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Introduction

THE "AUTONOMY" OF BLACK RADICALISM

Brent Hayes Edwards

The interview with Grace Lee Boggs and the essays on W. E. B. Du Bois and Richard Wright in this issue of *Social Text* are selections from a forthcoming collection of recent work on the history of black radicalism: *Rethinking Black Marxism*.[1] The collection is intended to fill a gap in our understanding of the politics of black radical activity during the twentieth century and to respond to a sense that the remarkable wealth of new work on the subject has marked a significant shift in historiographic orientation. More than twenty years ago, a number of historians began to revisit the participation of African Americans in the U.S. Communist Party, challenging the consensus of Cold War–period scholars, including Wilson Record and Harold Cruse, that—in the memorable phrase of Mark Naison—the story of blacks and communism was shot through from top to bottom with "manipulation, disillusionment, and betrayal."[2] The "new historians" of organized communism, working with a "willingness to acknowledge the indigenous influences on party politics,"[3] offered a more sanguine view of the legacy of blacks in communism, noting in particular the sometimes subtle impact of African American radicals on party policy and practice at both the local and national levels.[4]

The growing body of scholarship that has emerged in the wake of this revisionist project has extended its focus on black participation in communist movements to take up the broader and interconnected field of black radical work, whether party-based or not, especially in the metropolitan centers of the West. The orientation of the historiography has largely shifted, in other words, from unraveling the intricacies of organized communism to elucidating the complex parameters of African diasporic radicalism in all its varieties.[5] Recent work emphasizes, for instance, the common ground of radicalism inhabited in a place like Harlem in the 1920s by interacting and overlapping forces as diverse as Cyril Briggs's African Blood Brotherhood, Marcus Garvey's UNIA (Universal Negro Improvement Association), the socialist organizing of A. Philip Randolph and the group linked to the *Messenger*, W. E. B. Du Bois's nascent Pan-Africanism, Claude McKay's internationalist "vagabond" Bolshevism, and the antiracist campaigns of Walter White and the NAACP. The short-

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lived and still-mysterious African Blood Brotherhood has garnered a disproportionate amount of critical attention in this new work, as a "classic example" of an attempt to "organically conjoin Marxism and Black Nationalism,"[6] precisely because it embodies for a number of historians the quickly shifting object of study that is black radicalism. As Winston James has recently argued, if New Negro radicalism in the 1920s moved along a continuum from the vehement nationalism of the UNIA to the "orthodox" socialism of the *Messenger*, the African Blood Brotherhood swung productively between these poles, maintaining "a rather unstable equilibrium," but "at no point did it touch, let alone merge during its independent existence with, the politics represented at either end of the continuum."[7] There is a turn here, an attraction both to what we might term the *autonomy* of black radical groups and to their theoretical grappling—as fleeting or as fumbling as such work might be—toward a position and a praxis that would attend to both class *and* race in promoting social transformation.[8]

This historiographic shift is not only a departure from party-centered considerations of radicalism; it is also a return: it indicates a renewed attention to the methodologies and strategies embedded within key works within the African diasporic intellectual tradition itself, such as W. E. B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction* (1935) and C. L. R. James's *The Black Jacobins* (1938).[9] Du Bois and James—in elucidating the "underground history" of a black diasporic engagement with and shaping of Western discourses of American postbellum Reconstruction, on the one hand, and eighteenth-century French revolutionary republicanism, on the other—both insist on understanding the specific contours of black radicalism. As Grace Lee Boggs recounts, James gave an influential speech in 1948 to the Socialist Workers Party convention in New York that may be the most forceful crystallization of this perspective. Distinguishing the work of his small pressure group, the "Johnson-Forest Tendency," from previous positions on the "Negro Question" in the socialist movement—which tended to think of the struggles of black peoples against racism and oppression as subordinate to the class struggle, as outbursts of merely "episodic value"—James contends on the contrary:

> We say, number one, that the Negro struggle, the independent Negro struggle, has a vitality and a validity of its own; that it has deep historic roots in the past of America and in present struggles; it has an organic political perspective, along which it is traveling, to one degree or another. . . .
>
> We say, number two, that this independent Negro movement is able to intervene with terrific force upon the general social and political life of the nation, despite the fact that it is waged under the banner of democratic rights, and is not led necessarily either by the organized labor movement or

