the "domestic enemy."⁴⁰ Thinkers such as D.W. Griffith, Thomas Dixon, and others represented the genealogy that extended European racist ideology within the arts/culture complex.

The third and fourth chapters of the text offer the other side of the genealogy of American film and theater: the Black producers. Beginning in earnest with the Black-ran minstrel shows, which offered a radical alternative to minstrelsy in general, Robinson traces this tradition to at least the 1820s with its peak coming about fifty-five years later. This analysis presents the emergence of Black produced minstrelsy and Black musical theaters as part of a tradition that breaks the norms of Western constructed Black representation. This type of resistance captures

the essence of the Black radical tradition, which Robinson had outlined in *Black Marxism*, twenty-four years earlier.⁴¹ It cannot be said that these productions were neatly cut conceptual alternatives to mainstream American film industry, as Robinson would show in Chapter Four. However, much of the productions that Black filmmakers, dramatists, and playwrights would create often offered radical critiques in deceptive terms.⁴² Robinson shows the central idea of the fourth methodological consideration, the importance of genealogy, in his discussion of Black filmmaker Oscar Micheaux, where he reveals:

But notwithstanding his energetic and persistent campaign of self-invention, Micheaux was not entirely a creature of his own making. Indeed, he was the heir of a form of Black resistance to the new racial regime which could be traced to late minstrelsy, more particularly Black minstrelsy as it manifested itself in the last decade of the nineteenth century. In the process of spawning Black musical theatre from Black minstrelsy, a remarkable cluster of Black performers, choreographers, and writers—Bob Cole, Bert Williams, George Walker, Aida Overton Walker, James Weldon Johnson, and his brother J. Rosamond Johnson, Will Marion Cook, and Paul Laurence—perfected a host of Black resistance gestures for display before largely white audiences. Acutely race conscious, this group recovered and invented much of the moral and conceptual vocabulary and the sly oppositional stratagems which would sluice Black resistance into public entertainment, preparing an assemblage for Micheaux.⁴³

Through a genealogical frame Robinson shows that Black-produced minstrelsy spawned Black musical theater, which gave rise to an explicitly Black cinema tradition with Micheaux as its most well known exemplar. Here, a history is written, which challenges the idea that film production emerged in the Black community as a product of twentieth century imaginings. Robinson's use of genealogy proves that Black film only became the form of an older, extended conversation.

The fourth chapter, “Resistance and Imitation in Early Black Cinema,” continues the analysis on these foundations; it also exemplifies the second methodological consideration by contextualizing the broad social structure that resisters like Oscar Micheaux and others, were to oppose. As its title suggests, it recognizes the dual character of African political responses to the American social order. This will be discussed later, as much of these ideas are outlined in *Black Movements in America*. An important component of this chapter is its ultimate resolution of previous chapters and their concomitant methodologies for viewing the history of African representation and American film together. It encompasses both the treatment of American ideas of race as well as Black resistance to them, focusing on film in the first half of the twentieth

century. The final chapter, “The Racial Regimes of the ‘Golden Age,’” recasts the previous conversation in light of the changing and expanding industry in America, showing the immutability of racist representation, an analysis that finds resonance with Clyde Taylor’s important 1998 text, *The Mask of Art*.⁴⁴ During this era Hollywood establishes its seeming permanence while firmly encapsulating and normalizing the racial regime in film, which Robinson shows by exemplifying the second consideration. Within this milieu, Black film had to contend with the often incorrigible (at least in Hollywood) and racially dehumanizing mode of representation.

As stated in the introductory paragraph, *Forgeries* falls squarely into the methodological and theoretical corpus of Cedric Robinson's scholarship despite the fact that its topic is unique to Robinson's other four texts. It represents, in many ways, the foundational method of inquiry that Robinson established at the beginning of his career. This is a methodology that Robinson would never abandon, and we see it even clearer in two earlier works, *Black Movements in America* and *Black Marxism*.

Black Movements in America: Methodology of the Masses

At the birth of Africana Studies, many thinkers asserted the importance of establishing history as the foundation for the emerging field.⁴⁵ While its parameters have often been limited to the European experience, the discipline of history was thought to be the key discipline to counter as well as encounter racist constructions of the African past. Beyond this objective, however, lies the importance of the reconnection of African memory. Flipped on its head, “disciplinary” history becomes what Ngugi wa Thiong’o has termed a “remembering vision.”⁴⁶ Cedric Robinson’s *Black Movements in America* is a work that *remembers* the African American “quest for wholeness,”⁴⁷ by establishing the importance of mass group movements and their particular objectives within the social cauldron of the United States of America.

Written ten years earlier than *Forgeries*, Robinson's *Black Movements in America* concisely articulates the nature and objectives of African American social and political movements.⁴⁸ Moving his analysis from seventeenth century Virginia through the late 1960s, Robinson is able to offer a condensed, but thorough, study of the nature and consequences of each of the various forms of resistance, by explicating their *mass* character. His rendering of these political movements begins at various moments in United States history and shows the complex external issues at play in the African’s America. The social structure, whether it was the institution of slavery, the Civil War era, the Nadir, and/or Jim Crow, is discussed to show both the need for and nature of various forms of resistance.⁴⁹ It is here that we see the application of the second methodological consideration, understanding and exploring the implications of the link between social structures and resistance. Robinson is clear in his portrayal of the Africans’ understanding of American social structures, or as he frames it, “the rule of law”:

Among Blacks, the rule of law was respected for its power rather than for any resemblance to justice or a moral order. For the slaves, the rule of law was an injustice, a mercurial and violent companion to their humiliations, a form of physical abuse, a force for the destruction of their families, and an omnipresent cruelty to their loved ones. Even for free Blacks, the rule of law was too often a cruel hypocrisy, impotent in protecting their tenuous status.⁵⁰

Along with this consideration, Robinson offers another important insight with regard to how Africans resisted “the rule of law.” In each instance, he shows how the masses informed both the aims and objectives of the resistance; this revelation implicitly rejects notions inherent in much scholarship that suggests or privileges the importance of individual leaders. In *Black Movements in America*, there is a clear extension of many of the arguments presented in *Black Marxism* (to be discussed shortly), which posit that it was communities of Africans that came together to resist—on their own culturally specific terms.⁵¹ While *Black Marxism* explains the necessary preconditions for such unity, *Black Movements in America* continues what Robinson previously outlines as ubiquitous throughout the Americas: *resistance*. Written, in many ways, as a historical text, Robinson consistently shows that at each point where Africans conceptualized forms of resistance there was elaborate pre-planning carried out by a distinct community of characters. Further, in his discussion of cultural carriers of resistance (such as the Nat Turner rebellion and the Pointe Coupee conspiracy of 1795, inter alia), Robinson corroborates many of the arguments given by scholars such as Sterling Stuckey and Michael A. Gomez, concerning the nature of resistance and unity *across* various African ethnicities and the eventual rise of a racial consciousness.⁵²

Perhaps one of the more crucial forms of resistance was marronage. The communitarian nature of marronage reveals important clues about African notions of cultural character and mass resistance. The maroon settlements across North America were usually the base of community-fueled opposition to the political order.⁵³ *Black Movements in America* examines instances of marronage in seventeenth century Virginia and, more prominently, in early nineteenth century Florida. The latter communities would incite the Seminole Wars, where African maroons fought alongside Native Americans.⁵⁴ Robinson deals with the question of marronage more forcefully in *Black Marxism*, as the formation of these communities constituted the principal form of resistance among Africans throughout the Western hemisphere.

In the cases of the early revolts and the infamous nineteenth century plots of Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, and Nat Turner, the idea of their mass character becomes quite evident. However, Robinson extends this thesis to the communities of free Blacks and the early organization of civil rights groups. In Chapter Three, “Free Blacks and Resistance,” Robinson shows that free Blacks were also a community, and their methods of resistance were different in form but similar in *constitution* to the mass revolts and maroon societies. This does not deny the contradictions and divergence of opinions by free Blacks throughout the country, and Robinson

does indeed acknowledge them.⁵⁵ However, he makes clear that the "vast majority of Blacks" opposed slavery and shows how solutions articulated by many of these free Blacks ranged from three distinct phases of abolitionism to ideas for Black sovereignty.⁵⁶ The Black convention movement, characterized by mass organizations, was one of the most important phases of African political movements in the antebellum era.