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> the Marxist party. We say, number three, and this is the most important, that it is able to exercise a powerful influence upon the revolutionary proletariat, that it has got a great contribution to make to the development of the proletariat in the Untied States, and that it is in itself a constituent part of the struggle for socialism. In this way we challenge directly any attempt to subordinate or to push to the rear the social and political significance of the independent Negro struggle for democratic rights.[10]

James insists on the autonomy of the "Negro struggle," with its own "organic political perspective." The movement, as he notes, is sometimes Marxist in character, sometimes anticolonial, sometimes "waged under the banner of democratic rights," but in all these forms it has had an indelible impact on the shape of radical praxis. The "Negro struggle" is not merely influential, however: it is "constitutive" in the development of the proletariat and in the struggle for socialist revolution. James's words are not just a call to action. Nor are they simply a rhetorical challenge, calling the bluff of the Socialist Workers Party with regard to the "Negro question." They also propose a historiography. They announce a project that is taken up in recent scholarship on black radicalism: to unearth and analyze the "deep historic roots" of the "independent Negro movement."[11]

Recent work likewise follows up on a claim particularly evident in James's work, that revolutionary movements "take forms that are often cultural and religious rather than explicitly political."[12] This is both a point about mass insurgency and an argument about artistic expression. Considering just how many black activists also wrote literature that engaged questions of radicalism (Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. Du Bois, Claude McKay, Lamine Senghor, C. L. R. James, Richard Wright), it becomes indispensable to take an interdisciplinary approach to a historiography of activity that is itself so resolutely interdisciplinary. This is an issue that Alys Weinbaum takes up directly, for the multifaceted output of W. E. B. Du Bois poses this issue perhaps more markedly than the work of most other twentieth-century black intellectuals. Why, in his move away from liberal antiracist activism toward the more explicitly Marxist analysis that would bloom in *Black Reconstruction* and *Dusk of Dawn*, does Du Bois in 1928 write a *novel*, and more specifically a "romance"? Weinbaum begins to answer this question with her incisive reading of the way Du Bois's figure of the "black All-Mother" allows an evocation of what she terms "racial globality"—and allows him to broach in his fiction issues being debated in black nationalist circles and in the Communist International. In this sense, the literary may represent, as Sylvia Wynter has argued with regard to the "blurred genre" of C. L. R. James's 1963 "autosociography," *Beyond a Boundary*, the "condition of

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An important feature of the common ground of black radicalism is that it is consistently diasporic.

possibility of the emergence of a doctrine."[13] In recent literary historical work on black radicalism, this approach strives to attend to the complexity of such a relationship, without conceiving the literary to be simply propaganda or program—that is, a kind of cauldron for "real" political praxis, socialist struggle, and direct action.[14] This approach is now being elaborated in terms of other forms of cultural expression, particularly in an exciting explosion of work on the politics of black music.[15]

At the same time, the work of Du Bois and James inaugurates another shift in focus from the nation-state to a transnational or Pan-African frame of reference, a shift that has been integral in recent scholarship on anticolonialism and black internationalism. An important feature of the common ground of black radicalism is that it is consistently diasporic; from the mid-nineteenth century onward, black radicals "were keenly aware of the larger struggle of Africans and people of African descent throughout the world" against colonization, disenfranchisement, slavery, and segregation.[16] Thus, although the Marxist tradition developed some of the most visible and enduring forms of internationalist thought and practice during this period, it did not exhaust the field of this sort of activity. In other words, *Rethinking Black Marxism* is conceived less as a study of the contributions of Africans and those of African descent to a wider tradition of Marxist struggle than as a study of the ways Marxist struggles have informed and contributed to a wider tradition of black radicalism.[17]

The most explicit contemporary precursor of this historiographic shift is Cedric J. Robinson's monumental but often overlooked 1983 study, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*.[18] Like Du Bois and James, Robinson argues that black discourses of liberation are both constitutive of and finally exorbitant to the Western intellectual traditions commonly assumed to be the historical pivot and motor of the modern world system. First, Robinson attempts to reformulate our understanding of the category of class, proposing a historically grounded notion of "racial capitalism," which he argues is indispensable for an explanation of global capitalist development (*BM*, 9–28). But at the same time, he suggests that there exists an African diasporic "theory of history" (visible especially in black resistance to slavery and exploitation)—a construct engaged with Marxism, but not *of* Marxism. The black radical tradition is not, finally, subordinate to or comprehensible through Marxism, and *Black Marxism* sets out to track the "failed efforts to render the historical being of Black peoples into a construct of historical materialism, to signify our existence as merely an opposition to capitalist oppression." Extending this argument historically, Robinson notes that Western society and Western theoretical discourses like Marxism are necessary conditions for the emergence of black radicalism, but they are not alone sufficient to explain

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it—the black radical tradition moves in a different epistemological "tempo," it aims at another "zone of interrogation" (*BM*, 177).

In his long sixth chapter on black resistance and rebellion, Robinson attempts to produce a "historical archeology of the Black Radical Tradition." Using mainly traditional histories of revolt, Robinson aims here to synthesize not just a history of "episodic" and reactive uprising but instead the particular "revolutionary consciousness that proceeded from the whole historical experience of Black people and not merely from the social formations of capitalist slavery or the relations of production of colonialism" (*BM,* 169). The methodology is striking. Even in 1938, C. L. R. James had commented that in the Haitian revolution, one of the most bloody in history, the former slaves were "surprisingly moderate, then and afterwards, far more humane than their masters had been or would ever be to them. . . . The cruelties of property and privilege are always more ferocious than the revenges of poverty and oppression."[19] Drawing on a number of similar comments about the "absence of mass violence" (*BM*, 168) in black struggle, Robinson argues that the ultimate goal of black radical praxis is not material conquest, moral vengeance, or political dominance, but "the preservation of the ontological totality granted by a metaphysical system that had never allowed for property in either the physical, philosophical, temporal, legal, social, or psychic senses" (*BM*, 168).

It has not been previously noted that in terms of methodology, Robinson's historiography has much in common with the work of the "subaltern studies" group of historians working on peasant insurgency in the Indian subcontinent. Ranajit Guha's insistence, for example, that a critical historiography must strive to "exceed the limits of its conceptual universe," and that critical discourse comes "from outside the universe of dominance which provides the critique with its object, indeed, from another and historically antagonistic universe,"[20] is in consonance with Robinson's contention that black radicalism "cannot be understood within the particular context of its genesis," that "Black radicalism is a negation of Western civilization, but not in the direct sense of a simple dialectical negation" (*BM*, 73). Both historiographies attempt to read a record of what Robinson terms the "collective consciousness" of radicalism or "collective being, the ontological totality" (*BM*, 171), and what Guha calls the emerging "theoretical consciousness" of peasant-rebel anticolonial insurgency.[21] Both are theorizations of *totality*: Robinson refers to the "ontological" or "integral totality of the people themselves" (*BM*, 169), and Guha also tracks subalternity as a "totality" (*EA*, 157–58), "a pervasive theoretical consciousness which gives insurgency its categorical unity and helps to sort out its specific and separate moments" (*EA*, 334). In doing

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so, both pose the issue of whether it is necessary for a theory of radicalism to be also a theory of totality.[22]

Both start from the methodological assumption that one can read what Guha calls the "consciousness of insurgency" within a "discourse of counter-insurgency"—that is, within the archives of colonialism and within the recesses of traditional bourgeois historiography (*EA*, 15). Guha describes this method of reading as an attention to "an image caught in a distorting mirror" or to a "writing in reverse" that is "inscribed in elite discourse" (*EA*, 333). "In short," he adds, "we have been led to conclude that the documentation on insurgency must itself be turned upside down in order to reconstitute the insurgent's project aimed at reversing his world" (*EA*, 333). Robinson similarly suggests that the historian must approach the black radical tradition through what Stuart Hall calls the "narrow eye of the negative," noting toward the end of *Black Marxism* that the "work required a certain destructuring of American and Western historiography" (*BM*, 307).[23] The key divergence between the two methods, of course, is that Guha expressly engages in a project of Indian nationalist anti-imperialist historiography, whereas Robinson would seem to contend that nationalist anti-imperialist historiography is necessarily *also* transnational or diasporic due to the politics of race. In other words, their versions of anti-imperialism differ with regard to their investment in the frame of the nation-state. One wonders whether to read Robinson's invocation of a black radical tradition through the provocative lens offered by Gayatri Spivak in relation to subaltern studies, as the "strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest."[24] Here, beyond the issue of *Black Marxism*'s reliance on a positivist construct of the *subject* of insurgency, Robinson's work also forces one to question the strategy of what seems to be an explicit *racial* essentialism. What is the "scrupulously visible political interest" of defining the "totality" of radical consciousness as "ontologically" black?