In the concluding chapters of the work, Robinson continues this way of understanding resistance as he analyzes Black resistance and mass political movements during the Civil War and after, the periods preceding the Civil Rights Era (Black agrarianism and Anti-lynching movements), and finally the political maneuvering during the Civil Rights Era. Robinson adds an illuminating discussion of each of these moments of resistance while buttressing them with an understanding of the methods by which each movement was able or unable to capture the spirit of resistance characterized the masses of Africans. He then shows how that inability contributed to their success (or lack of success).⁵⁷ His discussion of the rise of Martin Luther King, Jr., exemplifies this approach:

King's charismatic authority was a tributary of the Afro-Christian tradition embedded in the consciousness of the now mostly urban Blacks in the South and elsewhere. His leadership was grounded on culturally cemented legitimacy rather than organizational management or skills, on the biblical faith tales retold at thousands of places of worship each Sunday, the militant millenarianism of Afro-Christian hymns, and the messianism of the Gospel. When he spoke, his speech rhythms and language conspired with beliefs, concepts, ideas, and icons insinuated into Black Christian consciousness for generations. He clarioned a call to action that was heard where Afro-Christians could be found (and beyond if one recalls Pentecostalism).⁵⁸

This is linked to the lasting and probably most important contribution of Robinson's *Black Movements in America*, which traces divergent political cultures in African America and how they, too, were linked to an intelligible mass consensus. By tracing the various moments of resistance in the African community, Robinson shows the origins of the ideas of political accommodation/integration and the origins of self-determination/nationalism. Chapter Five of the study begins with a characterization of these "two alternative Black political cultures:"

By the second half of the nineteenth century, two alternative Black political cultures had arisen, each nurtured by a particular Black experience. Akin to the social divergences that appeared through slave societies in the New World, communities of free Blacks gravitated toward the privileged political and social identities jealousy reserved for non-Blacks. At the same time, on the

plantation and in the slave quarters, slaves tended to form a historical identity that presumed a higher moral standard than that which seemed to bind their masters.⁵⁹

He continues...

[...]the better publicized was the assimilationist Black political culture that appropriated the values and objectives of the dominant American creed.⁶⁰

Against popular opinion, this culture did not represent the majority of African Americans, as Robinson argues:

To the contrary, the Black mass movements of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries proved both the existence and vitality of an alternative Black political culture, emergence from the brutal rural regimes of slavery and later, peonage. Inventive rather than imitative, communitarian rather than individualistic, democratic rather than republican, Afro-Christian rather than secular and materialist, the social values of these largely agrarian people generated a political cultural that distinguished between the inferior world of the political and the transcendent universe of moral goods.⁶¹

This discussion, as Robinson properly frames, allows us to understand the current political ideas still alive today among African Americans in the United States.

With regards to Africana Studies, the clear methodological consideration for the discipline that *Black Movements in America* exemplifies is identical to the third point listed above. How does Robinson show/prove the existence of alternative political cultures? It is via a thorough analysis of the Africana community, *writ large*. This speaks to the importance, often articulated in Africana Studies, of creating ways of approaching intellectual work that allows “the community” to enter; as well as the contention that their entrance should be literally *the conceptual foundation* for understanding and applying knowledge that purports to be about them—as opposed to the universalizing influence of peoples of other (read: Western) cultural groups.⁶² The idea of the community, or the masses, as the origin of analysis, as opposed to formulations of individual heroes of various political cultures, allows for a more fluid appreciation for the ways in which the masses were able to resist. The latter viewpoint creates dichotomies that greatly reduce the role of the masses and conflates the complex ideological position of the actual individuals cited. A few of these popular dichotomies have found their way into Africana Studies circles, and they include: Martin R. Delany vs. Frederick Douglass; W.E.B. Du Bois vs. Booker T. Washington; Malcolm X vs. Martin Luther King. In each of these

instances, it would be clearly more beneficial to scholars in Africana Studies to understand these scholars as a part of a clear genealogy of resistance, and at times, accommodation, as it developed in the African American community.⁶³ Robinson's scholarship suggests that the understanding of these individual exemplars is only a fragment of the larger history of political movements in African America; a fuller appreciation is achieved by analyzing their contributions as part of movements. Clarity is achieved by faithfully recounting the character of these movements for social change linked with Africana Studies' pursuit for realizing the potential of the social movements that accentuated its birth.⁶⁴ More importantly, as Africana Studies' evocation of historical memory remains essential, the interpretation of the past should be approached in an interpretive manner that gives credence to *all of* those ancestors who were the actual actors in that history. As previously mentioned, this aspect of Robinson's work is an extension of a conversation that links intellectual and cultural genealogy with group resistance that was first articulated in *Black Marxism*.

Black Marxism: Methodology and Genealogy

Much like its engagement with the critical area of history, Africana Studies has long been occupied with the question of political economy with regard to the contemporary African experience. The combination of revolutionary theory and the explosion of Leftist thought in the 1960s prepared the ground for a Marxian critique of society that appeared in African intellectual communities and, by extension, within Africana Studies.⁶⁵ A critical, though still not widely applied intervention, is the 1983 text, *Black Marxism*. This text is considered Robinson's magnum opus and the foundation for much of his scholarship on Black radical political theories. Characterized by almost all reviewers as one of the most ambitious scholarly works in recent memory on the topic, *Black Marxism* offers a sound analysis, a cogent history, and an eloquent journey through the contours of the Black radical tradition.⁶⁶ A work of this magnitude indeed warrants a separate and extended treatment, beyond the limited scope of the present article, which is simply to bring into sharper focus the implications for Robinson's work on the proper rendering of the experiences of African people. Further, the current analysis hopes to apply some of the listed considerations to conceptualizing Africana Studies' engagement with radical thought and historical materialism and their supposed/proposed connection to knowledge foundations for a disciplinary methodology.⁶⁷

In his quest to trace the genealogies of radicalism and resistance in the twentieth century, Robinson decides to tread a path that is not often taken in many studies on the subject. For much of the twentieth century, radicalism and "leftism" were articulated and defined by those who could be labeled as Marxist theorists. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were the main articulators of a well-known theory that stipulated the rise of a working class movement to overthrow global capitalist power.⁶⁸ While this article will not rehearse in detail the contours of Marxism, the connection for African Americans to this theory was that they represented en masse, the working class, or, in Marxist terms, the proletariat. In fact, in terms of hierarchy, the African American

working class is generally considered to constitute the “bottom rung.” Therefore, as Marxist theorists, some of whom were African Americans,⁶⁹ the natural attraction to a movement that privileged and promoted the advancement of the working class was obvious. However, instead of first dealing with the dynamics of Marxism as articulated in the twentieth century, Robinson takes us through a historical journey to early-modern Europe and from there, to the nineteenth century.

In Part One of the text, which is entitled "The Emergence and Limitations of European Radicalism," we see the emergence of the first methodological consideration: the examination of critical genealogies of Western ideas. In order to understand Marxism, Robinson precedes by way of a critical analysis of both the birth of European radicalism and its limitations. Methodologically, this type of historical analysis of Western society allows us to clearly see their manifestations in contemporary moments, or in different terms—the root of the idea. This idea would in fact manifest into a book length-study later in Robinson's career.⁷⁰ In much of the same way that Robinson examines the film and theater traditions of England in *Forgeries*, Robinson seeks to give a critical analysis of Western radicalism and its roots in the “English working class.”⁷¹ Robinson's analysis takes us to the oft-cited but rarely proven notion that the constitutive elements of Western radicalism and their extensions into twentieth century have the limited ability to apply, both theoretically and in practice, to the realities of the African American working class. These limitations, according to Robinson, occurred within the realms of both nationalism⁷² and racialism inherent in European societies that have created knowledge systems, which methodologically view the *other's* “social and historical processes” and/or ways of knowing as either “European” or “derivative” of their experiences in European-contrived life.⁷³ Consequently, Africana Studies practitioners must remain aware of the genealogy of Western knowledge and institutions in the context of any research that is situated in a time period where there is interaction between African ideas and Western civilizations.