It should be clear that the three articles that follow here are meant to echo—at a certain distance—the three examples cited in the second half of Robinson's study: W. E. B. Du Bois, C. L. R. James, and Richard Wright. Robinson turns to these three intellectuals in an effort to come to terms with the black petit bourgeois thinkers and activists who began to voice and historicize a black radical tradition in the second half of the twentieth century. The dissonance with Robinson's vision of the three should be apparent, in Weinbaum's feminist take on Du Bois, in Gaines's rehabilitative anticolonialist reading of Wright's *Black Power* (a work not taken up in Robinson's study), and in the spirited conversation among Kathryne Lindberg, Todd Duncan, and Grace Lee Boggs. Boggs was a former collaborator of James; after he left the United States in the early

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1950s, she got off the train of James's increasing celebrity as a radical intellectual in exile in order to pursue a very different—and still active—model of radical praxis as extreme localism through urban "place-based" activism in Detroit. The three articles also echo *Black Marxism* (and the figures cited in a more celebrated recent work, Paul Gilroy's 1993 *The Black Atlantic*)[25] in order to raise the very issue of *exemplarity*, a crucial question in a historiography that so regularly has recourse to the same cast of "representative colored men," as Nell Painter and Hazel Carby have pointed out.[26] The selection foregrounds, in other words, the tension implicit in the endeavor of a historiography of black radicalism, a historiography that would both attend to the intricacies of popular struggle and come to terms with the theoretical challenge of the major figures who have attempted to tell its story and learn its lessons.

Notes

I would like to thank Nikhil Singh and Robin Kelley for their comments on a draft of this introduction.

1. *Rethinking Black Marxism*, ed. Brent Hayes Edwards, Nikhil Pal Singh, and Penny Von Eschen (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

2. Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem during the Depression* (1983; reprint, New York: Grove, 1985), xv. Harold Cruse's work is particularly notorious (and influential) for its dismal appraisal of the encounter between black radical intellectuals and the Communist Party. His *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* in particular is riddled with categorical (and sometimes factually ungrounded) dismissals, like his evaluation of the entire generation of black intellectuals between the world wars: "Unable to arrive at any philosophical conclusions of their own as a *black intelligentsia*, the leading literary lights of the 1920's substituted the Communist left-wing philosophy of the 1930's, and thus were intellectually sidetracked for the remainder of their productive years" (Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* [New York: William Morrow and Co., 1967], 63). See also Wilson Record, *The Negro and the Communist Party* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1951); Wilson Record, *Race and Radicalism: The NAACP and the Communist Party in Conflict* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1964); and Theodore Draper, "The Negro Question," in *American Communism and Soviet Russia* (1960; reprint, New York: Vintage, 1966), esp. 354–56.

I tend to read in a somewhat different light works by the many important black radicals who left the Communist Party. Whatever disillusionment these works express regarding the Communist Party USA and/or the Communist International, they are ultimately driven less by this critique than by a commitment to theorizing black radicalism, to a degree that supersedes the black-communism encounter. I am thinking here not just of fictional works, including Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) and Richard Wright's *The Outsider* (1953), but also of statements such as George Padmore, "Communism and Black Nationalism," in *Pan-Africanism or Communism* (1956; reprint, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday,

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1971), 268–356; Aimé Césaire, *Letter to Maurice Thorez* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1957); and even Claude McKay, *Harlem: Negro Metropolis* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1940). I do not mean to ignore tendencies toward antiradical drift, opportunism, or complacency (especially in the cases of Ellison and McKay) but simply to suggest that in these examples—to varying degrees—a commitment to black liberation and anticolonialism outlives a commitment to organized communism. Indeed, as Kevin Gaines points out in his essay in this issue, this dynamic is particularly apparent in the seeming conundrum of Richard Wright's *Black Power*, where—in a work quite critical of organized communism—the theorization of a black radical agenda continues to make recourse to what Wright terms "Marxist instrumentalities" of analysis. See Wright's fascinating preface, "Apropos Prepossessions," in *Black Power: A Record of Reactions in a Land of Pathos* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), xiii. Cedric J. Robinson makes a similar argument in *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (1983; reprint, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 288, 304.

3. Gerald Horne, "The Red and the Black: The Communist Party and African-Americans in Historical Perspective," in *New Studies in the Politics and Culture of U.S. Communism*, ed. Michael E. Brown et al. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1993), 203.

4. Mark Naison, "Marxism and Black Radicalism in America: Notes on a Long (and Continuing) Journey," *Radical America* 5 (May–June 1971): 3–25; Charles H. Martin, *The Angelo Herndon Case and Southern Justice* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976); Mark Naison, "Historical Notes on Blacks and American Communism: The Harlem Experience," *Science and Society* 42 (fall 1978): 324–43; Nell Painter, *The Narrative of the Life of Hoseah Hudson: His Life as a Negro Communist in the South* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979); Naison, *Communists in Harlem*.

5. Here is a small sample of the work in this vein: Angela Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Random House, 1981); Manning Marable, *Blackwater: Historical Studies in Race, Class Consciousness, and Revolution* (Dayton, Ohio: Black Praxis Press, 1981); Cornel West, *Prophesy Deliverance! An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982); Vincent Harding, *There Is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (New York: Random House, 1983); V. P. Franklin, *Black Self-Determination: A Cultural History of African American Resistance* (1984; reprint, Brooklyn, N.Y.: Lawrence Hill Books, 1992); Robert A. Hill, "Racial and Radical: Cyril V. Briggs, *The Crusader* Magazine, and the African Blood Brotherhood, 1918–1922," introduction to *The Crusader: September 1918–August 1919*, vol. 1, ed. Robert A. Hill (New York: Garland, 1987), v–lxvi; Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

6. Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (London: Verso, 1998), 292 n. 1.

7. Ibid., 157.

8. In an insightful review of *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*, Tim Watson also notes James's admiration of the Brotherhood's evasion of "the traps of either an exclusivist ethnic nationalism or a class-based socialism unable to accommodate the politics of race and ethnicity." Watson adds, though, that this focus on theoretical innovation in minuscule black pressure groups runs a risk in terms of strategy, in that it might "single out figures whose political positions could remain

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'pure' precisely to the extent that they did not have to adapt them to the contingencies and contradictions of a mass organization" ("An American Studies Dilemma," *Diaspora* 8 [spring 1999]: 103–4).

9. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay toward a History of the Part which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880* (New York: Russel and Russel, 1935); C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1938; reprint, New York: Vintage, 1963).

10. C. L. R. James, "The Revolutionary Answer to the Negro Problem in the United States" (1948), in *C. L. R. James on the 'Negro Question'*, ed. Scott McLemee (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996), 139. At the same time, James was developing a similar argument with regard to the European proletariat in the manuscripts on Lenin collected as *Notes on Dialectics* (1948; reprint, London: Allison and Busby, 1980), calling, for instance, for radical activists not to "organize" but to "develop *spontaneity*—the free creative activity of the proletariat" (117). *Notes on Dialectics* does not mention the black worker in the United States, however, and it is unclear whether the "autonomy" argument in "The Revolutionary Answer to the Negro Problem" shaped James's reading of European revolutionary politics, or vice versa. On the relationship after 1947 between the SWP and the Johnson-Forest Tendency, see McLemee, introduction to *C. L. R. James on the 'Negro Question'*, xxviii–xxix; and Paul Le Blanc, introduction to *C. L. R. James and Revolutionary Marxism*, ed. McLemee and Le Blanc (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1994), 10–19.