The links between understanding African people through the community writ large and its connection to genealogies of African people throughout the modern era (the third and fourth considerations) form the balance of the remainder of the work. Part Two, "The Roots of Black Radicalism," is that articulation. In this section Robinson argues that historians, scholars, and others have not been able to conceive of radical traditions in African American communities that were informed outside of their immediate context. He analyzes the reasoning behind their conclusion and systematically reveals the ways in which Africans were able to base their radicalism on an accessible and old tradition. The idea of an extended genealogy of resistance, according to Robinson, is the proper frame for viewing African notions of radicalism that became widely visible in the twentieth century. Here, it is necessary to quote Robinson at length, as this notion is perhaps the idea that should have garnered wider currency within Africana Studies, for it contextualizes how methodologies attempting to understand the African experience in the West should be approached:

The makings of an essentially African response, strewn across the

physical and temporal terrain of societies conceived in Western civilization have been too infrequently distinguished. Only over time has the setting for these events been integrated into the tradition. The social cauldron of Black radicalism is Western society. Western society, however, has been its location and its objective condition but not—except in a most perverse fashion—its specific inspiration. Black radicalism is a negation of Western civilization, but not in the direct sense of a simple dialectical negation. It is certain that the evolving tradition of Black radicalism owes its peculiar moment to the historical interdiction of African life by European agents. In this sense, the African experiences of the past five centuries is simply one element in the mesh of European history: some of the objective requirements for Europe’s industrial development were met by the physical and mental exploitation of Asian, African, and native American peoples. This experience, though, was merely the condition for Black radicalism—its immediate reason for and object of being—but not the foundation for its nature or character. Black radicalism, consequently, cannot be understood within the particular context of its genesis. It is not a variant of Western radicalism whose proponents happen to be Black. Rather, it is a specifically African response to an oppression emergent from the immediate determinants of European development in the modern era and framed by orders of human exploitation woven into the interstices of European social life from the inception of Western civilization [...]⁷⁴

Continuing Chapter Four, “The Process and Consequences of Africa’s Transmutation,” Robinson shows how historical inquiry, beginning in large measure with Georg W.F. Hegel and others, impedes the ability of thinkers to conceive of this discernible tradition in Africa and, as a corrective, Robinson, relying on many thinkers, revises the traditional narratives of the African past, beginning with antiquity. Next, he analyzes the reason behind the pursuit of African labor and takes us throughout the period where Europeans would extract African labor from the continent to fulfill its imperial ambitions in the New World. Here Robinson, much like in *Black Movements*, points to a shared epistemology of resistance based on African culture that was carried to the ships and arrived to the New World intact.⁷⁵ These carriers of tradition were emptied into objective conditions in the Western hemisphere, which necessitated confrontations with the social structures in places like Nueva Espana (Mexico), Brazil, North America, Caribbean, and as colonialism became prevalent, on the continent itself.⁷⁶ The following statement, which ends the next chapter, is important to the defining impulse of a Black radical consciousness:

...the Black radical tradition had defined the terms of their [meaning the military dictators and neocolonial petit bourgeoisie's] destruction: the continuing development of a collective consciousness informed by the historical struggles for liberation and motivated by the shared sense of obligation to preserve the collective being, the ontological totality.⁷⁷

In this manner, we see “being” as the force and motivation for resistance. The sixth and seventh chapters reveal the third and fourth methodological considerations, as Robinson allows us to view the radical tradition as a product of a long tradition, a genealogy as well as the product of the “collective being.” A tradition that would transition from being represented by the masses to being represented by identifiable, though not unconnected, individual exemplars; Part Three of the text, “Black Radicalism and Marxist Theory,” allows us to further understand this lineage. Chapter Eight, “The Formation of an Intelligentsia,” reveals that those members of the intelligentsia who would comprise the Black radical tradition merely imitated the character of the foremothers and forefathers of the tradition.⁷⁸

In this section Robinson gives intellectual foundations for the emergence of a Black radical intellectual class. Robinson frames this conversation in concordance with the methodological consideration that genealogy should contextualize chronology. The development of this class was premised upon a “truer genius,” that of the “communities of meaning” from which they had emerged.⁷⁹ Under consideration for Robinson, however, was not the simple construction of what could be termed “twentieth century Black thought,” but the order of what he terms the “formation of an intelligentsia.” Robinson explains that the notion of an intelligentsia informed by the rhythms of human action of the Black radical tradition, allows us to view it in a new form: its genealogy of resistance—as informed by African formulations of reality. As Robinson articulates earlier, the foundations of the Black radical tradition are enlivened by African worldviews, cultures, and knowledge systems which were the “actual terms of their humanity.”⁸⁰ In discussing the issues inherent in framing narratives of Black resistance as merely twentieth century phenomena, Robinson states:

The point is that time is only a sort of catchment for events. Their limited utility, though, is often abused when we turn from the *ordering* of things, that is chronological sequencings, to the *order* of things, that is the arrangement of their significances, meanings, and relations. Increments of time contoured to abstract measure rarely match the rhythms of human action.⁸¹

These “rhythms of human action” are in many ways the conceptual lens for understanding Africana experiences, and the *order* of things should constitute the process and/or frame. The link between the wider African world and its concomitant intellectual genealogies (considerations three and four), occupy a central position in how Robinson contextualizes his

argument in Part Two and Part Three of *Black Marxism*.

Continuing Part Three, Robinson outlines the consequences that gave rise to the emergence of Black intelligentsia, and employs what I have outlined as the fifth methodological consideration to explain his thesis. James Stewart's seminal 1984 article, "The Legacy of W.E.B. Du Bois for Contemporary Black Studies," suggests that the direction for the discipline should involve the use of representative exemplars. In carrying out this notion, Stewart uses the life and legacy of W.E.B. Du Bois as a thinker that Africana Studies thinkers should emulate, in this "academic manifestation of the Black radical tradition."⁸² Not coincidentally, Robinson is in alignment with the utilization of the legacy of Du Bois, but Robinson's intent is to show how Du Boisian thought was essentially an extension of Black radical thought, not necessarily circumscribed by work in the academy. Utilizing him as an exemplar of radical thought, Robinson chooses to analyze Du Bois' historical works as the foundation for contextualizing his engagement with and analysis of the applicability of Marxist theory in the African (and Diasporic) world. In Chapter Nine, "Historiography and the Black Radical Tradition," Robinson takes us through an extended journey through the historical writings of W.E.B. Du Bois, seeking to articulate his objectives. Perhaps it was through his analysis of Du Bois' *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935) that Robinson provides the conceptual thrust to represent Du Bois' work as continuum of the radical thought of the Black intelligentsia. In *Black Reconstruction*, Robinson sees three important engagements made by Du Bois regarding Marxian thought: 1) the emergence of capitalism, 2) the nature of revolutionary consciousness and 3) the nature of revolutionary organization. Du Bois, himself dealing with the contours of Marxian thought, would lead Robinson to conclude that:

In the midst of most fearsome maelstrom his age had seen, and with the pitiable reaction of the declared revolutionary opposition in mind, his purposeful interrogation of the past had led him to the hidden specter of Black revolutionists. Their revolution had failed, of course. And with its failure had gone the second and truer possibility of an American democracy. But until the writing of *Black Reconstruction*, the only mark on American historical consciousness left by their movement had been a revised legend of savagery. Du Bois had understood, finally, that his was insufficient. "Somebody in each era," he had written, "must make clear the facts." With that declaration, the first of radical Black historiography had been filled.⁸³

What Robinson articulates is indeed the work of an exemplar tied to a relatively new form of resistance, that of radical historiography in the Black radical tradition. The rest of the text discusses two other thinkers who would embrace the Marxian tradition only to later formulate critiques of historical materialism based on the embrace of Black consciousness.⁸⁴ A second exemplar Robinson employs is the persona of C.L.R. James. Much like he guides us through

Black Reconstruction, Robinson follows a similar trajectory with James and his work on the Haitian revolution, *Black Jacobins* (1938). After tracing James' genealogy, Robinson discusses the theory of that work and other works James would author as he "came to terms with the Marxist tradition."⁸⁵ A third exemplar comes in the form of Richard Wright. In the penultimate chapter, Robinson places Wright in the same genealogy of Du Bois and James, analyzing his "novels as politics."⁸⁶ Robinson's use of exemplars to explain genealogy is an essential practice for Africana Studies. It is African in nature and methodologically sound for explaining the manifestations of group resistance in Africana communities.⁸⁷ However, as Robinson does, they should precede first from a methodical analysis of the collective character and identity.

Black Marxism then, represents a number of the listed methodological considerations and is useful for the further articulation of a distinct methodology for understanding African experiences in Euro-modernity. *Black Marxism* involves the thoughtful and thorough analysis of Western ideas, the usages of genealogies of Africana peoples and ideas, and the employment of individual exemplars based on those genealogies. It is a treasured work for its articulation of Black radical theories and a gem for continued methodological and paradigmatic constructions in Africana Studies.

"Bone of the Bone and Flesh of the Flesh": Africana Studies Intellectual Workers

The sixth methodological consideration is one that is not clearly stated in words but comes across with much clarity in the intellectual work of Cedric Robinson. It is clear in the way that Robinson contextualizes history concerning Africana peoples that he implicitly recognizes their humanity. Robinson's life work reveals that his intellectual work is merely an extension of the traditions of resistance that he writes about. He exemplifies the idea that Du Bois articulates in the forethought to *The Souls of Black Folk*, "And finally, need I add that I who speak am bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of them that live within the veil?"⁸⁸ Here Du Bois articulates that he *is* who he is studying. The scholar is both participant *and* observer and, for historical subjects, both the descendant *and* the observer;⁸⁹ in African traditions he or she is the *seshe* or *doma*.⁹⁰ Scholarship in Africana Studies can break the shackles of Western inquiry that articulates authenticity as the consequence of objectivity, or disinterestedness.⁹¹ As it is advanced in the West, scholarship is effectively viewed as biased when it is not objective. Notwithstanding the fact that Robinson's work does not explicitly violate these norms, the litmus test for the effectiveness of Robinson's, as well as all of Africana Studies' scholarship, should not and is not obedience to these norms. Africana Studies intellectual work should be geared toward and relevant to the struggles that characterized the original motives of the Black radical tradition and the range of interests it serves.⁹² As such standards for reliability and stringency must be internally generated and developed from the same bases.⁹³ Africana Studies, as a discipline, should seek to retire the academic debates on objectivity, and seek to produce scholarship that actively engages the reality of what it means to be African. While he does not plainly state his larger motives in words, it is clear by way of approach that Robinson views himself as "bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh" of Africans across the world.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion on methodology and the work of Cedric J. Robinson is only a contribution to an ongoing discussion of Africana Studies' quest for norms arising out of the Africana experience. While it does not seek to represent a panacea to the impasse, this essay hopes to serve as a point of departure for a large discussion around methodological ordering in the discipline. These considerations can be applied to distinct areas of study in the Africana experience and are the inherent implications for Robinson's approach for future scholars. At the very least, Robinson provides perhaps the single most important frame for studying and understanding Africans' resistance to the West. As Carr recognizes in his explanation of the "Black radical tradition" approach, the impetus to observe Africans' action and reaction toward foreign control over their reality as part of a shared epistemology of resistance is perhaps the lasting synergy between themes inherent in Robinson's work and for the creation of Africana Studies methodology. The creation of connections to and extenders of genealogies of dissent and resistance articulates a perfect match to the intellectual project of Africana Studies in the twenty-first century.⁹⁴

¹ Africana Studies as an intellectual project is the legacy of a long tradition of deep thought. A legacy, that of course began prior to 1968. For an extended examination of these precursors see, Greg E. Kimathi Carr, "The African-Centered Philosophy of History: An Exploratory Essay on the Genealogy of Foundationalist Historical Thought and African Nationalist Identity Construction" in *The African World History Project: The Preliminary Challenge*, eds. Jacob H. Carruthers and Leon C. Harris (Los Angeles: Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations, 1997), 285-320. Deep thought refers to the African understanding of reality through time and space. Both Carr and Jacob Carruthers discuss its improvisational character in the face of European attempts to "dismember" African consciousness. Further, Jacob Carruthers traces the foundationalist thinkers responsible for setting the foundation to Africana Studies, categorizing them as "The Champions of African Deep Thought." See the first chapter of Jacob Carruthers, *Mdw Ntr: Divine Speech A Historiographical Reflection of African Deep Thought from the Time of the Pharaohs to the Present* (London: Karnak House, 1995), 7-36.

Other scholars have stretched the chronology of Africana Studies, pointing to an intellectual tradition prior to the 1968 moment. See Robert Harris, "The Intellectual and Institutional Development of Africana Studies" in *Three Essays, Black Studies in the United States*, eds. Robert Harris, Darlene Clark Hine, and Nellie McKay (New York: Ford Foundation, 1990) and the earlier James Turner and C. Steven McGann, "Black Studies as an Integral Tradition in Afro-American Intellectual History," *Journal of Negro Education* 49 (Winter 1980): 52-59. See also the author's extended discussion of these and other historians of Africana Studies in Joshua Myers, "(Re)conceptualizing Intellectual Histories of Africana Studies: Preliminary Considerations," (Master's Thesis, Temple University, 2011), 55-60. There is a debate on the nomenclature to denote this pre-1960s period. Scholars have generally considered the intellectual foundations of the discipline to connote a "pre-disciplinary" or "intellectual history period" of Africana Studies. See inter alia, Maulana Karenga, "Black Studies and the Problematic of Paradigm: The Philosophical Dimension," *Journal of Black Studies* 18 (June 1988): 398-400 and James B. Stewart, "James B. Stewart, "The Legacy of W.E.B. Du Bois for Contemporary Black Studies," *Journal of Negro Education* 53 (1984): 297. Daudi Ajani ya Azibo proposes an "origin" of Africana Studies as the first attempts by Africans to *study*. See Daudi Ajani ya Azibo, "Articulating the Distinction Between Black Studies and the Study of Blacks: The Fundamental Role of Culture and the African-Centered Worldview," In *The African American Studies Reader*, ed. Nathaniel Norment (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2007), 532-533.

Africans/Africana peoples will be used throughout this paper to refer to African and African descended people throughout the world.

² There are no “official” histories of the discipline to this point. There are, however, what I have termed elsewhere, “quasi-official histories” of Africana Studies. See Myers, “(Re)conceptualizing Intellectual Histories of Africana Studies,” 49-55. These are Fabio Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007) and Noliwe Rooks, *White Money/Black Power: The Surprising History of African American Studies and the Crisis of Race and Higher Education* (Boston, Beacon Press, 2006).

³ Historically Black Colleges, in the period covering the beginning of the twentieth century until the 1960s, were generally the only places in the academy where one could learn about the experiences and/or current situations of African and African-descended people. On the previous iterations of Africana Studies at HBCUs see note 37 of Greg Carr, “Towards an Intellectual History of Africana Studies: Genealogy and Normative Theory,” in *The African American Studies Reader*, ed. Nathaniel Norment, Jr., (Carolina Academic Press, 2007), 451. He discusses the work of Alan Colon, “Black Studies and Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Towards a New Synthesis,” in *Out of the Revolution: The Development of Africana Studies*, eds. Delores P. Aldridge and Carlene Young (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000), 287-314 and Daryl Zizwe Poe, “Black Studies in the Historically Black Colleges and Universities,” in *Handbook of Black Studies*, eds. Maulana Karenga and Molefi Asante (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006), 204-224. According to Carr, however, “neither article attempts a genealogical re-situation of the work at HBCUs within a larger frame of the long-view African intellectual tradition.” Carr, *Ibid*.

⁴ This is what Rhett Jones has termed, “phantom Black Studies.” See his discussion in Rhett Jones, “A Greater Focus on Methodology in Black Studies,” *International Journal of Africana Studies* 14 (Spring/Summer2008): 260-264.

⁵ Edward Wilmot Blyden was an early advocate of the development of a methodology for Africans. His address at Liberia College, among many other declarations expressed that “Africans must advance by methods of their own” a statement aimed at provoking the rethinking of university offerings for the African future. See Edward W. Blyden, *The Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans: Inaugural Address* (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 2005), 17 and the discussion of and surrounding Blyden in Myers, “(Re)conceptualizing Intellectual Histories of Africana Studies,” 26-29.

⁶ The clarion call for a Black or “African perspective” was the premise and rationale for the distinction between Africana Studies and “Black Studies” within traditional disciplinary frameworks. It was *within* these disciplinary frameworks that the call was first set forth before it was posited that it could best be generated from an autonomous discipline. Representative works on the importance of perspective are many and include inter alia the contributions of Joyce Ladner, ed. *The Death of White Sociology: Essays on Race and Culture* (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1998).