11. There is an impressive body of work that might be said to respond to this call. One might begin with Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1994); Joy James, *Resisting State Violence: Radicalizing Gender and Race in U.S. Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Lewis Gordon, *Her Majesty's Other Children: Sketches of Racism from a Neo-Colonial Age* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997); Komozi Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (Leroi Jones) and Black Power Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Nikhil Singh, "Culture/Wars: Recoding Empire in an Age of Democracy," *American Quarterly* 50 (September 1998): 471–522; Charles E. Jones, ed., *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered* (Baltimore, Md.: Black Classic Press, 1998); Rebecca Hill, "Fosterites and Feminists, or 1950s Ultra-Leftists and the Invention of AmeriKKKa," *New Left Review* 228 (March–April 1998): 67–90; Michelle Stephens, "Black Transnationalism and the Politics of National Identity: West Indian Intellectuals in Harlem in the Age of War and Revolution," *American Quarterly* 50 (September 1998): 592–608; Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia*; Bill Mullen, *Popular Fronts: Chicago and African American Cultural Politics, 1935–1946* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Marika Sherwood, *Claudia Jones: A Life in Exile* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1999); Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Adolph Reed, *Stirrings in the Jug: Black Politics in the Post-Segregation Era* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Nikhil Singh, *Color and Democracy in the American Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, forthcoming).

One might note in addition that in recent years—although the trend might be considered to commence with the solitary (and rather idiosyncratic) example of Eugene Genovese's 1971 book *In Red and Black*—there has been a veritable

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eruption of titles based on variants of that Stendhalian phrase. This work points to the intensified historiographic effort to theorize the conjuncture between black radicalism and Marxism, particularly in terms of black participation in the Communist Party. Consider Gerald Horne, *Black and Red: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944–1963* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986); Robert Robinson, *Black on Red: My 44 Years inside the Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: Acropolis Books, 1988); Mark I. Solomon, *Red and Black: Communism and Afro-Americans, 1925–1935* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988); Gerald Horne, *Black Liberation/Red Scare: Ben Davis and the Communist Party* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994); Earl Ofari Hutchinson, *Blacks and Reds: Race and Class in Conflict, 1919–1990* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1995); Theodore Kornweibel, *Seeing Red: Federal Campaigns against Black Militancy, 1919–1925* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); Robin D. G. Kelley and Betsy Esch, "Black Like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution, *Souls* 1 (fall 1999): 6–41; Winston James, "Being Red and Black in Jim Crow America: Notes on the Ideology and Travails of Afro-America's Socialist Pioneers, 1877–1930," *Souls* 1 (fall 1999): 45–63; Alan Warren Friedman, ed., *Beckett in Black and Red: The Translations for Nancy Cunard's Negro (1934)* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000). Other recent revisionary scholarship on the issue includes Susan Campbell, "'Black Bolsheviks' and Recognition of African-America's Right to Self-Determination by the Communist Party USA," *Science and Society* 58 (winter 1994–1995): 440–70; Mark I. Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917–1936* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998); Alan Wald, "African Americans, Communisn, and Culture, Part I," *Against the Current* 84 (January–February 2000): 23–29; Wald, "Narrating Nationalisms: Black Marxism and Jewish Communists through the Eyes of Harold Cruse," *Science and Society* 64 (winter 2000–2001): 400–423.

12. Robin D. G. Kelley, introduction to *A History of Pan-African Revolt*, by C. L. R. James (1938; reprint, Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1995), 15. James's extraordinary interdisciplinary approach is equally apparent in *The Black Jacobins*, both in his analysis of Haitian folk culture, for instance (18, 368), and in his breathtaking reading of Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* in the appendix added to the book in 1963 (399–402). One of the great contributions of Robin Kelley's work (in tandem with the work of other historians and sociologists, such as George Lipsitz) has been to expand upon this cultural trajectory in a historiography of black radicalism that emerges out of James. See Kelley, "Negroes Ain' Black—But Red!: Black Communists and the Culture of Opposition," in *Hammer and Hoe*, 92–116; and "'Afric's Sons with Banner Red': African American Communists and the Politics of Culture, 1919–1934," in *Race Rebels*, 103–21.