⁷ Greg E. Kimathi Carr, “Inscribing African World History: Intergenerational Repetition and Improvisation of Ancestral Instruction,” in *The African World History Project: African Historiography*, eds. Asa G. Hilliard, Greg Carr, and Mario H. Beatty (Atlanta: ASCAC Foundation, forthcoming), 10. The discussion of repetition and improvisation frames Greg Carr’s and the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations’ attempt to develop a methodology for African world history that relies on African ways of knowing. Similarly Africana Studies should adapt such ways of ordering knowledge. This article is framed with this idea as the fundamental difference between what should count as methodologically and theoretically sound intellectual work.

⁸ Researchers both within and outside the discipline have articulated the “key” differences between Africana Studies and other disciplines incorporating Black content as “perspective” driven (see note 6), often placing the qualifier “African,” “Afrocentric,” “African-centered,” or “womanist” in front of a concept or issue. Often times these

research inquiries or studies utilize that labeling while simultaneously taking Western scientific methodologies whole, even though the qualifier is often projected to glean some sort of difference between this work and work coming from traditional disciplines. With regard specifically to the womanist discussion, Valetia Watkins summarizes the fallacies inherent in simple name changes: “The mere act of adding the adjectives, *black*, *Afrocentric*, *Africana*, or *African* before the word *feminism* does not change the substance and essence of feminism nor divorce feminism from its a priori assumptions. The concept of *womanism* suffers from the same analytical fate as the term *black feminism*. It is not theoretically independent and it shares in common many of the premises of feminism as well as its political vocabulary. The term womanism is only a label change, not a theoretical alternative to feminism.” (emphasis in the original) See Valetia Watkins, “Womanism and Black Feminism: Issues in the Manipulation of African Historiography,” in *The African World History Project: The Preliminary Challenge*, eds. Jacob H. Carruthers and Leon C. Harris, 280.

⁹ More often than not, the researcher is merely a proxy for disciplinary reasoning. On the socialization of researchers and disciplinary continuity, see Andrew Abbott, *Chaos of Disciplines* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) and Tony Becher, *Academic Tribes and Territories : Intellectual Enquiry and the Cultures of Disciplines* (Bristol, PA: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press, 1989).

¹⁰ Scholars in African American Studies have consistently asserted this. For some of the more pertinent analyses, see the collective work of African American Studies scholars: Norment, Jr., ed., *African American Studies Reader* (Carolina Academic Press, 2007); Delores Aldridge and Carlene Young, eds., *Out of the Revolution: The Development of Africana Studies* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000); James L. Conyers, *Africana Studies: A Disciplinary Quest for Both Theory and Method* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1997); Talmadge Anderson, ed., *Black Studies: Theory, Method and Cultural Perspectives* (Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 1990) Lewis Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon, eds., *Not Only the Master's Tools* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2007); and Floyd W. Hayes, III, ed., *A Turbulent Voyage: Readings in African American Studies* (San Diego, CA: Collegiate Press, 1992).

¹¹ On some of these particularities, see inter alia Mattie Dogan and Robert Pahre, “The Fragmentation and Recombination of the Social Sciences,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 24 (Summer 1989): 56-73, Gordon Leff, “The Trivium and the Three Philosophies,” in *A History of the University in Europe: Universities in the Middle Ages*, Vol. 1, eds. Walter Rüegg and H. De Ridder-Symoens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 307-336, and Asa Briggs, “History and the Social Sciences,” in *A History of the University in Europe: Universities in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, Vol. 3, ed. Walter Rüegg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 459-491.

¹² Newer departments have adopted an interdisciplinary structure for Africana Studies with faculty appointments coming from outside the discipline or via joint appointment. This challenges ideas advanced at the birth of the discipline in the 1960s, during which the need for Africana Studies to be autonomous and its own department was consistently articulated. See Robert Allen, “The Politics of the Attack on Black Studies,” *The Black Scholar* 6 (September 1974), 6-7 as well as other contributions of the volumes in note 10. See specifically the NCBS curriculum of 1980, which reveals the reliance of traditional disciplinary knowledge demarcations, though within an autonomous setting, William A. Little, Carolyn M. Leonard, and Edward Crosby, “Black Studies and Africana Studies Curriculum Model in the United States,” in *The African American Studies Reader*, ed. Norment, Jr., 811-831.

¹² It is republished in Lucius Outlaw, “Africology: Normative Theory” in *On Race and Philosophy*, ed. Lucius Outlaw (London: Routledge, 1997). In Outlaw’s view the development of an anti-foundational basis in Maulana Karenga’s and Molefi Asante’s work does not “fare well.” Much of their work, he asserts, is grounded in identification with forms of Africanness or Africinity supposedly persevered in their essence across all cultural

spaces and times. He posits that disruptions (i.e. the Maafa) be taken seriously. See Ibid, 123-124. In many ways, Outlaw seems to be responding to utilization of classical African history and conceptual systems such as the Nguzo Saba by Maulana Karenga and Molefi Asante as “ready-made syntheses accepted without examination.” Ibid, 108. In other words, in Outlaw’s view, their uncritical and unsystematic (at least in their published works) uses of African knowledge complexes as the foundational crux for Africology does not pass muster.

¹⁴ (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1990), See especially Part One, 3-42. This work recalls Karenga’s 1988 article, which echoes Jacob Carruthers’ and Cheikh Anta Diop’s calls for Africans to look at Kemet (Egypt) as the paradigmatic civilization. For Karenga, this is its proper use in a useful paradigm for the discipline. Asante continues this line of reasoning. See Karenga, “Black Studies and the Problematic of Paradigm” 410-412.

¹⁵ Daudi Ajani ya Azibo, "Articulating the Distinction Between Black Studies and the Study of Blacks: The Fundamental Role of Culture and the African-Centered Worldview," In *The African American Studies Reader*, ed. Nathaniel Norment, Jr. (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2007), 525-546; and James Stewart, "Reaching for Higher Ground: Toward an Understanding of Black/Africana Studies," in *Africana Studies: A Disciplinary Quest for Both Theory and Method*, ed. James L. Conyers (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1997), 108-129. These articles along with others appeared in the important initial issue of *The Afrocentric Scholar* (May 1992).

¹⁶ Terry Kershaw, "The Emerging Paradigm in Black Studies," in *Black Studies, Theory, Method, and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Talmadge Anderson, 16-24 and Maulana Karenga, “Black Studies and the Problematic of Paradigm: The Philosophical Dimension.” *Journal of Black Studies* 18 (June 1988): 395-414.

¹⁷ Greg Carr, "Towards an Intellectual History of Africana Studies: Genealogy and Normative Theory," 438-439.

¹⁸ Greg Carr, “What Black Studies is Not: Moving from Crisis to Liberation in Africana Intellectual Work,” *Socialism and Democracy* 25 (March 2011): 180-181; 186-190.

¹⁹ On exemplar creation in Africana Studies, see James B. Stewart, “The Legacy of W.E.B. Du Bois for Contemporary Black Studies,” 297-298.

²⁰ For an extended discussion on Robinson's personal biography and for varied intellectual perspectives on his scholarship generally, see the special issue, Darryl C. Thomas, ed., "Cedric Robinson and the philosophy of Black resistance," *Race and Class* 47 (October 2005). Thomas' lead article, "The Black Radical Tradition- Theory and Practice: Black Studies and the Scholarship of Cedric Robinson" comes closest to assessing the work of Robinson in an explicit Black studies tradition. While it is a valuable and needed contribution, it does not include explicit discussion on methodology and approaches to the discipline of Africana Studies. The balance of the contributions in this issue discuss, review, and reexamine major works of Robinson's and the various contributions to radical theory.

²¹ (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2007).

²² (New York: Routledge, 1997).

²³ Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2000).

²⁴ This understanding of the terms “social structure” and “governance” stems from a reading of Greg Carr, “Teaching and Studying The African(a) Experience: Definitions and Categories,” in *Lessons in Africana Studies*, ed. Greg Carr (Philadelphia: Songhai Press and the School District of Philadelphia 2005), 14-15. These ways of studying human experiences must be delinked from the universalizing impulse inherent in Western disciplinary

discourse, long acknowledged by thinkers of every persuasion. As such, this particular methodological consideration continues to acknowledge importance of understanding these differences in “gaze.”

²⁵ Along with the major texts presented above, Robinson has also published a number of articles appearing across a vast selection of periodicals. A great deal of Robinson's publications appeared prior to the elaboration of book-length studies. His extensive study on film, media, and representation *Forgeries*, was antedated by a plethora of scholarly pieces that anticipated the consideration of viewing Western civilization and social structures as products of an extended genealogy. These pieces ranged from early studies of the media and public consumption to examinations of the nature and genealogy of propaganda. These include Cedric Robinson, “Blaxploitation and the Misrepresentation of Liberation,” *Race and Class* 40 (July 1998): 1-12 and “Mass Media and the U.S. Presidency,” in *Questioning the Media*, eds. John Downing, Ali Mohammadi, and Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1990): 94-111.

Much of his research articles examine the contours of race, historiography, and political theory, the latter being his area of formal training. This has allowed him to derive essential meaning for Africans across the world on the political machinery of the West. For example, see Cedric Robinson, “Capitalism, Slavery, and Bourgeois Historiography,” *History Workshop* 23 (Spring 1987): 122-140.

In line with this, we see the theme of exploring the ways in which exemplars of the Black radical tradition attack these issues. Some representative works include, Cedric Robinson, “Oliver Cromwell Cox and the Historiography of the West,” *Cultural Critique* 17 (Winter 1990-1991): 5-19, “The Appropriation of Fanon,” *Race and Class* 35 (July 1998): 79-91, and “Amilcar Cabral and the Dialectic of Portuguese Colonialism,” *Radical America* 15 (May-June 1981): 39-57.

The international orientation of his work is seen with his dealing with global crises from the South Africa struggle to historical commentaries on the Italo-Ethiopian War. An early example is Cedric Robinson, “The African Diaspora and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis,” *Race and Class* 27 (October 1985): 51-65. An extended bibliography of all the works of Cedric Robinson prior to 2005 appears in the aforementioned special issue of *Race and Class*, 47. No. 2 edited by Darryl C. Thomas. This discussion is based on the works appearing on that list. See “Bibliography of publications by Cedric Robinson,” 115-118.

²⁶ Carr, “What Black Studies is Not,” 180.

²⁷ Hereafter, referred to in the article as *Forgeries*.

²⁸ He explains: “Racial regimes are constructed social systems in which race is proposed as a justification for the relations of power. While necessarily articulated with accruals of power, the covering conceit of a racial regime is a makeshift patchwork masquerading as memory and the immutable. Nevertheless, racial regimes do possess history, that is, discernible origins and mechanism of assembly. But racial regimes are unrelentingly hostile to their exhibition. This antipathy exists because a discoverable history is incompatible with a racial regime and from the realization that, paradoxically, so are its social relations.” Robinson, *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning*, xii.

²⁹ Further, the discipline sets out to counter normative representations of African intellectual responses as outlined in traditional Western discourse. See the aforementioned, Carr, “What Black Studies is Not,” 180-181. We have already explained Carr’s notion of the Black radical tradition approach. Carr outlines other approaches that attempt to explain African intellectual genealogies. These are: the emic/etic approach, the unbroken genealogy approach, the alternative epistemology approach and the sui generis approach. Each of these understands the development of African intellectual genealogies in similar ways, although each are different in important areas. The alternative epistemology approach attempts to create out of the other approaches, norms and standards of disciplinary theory and methodology. The work of Cedric Robinson provides ways of clearing the conceptual space to generate norms out of African-descended intellectual genealogies.

²⁹ As explained in the preface to the volume, conceptually, Robinson's position within Black Studies affords him an alternative gaze to the dominant constructions of meaning inherent within the discipline of film history. See Robinson, *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning*, xvi.

³¹ Relying on the insights of John G. Jackson and Jack Forbes, Robinson asserts that the "twinning phenomena" of racial consciousness and identity were not "unrelated." Consciousness of "enslaved" identity was embedded in terms which only later came to be viewed as only "racial." On the next page, Robinson then gives a brief synopsis of other "postmedieval cultures" in Elizabethan England which were "embedded with factors of enslavement" to show that African enslavement was "hardly a phenomenon divorced from the social history of the British isles." Quoting Orlando Patterson's *Slavery and Social Death*, he also shows that this was not limited to the British Isles. See *Ibid.*, 7-8.

³² According to Robinson, many scholars "have a great deal of difficulty in assigning the emergence of racial discourses before the advent of the Atlantic or African slave trade." See the brief discussion and notes from *Ibid.*, 4-5. The question of intra-European racism has been raised by a number of scholars in what has been labeled, "whiteness studies." White scholars such as Theodore Allen and David Roediger show that English racism may have indeed had its origins in the British context. Though these texts explain the political-economic aspects of racism, Robinson is able to delve deeper into the cultural approaches of acknowledging the *other* within British communities. He anticipates many of their subsequent arguments in Part I of his earlier text, *Black Marxism* to be discussed *infra*. See *inter alia* Theodore Allen, *The Invention of the White Race* (2. Vols)(New York: Verso, 1994) and David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness* (New York: Verso, 1999).

³³ This is the title of the first chapter of *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning* and is an extension of an article published under the same name six years earlier. For this iteration see, Robinson, "The Inventions of the Negro," *Social Identities* 7 (September 2001): 329-361.

³⁴ Robinson shows this through an examination of the ideas of the seventeenth century critic, Thomas Rymer. See *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning*, 28-31.

³⁵ See *Ibid.*, 37-81. Of these, the one with perhaps the most bearing on Africana Studies methodology is the development of race science. Robinson shows how the Smithsonian became the center of many "scientific" representations of African physical and mental theories. His examination shows that even science, "exists within historical and cultural matrices" *Ibid.*, 62. These, as his quotation of Franz Boas would imply, had never been "particularly good" (read: *representative*) with regard to studies of African people. See *Ibid.*, 81. This echoes the conclusions of Jacob Carruthers' *Science and Oppression*. In this short piece, Carruthers is able to show that Western science, whether "hard" or "soft" has at its base, worldviews which contribute to the subjugation, or perhaps what Robinson would understand as the "othering" of non-Western peoples. See Jacob Carruthers, *Science and Oppression* (Chicago: Kemetic Institute, 1972).

³⁶ Robinson, of course details the ways in which minstrelsy and (re)presentative imagery of Africans were used to support slavery and extend racial ideas about them, but he also shows how abolitionists attempted to institutionalize what they thought of as positive imagery of the African to promote the abolition of slavery. This is the legacy of the "noble slave." See *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning*, 38-45.

³⁷ This shift in productive forces had to appropriate a "vast but disparate labor force which required cultural discipline, social habituation, and political regulation" that "required race discourse to function." *Ibid.*, 92.

³⁸ This "rewhiting," which occurred in 1915, was the period when "the mapping of American culture was reinscribed, when the contours of the social practices which came to characterize twentieth century American society were fixed." *Ibid.*

³⁹ Ibid, 108.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 115.

⁴¹ In the context of a development of an intelligentsia, the construction of a radical historiography mirrors conceptually that of the radical minstrelsy and will be discussed infra. See Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 189-195.

⁴² James Weldon Johnson is an exemplar that Robinson points to as one who utilized deceptive imagery and casting to comment on racial issues through his minstrel, and other artistic and literary productions. He states: "Minstrelsy functioned as a Trojan horse for this militant segment of the Black petit bourgeoisie. And though the determinant narrative of their insurgency into American popular culture was provided in 1930 by James Weldon Johnson in his *Black Manhattan*, he muted their radicalism and employed frequent misdirection. In that sense, Johnson's historical reconstruction of the subversion of minstrelsy mirrored some of the deceptive techniques of his Black minstrel collaborators," Ibid, 150.

⁴³ Ibid,128.

⁴⁴ Taylor's book is an extended examination of the role of aesthetics in the constructing of "the other," and more importantly, how that connects with the politics of representation that supports the dehumanizing status quo of the West. A useful future study would read Robinson's discussion of African American theater workers and filmmakers against Taylor's construction of a typology for examining resistances to the aesthetic. For these see Clyde Taylor, *The Mask of Art: Breaking the Aesthetic Contract- Film and Literature* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1998), 153-175.