13. Sylvia Wynter, "Beyond the Categories of the Master Conception: The Counterdoctrine of the Jamesian Poiesis," in *C. L. R. James's Caribbean*, ed. Paget Henry and Paul Buhle (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992), 80, 64. Another literary critic who has taken up this question is Kenneth Warren in a recent reading of Du Bois's *Dark Princess*. Where Weinbaum critiques the explicit gendering of Du Bois's racial politics in the novel, Warren takes up Du Bois's continued reliance on "oligarchy," even as he attempts to figure a "mass" internationalist movement of the "Darker Peoples of the World." Warren conjectures that in this project, the novel form "did not enable Du Bois to revise and free

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himself from 'technocratic rationalism' as much as it provided him with a tool with which to eroticise, spiritualize, and thus revitalize his technocratic rationalism so that it could continue to play a role in his political and aesthetic interventions over the next decade" (Warren, "An Inevitable Drift? Oligarchy, Du Bois, and the Politics of Race between the Wars," *boundary 2* 27 [fall 2000]: 157). See also Aldon Nielsen's discussion of James's early fiction in *C. L. R. James: A Critical Introduction* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997), 15–16.

14. Early examples include critical and biographical work such as Alan Wald, "Anti-Racism," part 4 of *Writing from the Left: New Essays on Radical Culture and Politics* (New York: Verso, 1994); Barbara Foley, "Race, Class, and the 'Negro Question,'" in *Radical Representations: Politics and Form in U.S. Proletarian Fiction, 1929–1941* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993), 170–212; James A. Miller, "African-American Writing of the 1930s: A Prologue," in *Radical Revisions: Rereading 1930s Culture*, ed. Bill Mullen and Sherry Lee Linkon (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 78–90; Faith Berry, *Langston Hughes: Before and beyond Harlem*, rev. ed. (New York: Citadel Press, 1992); and Wayne Cooper, *Claude McKay, Rebel Sojourner in the Harlem Renaissance: A Biography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univeristy Press, 1987). Two notable recent additions to this list are William J. Maxwell, *New Negro, Old Left: African-American Writing and Communism between the Wars* (New York: Columbia University Press 1999); and James Edward Smethurst, *The New Red Negro: The Literary Left and African American Poetry, 1930–1946* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

15. This scholarship includes Ted Vincent, *Keep Cool: The Black Activists Who Built the Jazz Age* (London: Pluto Press, 1995); Angela Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Pantheon, 1998); Clyde Woods, *Development Arrested: Race, Power, and the Blues in Mississippi Delta* (London: Verso, 1998); Penny Von Eschen, "'Satchmo Blows Up the World': Jazz, Race, and Empire during the Cold War and Beyond," in *Here, There, and Everywhere: The Foreign Politics of American Popular Culture*, ed. Reinhold Wagnleitner and Elaine Tyler May (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2000), 163–78; Robin D. G. Kelley, "New Monastery: Monk and the Jazz Avant-Garde," *Black Music Research Journal* 19 (fall 1999): 135–68; Gary Stewart, *Rumba on the River: A History of the Popular Music of the Two Congos* (London: Verso, 2000); Michael E. Veal, *Fela: The Life and Times of an African Musical Icon* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000); and Kelley, *Misterioso: In Search of Thelonious Monk* (New York: Free Press, forthcoming). Of course, just as the literary scholarship mentioned above is informed by precursors in the field as much as by the cultural leanings of James and Du Bois, this recent music history draws upon a longer history of work on black music and social change, including books by Frank Kofsky, Sidney Finkelstein, Ralph Ellison, and especially Amiri Baraka.