⁴⁵ According to James Turner: "As a methodology, history, in Black Studies constitutes the foundation for theoretical construction of an analysis of the fundamental relationship between the political economy of societal developments and the racial divisions of labor and privilege, and the common patterns of life chances peculiar to the social conditions of Black people." James Turner, "Foreword: Africana Studies and Epistemology: A Discourse in the Sociology of Knowledge," in *The Next Decade: Theoretical and Research Issues in Africana Studies*, ed. James Turner, ix-x. This idea is echoed in Maulana Karenga's *Introduction to Black Studies* as well as in Asantean Afrocentricity. For their understandings see Pero Gaglo Dagbovie, "History as a Core Subject Area of African American Studies: Self-Taught and Self-Proclaimed African American Historians, 1960s-1980s," *Journal of Black Studies* 37 (May 2007): 602-629. History in Africana Studies builds upon the usage of the area adopted by an extended genealogy of thinkers, who according to the eminent intellectual historian, Earl Thorpe, had at its central theme the political aims of "equality, freedom and manhood." See his *Black Historians: A Critique* (New York: Morrow, 1968), 40 and his *The Central Theme of Black History* (Durham, NC: Seeman, 1969). This broader application to both socio-political movements and the reconnection to earlier memories has long been an impulse in what has been termed "African nationalist" intellectual communities this genealogy is explored in Greg Carr's 1998 Temple University dissertation and perhaps distinguishes the approaches to history among African thinkers from the disciplinary (as articulated mainly by German thinkers) base of history in the West. See Greg E. Kimathi Carr, "African Philosophy of History in the Contemporary Era: Its Antecedents and Methodological Implications for the African Contribution to World History," (PhD diss., Temple University, 1998).

⁴⁶ These "remembering visions" constitute the African attempts to develop memory of themselves, both historically and culturally to reverse the dismemberment of Africa. See Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Something Torn and New: An African Renaissance* (New York: Basic Civitas, 2009), 33-65.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 35.

⁴⁸ As a reviewer would point out, *Black Movements* has neither an introduction nor a conclusion, which made it more difficult to understand what Robinson's central thesis was in any neat fashion. However, the text provides major themes and Robinson is clear in his attempts to (re)examine the nature of mass political movements (and on a lesser, though important level—cultural continuity) in the Americas to understand the genealogy of political cultures among Africans in America. For the review, see Rich Newman, "Book Reviews: The Americas," *The Historian* 61 (Spring 1999): 683-684. For a review that acknowledges the foregoing conclusions concerning Robinson's thesis, see David Leonard, "Book Reviews: *Black Movements in America*," *The Black Scholar* 28 (Spring 1998): 86-87.

⁴⁹ According to Robinson, "Resistance among the slave and bonded laborers assumed various appearances; appeals to the courts, physical violence, flight, and rebelliousness." *Black Movements in America*, 8.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 20. The question of rule of law and the "delusions of social order" is examined forcefully in the Robinson's 1980 study, *The Terms of Order*.

⁵¹ Robinson explicates these terms in his discussion of Nat Turner, showing that his personage "signaled the appearance of a new historical, psychological and cultural phenomenon, a personality formed from a cultural fusion coincidental to the enslavement of Africans in the New World," *Ibid*, 36. For Robinson, this fusion was based upon the "cultural materials of the messianic narratives of Christianity and African beliefs in the transmigration of the soul. The coincidence of moral order and genuine authority, and what Michel Foucault would term the 'archaeology of knowledge,'" *Ibid*, 37. The discussion of this "fusion" has been explored by, *inter alia*, Michael Gomez whose discussion is shaped by the extended explication of cultural anteniors found in West African and West Central African belief systems. See Michael Gomez, *Exchanging our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 244-290.

⁵² For Robinson's discussion on Pointe Coupee see, *Black Movements in America*, 31-33. Sterling Stuckey and Michael Gomez have provided excellent analyses of how Africans across various ethnicities came to employ resistance via their uses of common cultures and shared epistemologies. See Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and Foundations of Black America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) and Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*.

⁵³ Michael Gomez offers an examination of how different ethnicities often-created maroon communities together—which he conceptualizes as the development of a racially formed identity, in distinction from one that was ethnically-based. See Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 52-53; 182-185.

⁵⁴ See Robinson, *Black Movements in America*, 40-44.

⁵⁵ In the opening statement to the chapter, Robinson shows that this community ranged from "those free Blacks in Louisiana who themselves owned slaves and, at another, by the insurrectionary army of whites, free Blacks, and fugitive slaves gathered by John Brown at Harper's Ferry in 1859." *Ibid*, 45.

⁵⁶ Robinson explains: "In the absence of any more exact evidence, we can surmise that the vast majority of Black opposed slavery, while whites were divided by class, religion, and region on the question of support for the system," *Ibid*, 46. The balance of chapter three discusses the phases of abolition in the free Black community as well as ideas of sovereignty.

⁵⁷ Chapters 4-6 cover the period of African American political history from the Civil War until the 1960s. Robinson discusses the nature of political organizations and groups that sought to work on behalf of the Black population. These included the Blacks in the Reconstruction governments, the Freedmen's Bureau, the Black Church (AME,

AMEZ, and CME), the Colored Farmer's National Alliance, Ida Wells and anti-lynching, the National Association of Colored Women, the Niagara Movement, the NAACP, the Black Left, the Black labor movement, the UNIA, SNCC, CORE, and the SCLC.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 144.

⁵⁹ Robinson, *Black Movements in America*, 96.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid, 97.

⁶² An old argument, the notion of Africans or other non-Western peoples asserting their right to formulate knowledge based upon their particularities, continues to be dismissed as essentializing—an irony and contradiction Western intellectual history has been privileged enough to escape. Robinson has commented on variations of this idea in the context of the “culture wars” of the early 1990s. His “Manichaeism and Multiculturalism” shows the political origins of the attacks on multiculturalism from neoconservatives as a fear that it will ensure the provocation of “an alternative dialectic of ethics between the desperate particularity of the Same and the anguished universality of the Other.” Viewing this “particularity of the Same” as Western discourse, Robinson asserts that multiculturalism should be “a site of discursive resistance, an emblem and articulation of the several trajectories of “objective” opposition,” Cedric Robinson, “Manichaeism and Multiculturalism,” in *Mapping Multiculturalism*, eds., Avery F. Gordon and Christopher Newfield (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 119; 122. Africana Studies is one such site and trajectory, though methodologically it attempts (or should) to go beyond the limiting scope of Western constructions of knowledge that animate many ethnic and cultural studies disciplines.

⁶³ By showing the genealogies of these political cultures, we also see the exemplification of the fourth listed consideration discussed infra. Helpful in understanding the role of broader African communities in the development of genealogies of resistance is Ella Baker's understanding of the Africana community. Her oft-quoted, “A strong people don't need strong leaders” reveals her understanding of how Africans operated leadership structures. The first political culture we outlined had viewed these philosophies quite differently due to their proximity to Western philosophies of leadership. On Baker, see inter Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: a Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2005) and Muhammad Ahmad, *African American History Since 1900* (New York: Pearson Custom Publishing, 2007), 150-155. In Gomez's examination of the various African ethnicities, which comprise African America, he discusses the traditional and antecedent cultural forms of leadership among West African groups. A synthesis of these cultures' view on “democracy,” for lack of a better term, may explain this impulse among the majority of African Americans. See Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 38-153. Contextualizing these communities this way also brings the third and fourth considerations into sharper view.

⁶⁴ As Greg Carr asserts, “Africana Studies is not a de-linking of intellectual work from the Pan-African political movements and social policy informed by the social policy of these movements.” Carr, “What Black Studies is Not” 186.

⁶⁵ One of the earliest textbooks in the discipline has been considered by many scholars to take a class and/or labor approach to the African American experience. See Abdul Alkalimat and Associates, *Introduction to Afro-American Studies: A Peoples College Primer* (Chicago: Twenty First Century Books and Publications, 1974).

⁶⁶ The most widely read reviews are Cornel West's 1983 review in *Monthly Review* and Robin D.G. Kelley's “Foreword” to the 2000 edition of the text published by the University of North Carolina Press. These reviews, and

others, reveal the importance of the articulation of a Black radical tradition, but many fail to capture its relevance for not only the politics of knowledge, but for the reconnection of African memory and continuity. The Marxist thinker Gregory Meyerson's review characterizes Robinson's examination as more than simply a critique of Marxist mini-narratives (i.e. its neglect of gender and/or racial issues in twentieth century radical thought). Meyerson characterizes Robinson's intervention as critique of the entire grand narrative of Marxist thought. Meyerson, who by sheer ideological orientation is uninterested in large measure with African thought, nevertheless reveals this important truism inherent in Robinson's text. See Gregory Meyerson, "Rethinking Black Marxism: Reflections on Cedric Robinson and Others," *Cultural Logic* 3 (Spring 2000): 1-45. For West's review, see Cornel West, "Black Radicalism and the Marxist Tradition," *Monthly Review* 40 (September 1988): 51-56.