16. George Fredrickson, *Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 5–6.

17. There is a large body of work on black radicalism in a transnational arena, including revisionist considerations of black influence on Communist Party policy on the "Negro question" in an international sphere, overviews of African American impact on U.S. foreign policy, work on black anticolonial activism, and histories and ethnographies of black radical movements in South

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America, the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa. See, for instance, Roger E. Kanet, "The Comintern and the 'Negro Question': Communist Policy in the United States and Africa, 1921–1941," *Survey* 19 (autumn 1973): 86–122; Sheridan Johns, "The Comintern, South Africa, and the Black Diaspora," *Review of Politics* 37 (April 1975): 200–234; Edward T. Wilson, *Russian and Black Africa before World War II* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1975); Robin D. G. Kelley, "The Third International and the Struggle for National Liberation in South Africa," *UFAHAMU* 15, nos. 1–2 (1986): 99–120; Michael Hanchard, *Orpheus and Power: The Movimento Negro of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, Brazil, 1945–1988* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994); Hakim Adi, "West Africans and the Communist Party in the 1950s," in *Opening the Books: Essays on the Social and Cultural History of the British Communist Party*, ed. Geoff Andrews, Nina Fishman, and Kevin Morgan (London: Pluto Press, 1995); Marika Sherwood, "The Comintern, The CPGB, Colonies, and Black Britons, 1920–1938," *Science and Society* 60 (summer 1996): 137–63; Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935–1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Hakim Adi, "The Communist Movement in West Africa," *Science and Society* 61 (spring 1997): 94–99; Penny Von Eschen, *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937–1957* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997); John Callaghan, "Colonies, Racism, the CPGB and the Comintern in the Inter-war Years," *Science and Society* 61 (winter 1997–1998): 513–25; Marc Gallicchio, *The African American Encounter with Japan and China: Black Internationalism in Asia, 1895–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Paget Henry, "Caribbean Marxism: After the Neoliberal and Linguistic Turns," in *Caliban's Reason: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 221–46.

There is also a growing body of work on the subject with regard to non–English language contexts. In the Francophone context, for example, the emerging historiography of black radicalism includes Philippe De Witte, *Les mouvements nègres en France, 1919–1939* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985); Martin Steins, "Brown France vs. Black Africa: The Tide Turned in 1932," *Research in African Literatures* 14 (winter 1983): 474–97; Martin Steins, "Pour une nouvelle approche de la négritude," *L'Afrique littéraire et artistique* 50 (1978): 42–46; Martin Steins, "Les antecedents et la genèse de la négritude senghorienne" (thèse d'état, University of Paris, 1981); Christopher L. Miller, "Involution and Revolution: African Paris in the 1920s," in *Nationalists and Nomads: Essays on Francophone African Literature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 9–54; Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Black Internationalism in Translation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, forthcoming).

18. Robinson, *Black Marxism*. Subsequent references to this work will be cited parenthetically in the text as *BM*.

19. James, *Black Jacobins*, 88–89.

20. Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 10, 11.

21. Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), 11. Subsequent references to this work will be cited parenthetically in the text as *EA*.

22. With regard to the issue of totality, see Fred Moten, "Tonality of Totality: Is the Aesthetic of Cognitive Mapping the Black Aesthetic?" in *Rethinking Black Marxism*.

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23. Stuart Hall, "The Local and the Global," in *Culture, Globalization, and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity,* ed. Anthony D. King (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 21.

24. Gayatri Spivak, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography," in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 205. Of course, this thesis would need to be tested in light of Spivak's subsequent contention in the same essay that "the subaltern is necessarily the absolute limit of the place where history is narrativized into logic" (207). It would also be necessary to consider Robinson's understanding of a radical historiography in more detail, not just with regard to *Black Marxism*, but also in relation to his more recent work on the subject: Cedric J. Robinson, "Capitalism, Slavery, and Bourgeois Historiography," *History Workshop* 23 (spring 1987): 122–40; "Oliver Cromwell Cox and the Historiography of the West," *Cultural Critique* (winter 1990–1991): 5–19; and "Notes toward a 'Native' Theory of History," *Review* 4 (summer 1980): 45–78.

25. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). Interestingly, though he only briefly mentions Robinson's work (122), Gilroy gives as his main examples W. E. B. Du Bois, Richard Wright, and black music, particularly the Fisk Jubilee Singers.

26. Nell Irvin Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas after Reconstruction* (1977; reprint, Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 15; Hazel Carby, *Race Men* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

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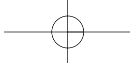
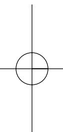
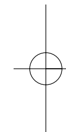
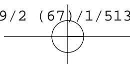

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