⁶⁷ Despite the fact that Fabio Rojas' survey of canonical texts in Africana Studies reveals that *Black Marxism* receives a rating of 3.02 in terms of level of importance to the discipline (on a scale of 1 to 5), very few thinkers within the discipline have explored the ramifications of *Black Marxism* in print. These included the aforementioned Carr, but also Maulana Karenga, who comments on the text in passing. On the question of the genealogy of Marxism and its embrace by Black thinkers he states: "Without an honest recognition of this cultural and epistemological limitation by Black Marxists and an attempt to creatively deal with and diminish it, a synthesis is neither possible nor desirable for Black Studies. Certainly Robinson (1983) is to be commended for his honest and critical appraisal of this problem in a well-thought out and impressive volume..." See Karenga, "Black Studies and the Problematic of Paradigm, 407-408. Carr has included in his definition of the discipline the notion that Africana Studies "is the academic manifestation of what Cedric Robinson has termed the Black Radical tradition." This elevates Robinson's construction into a useful frame for viewing work within the discipline. See Carr, "What Black Studies is Not," 178 and "Towards an Intellectual History of Africana Studies," 438. For Rojas' survey, see Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 202.

⁶⁸ The ideas of Karl Marx can be culled from his three-volume *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (New York: Penguin, 1993), Robert Tucker, ed. *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1978) and Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York: Penguin, 2006). A number of critical works have appeared, see inter alia, Terrell Carver, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Marx* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁶⁹ These included thinkers such as Harry Haywood, Otto Huiswoud, and Claude McKay, among others in the first half of the twentieth century. For Robinson's discussion of them, see *Black Marxism*, 212-228.

⁷⁰ See Robinson, *An Anthropology of Marxism* (London: Ashgate, 2001).

⁷¹ The English factory worker's experience was the predominant lens for the development of radical theory during this era. See Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 29-43. David MacGregor makes a theoretical (and perhaps genealogical) connection to Marx's *Capital* with another commentator on the English experience, Georg W.F. Hegel. See his *Hegel, Marx, and The English State* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

⁷² The balance of Chapter Three, "Socialist Theory and Nationalism," considers the emergence of nationalism and Europe and its effect on the evolution of Marxian thought.

⁷³ He summarizes: "As we shall observe in the next section of this study (Part Two), the results have been rather bizarre; some students of racism have happily reiterated the premise of a sort of mass psychology of chromatic trauma in which European reactions to darker-skinned peoples are seen as nature; others, including Marxists, have argued for as simplistic "empiricism: where the inevitable consequences of slavery and domination are the rationalizations of racial superiority and inferiority. In each instance, the root of the methodological and conceptual

flaws is the same: the presumption that the social and historical processes that matter, which are determinative, are European. All else it seems, is derivative” Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 67-68.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 72-73.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 122.

⁷⁶ These are discussed throughout Chapter Six, “Historical Archaeology of the Black Radical Tradition,” Ibid, 121-166.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 171.

⁷⁸ In other words, much of the cultural and intellectual characteristics of the Black radical tradition were actually derived from earlier memories of the resistance of African ancestors. Robinson states: “In the twentieth century, when Black radical thinkers had acquired new habits of thought in keeping, some of them supposed, with the new conditions of their people, their task eventually became the revelation of the older tradition. Not surprisingly, they would discover it first in their history, and finally around them. The Black radical tradition that they were to discover from a Black historical experience nearly grounded under the intellectual weight and authority of the official European version of the past, was to be the foundation upon which they stood. From this vantage point they could survey the theoretical, ideological, and political instrumentation with which Western radicalism approached the problem of revolutionary social change. The Black radical tradition cast doubt on the extent to which capitalism penetrated and re-formed social life and on its ability to create entirely new categories of human experience stripped bare of the historical consciousness embedded in culture. It gave them cause to question the authority of a radical intelligentsia drawn by its own analyses from marginal and ambiguous social strata to construct an adequate manifestation of proletarian power. And it drew them more and more toward the actual discourse of revolutionary masses, the impulse to make history in their own terms. And finally, the Black radical tradition forced them to reevaluate the nature and historical roles of ideology and consciousness. After all it had been as an emergent African people and not as slaves that Black men and women had opposed enslavement,” Ibid, 170-171.

⁷⁹ Robinson argues that this intellectual class’ “brilliance was also derivative. The truer genius was in the midst of the people of whom they wrote.” Ibid, 184.

⁸⁰ Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 122.

⁸¹ Ibid, 177. Their significance was gleaned from how they contributed to human civilization via “communities of meaning”: the special orientations to reality developed from African ways of knowing applied to various contexts. On “communities of meaning,” See Lucius T. Outlaw, Jr., “‘Conserve’ Races?: In Defense of W.E.B. Du Bois,” in *W.E.B. Du Bois On Race & Culture: Philosophy, Politics, and Poetics*, eds. Bernard W. Bell, Emily R. Grosholz, and James B. Stewart (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 31-32. This is linked to Carr’s contention that the “articulation of a genealogy of Africana intellectual work which aligns disciplinary Africana Studies within a range of normative practice emerging out of long-view genealogy” is the next stage in the development of Africana Studies. He further asserts that this has begun to allow thinkers to reframe “ideas of genealogies of Africana intellectual work out of these [music, dance, art, and spiritual practices] categories.” Carr, “Towards an Intellectual History of Africana Studies,” 439.

⁸² See Stewart’s “The Legacy of W.E.B. Du Bois for Contemporary Black Studies,” is discussed supra. Carr’s definition is in Carr, “Towards an Intellectual History of Africana Studies: Genealogy and Normative Theory,” 438 and repeated in Carr, “What Black Studies is Not,” 178.

⁸³ Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 238.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 68.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 278-286.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 291.

⁸⁷ From Kemetic historiography through the traditionalists of West Africa (often called *griots*), the understanding of relationships between those of common cultural and/or national extractions is central to historical framing of events. See Jacob Carruthers, "An African Historiography of the 21st Century," in *The African World History Project: The Preliminary Challenge*, eds. Jacob H. Carruthers and Leon C. Harris, 47-72 and Amadou Hampate Ba, "The Living Tradition," in *General History of Africa, Volume I: Methodology and African Prehistory*, ed. Joseph Ki-Zerbo (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981), 166-205.

⁸⁸ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co, 1903), 6.

⁸⁹ The idea of participant and observer as it relates to the discipline of Africana Studies can be found in the works of Black social scientists and theorists. See inter alia the discussion of Ronald Taylor, "The Study of Black People: A Survey of Empirical and Theoretical Models" in *Black Studies, Theory, Method and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Talmadge Anderson, 11-15.

⁹⁰ On the traditionalist-doma, see Ba, "The Living Tradition" and on the role of the Kemetic sesh, see the work of Theophile Obenga, *African Philosophy: The Pharaonic Period, 2780-330 BC* (Popenguine, Senegal: Per Ankh Books, 2004). Connections to the African American conception of "master-teacher" can also be made here.

⁹¹ For a discussion of objectivity and the traditional disciplines see James Turner, "Africana Studies and Epistemology: A Discourse in the Sociology of Knowledge," in *The Next Decade: Theoretical and Research Issues in Africana Studies* ed. James E Turner (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Africana Studies and Research Center). This seminal article also appears in Norment, Jr., ed., *The African American Studies Reader*, 74-87, Conyers, ed., *Africana Studies*, 91-107, and Young and Aldridge, ed., *Out of the Revolution*, 59-75. See also the work of Winston Van Horne, "Africology: A Discipline of the Twenty- First Century," in *The African American Studies Reader*, ed. Norment, Jr., 411-419.

⁹² According to Van Horne, it is simply a moot point as to whether or not disciplines *should* serve particular interests. The sheer reality is that they all have and do. See Van Horne, "Africology: A Discipline of the Twenty-First Century," 412.

⁹³ See Van Horne, "Africology," 415-418 and Carr, "Inscribing African World History," 18-20.

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