

Black Voices Matter: Race, Resistance and Reverse Pedagogy in the Metropole

When viewed through the lens of race, the thesis – advanced by many labour and socialist historians – that this period marked some kind of universalist class awakening that had brought Britain to the ‘brink of revolution’ requires considerable revision. A more nuanced explanation is required that can help us understand both the rising tide of working-class industrial and political struggles, and working-class deployment of racism, including violence and discrimination against Jewish migrants, as well as those from the British colonies.

Satnam Virdee, *Racism, Class and the Racialized Outsider*

If the League against Imperialism was a metonym for the making of international anticolonial coalitions based in the metropole but fuelled by resistance in the colonies, the *idea* of transnational opposition led by the colonized had in fact arrived on the global stage in a modest but significant way nearly thirty years before. In 1900, the initiative was taken by a group of campaigners describing themselves as ‘men and women of African blood’.¹ The first of several pan-African conferences then took place in London at the instigation of the African Association – an organization founded by Henry Sylvester Williams, a Trinidadian lawyer who was determined that ‘the association would act on its own, draft its own rules, and not be led by Europeans’.² The British Anti-Slavery Society expressed its good wishes but, despite explicit requests from the association, refused further involvement, leading one historian to remark trenchantly: ‘Perhaps the humanitarians found a world conference of blacks too frightening a project as the time got nearer for the delegates to meet.’³ In the wake of the division of spoils by colonial powers, the notorious ‘scramble for Africa’ in the late nineteenth century, pan-Africanism had emerged first ‘not as an organised movement but as a widespread sentiment of solidarity among Africans, West Indians and African Americans’.⁴ The idea behind the conference of 1900 was that, without rejecting the assistance of white allies, people of African blood were capable of and ought to be standing up – and speaking – for their own interests with ‘our own chroniclers’ and ‘our own libraries and organizations’.⁵ The succinct ‘Address to the Nations of the World’ on behalf of ‘the darker races of mankind’ is worth pausing on, for its role in laying out some of the rhetorical terms for twentieth-century black anticolonialism.

A Habit of Democracy: The African Background to Internationalism

Issuing from ‘we, the men and women of Africa in world congress assembled’, the address, famously drafted and delivered by W. E. B. Du Bois, and co-signed by Williams, Henry B. Brown and Alexander Walters, opens with two preliminary gestures which, at first glance, draw on the language of mendicancy.⁶ There is an appeal to shared Christian values as the basis for extending ‘the opportunities and privileges of modern civilization’ to all, regardless of colour.⁷ This is followed by a call for the work of white champions of ‘Negro Freedom’ such as Wilberforce, Clarkson and Buxton to be ‘crowned’ by Britain, an act which would include giving ‘the rights of responsible self-government to the black colonies of Africa and the West Indies’.⁸ Beneath the appeals to European decency, however, the address contains uncompromising notes of black self-assertion, putting into play themes that would be reprised and amplified in the decades to come. It begins by noting that much-vaunted differences of race are based on the most superficial markers, showing themselves ‘chiefly in the colour of the skin and the texture of the hair’.⁹ While the ‘darker races’ may at present be ‘the least advanced in culture *according to European standards*’, this ‘has not, however, always been the case in the past’; both ancient and modern history provides many instances of African ability and capacity.¹⁰ Then, in a more implacable tone, the address reminds the world that, in the century to come, great influence will be inevitably exercised by ‘the millions of black men in Africa, America, and the Islands of the Sea, not to speak of the brown and yellow myriads elsewhere’.¹¹ Human progress itself will suffer if, instead of being given ‘the largest and broadest opportunity for education and self-development’, the black world is further exploited and degraded. Even as it appeals to the followers of ‘the Prince of Peace’ to take the black cause seriously, the address calls uncompromisingly for the removal of the ‘cloak of the Christian missionary enterprise’, which hides ‘the ruthless economic exploitation and political downfall of less developed nations’.¹² The concept of self-emancipation surfaces gently but distinctly in this text, which, while saluting both white and black abolitionists from Wilberforce and Garrison to Sharpe and Douglass, also insists on the need generously to recognize and honour the ordinary ‘American Negro’ and ‘the great work he has accomplished in a generation toward raising nine millions of human beings from slavery to manhood’.¹³ And in a final determined gesture which would turn out to be a prescient warning, the address calls for the sovereignty of black nation-states to remain inviolate:

Let the nations of the World respect the integrity and independence of the first Negro States of Abyssinia, Liberia, Haiti, and the rest, and then let the inhabitants of these States, the independent tribes of Africa, the Negroes of the West Indies and America, and the black subjects of all nations take courage, strive ceaselessly, and fight bravely, that they may prove to the world their incontestible [*sic*] right to be counted among the great brotherhood of mankind.¹⁴

As the century progressed, so did the strength of black challenges to empire.

Manifestos were among the genres which proffered a platform for such challenges and self-assertion, expressing as they did ‘a structure of feeling of an empire in crisis’; they produced narratives of modernity which often made ‘central the racial margin’.¹⁵ By the time

of the London Manifesto, produced twenty years later by the second Pan-African Congress, held in 1921, black self-emancipation was an idea that had gathered heft. The first Congress, under W. E. B. Du Bois's leadership, had taken place in 1919, and had issued a set of demands on behalf of the 'Negroes of the world' calling for the Allied and Associated 'trustee' powers to ensure that the land, capital, labour, education and political rights of 'the natives of Africa and peoples of African descent were safeguarded. What is striking about the 1921 text, particularly in comparison to the more reformist resolutions contained in its predecessor, is a determined insistence that self-government involves not the concession of a new right but the 'recognition' of an existing one. It is a right already inscribed in history and made manifest by resistance and struggle: 'The independence of Abyssinia, Liberia, Haiti and San Domingo is absolutely necessary to any sustained belief of the black folk in the sincerity and honesty of the white. These nations have earned the right to be free, they deserve the recognition of the world.'¹⁶ Indeed, the document goes so far as to suggest that these nations, for all their faults and mistakes, 'compare favourably with the past and even recent history of most European nations and America', which continue to invade and overthrow free institutions.¹⁷ It then issues a robust challenge to the idea that some nations had to be looked after by others – an idea that would find its apotheosis in notions of 'trusteeship':

The insidious and dishonourable propaganda which for selfish ends so distorts and denies facts as to represent the advancement and development of certain races as impossible and undesirable should be met with wide-spread dissemination of the truth; the experiment of making the Negro slave a free citizen in the United States is not a failure; the attempts at autonomous government in Haiti and Liberia are not proofs of the impossibility of self-government among black men; the experience of Spanish America does not prove that mulatto democracy will not eventually succeed there; the aspirations of Egypt and India are not successfully to be met by sneers at the capacity of darker races.¹⁸

This manifesto references earlier pan-African appeals, but recasts them as more far-reaching *demands*, the boldest of which is a return to the 'ancient common ownership of the Land and its natural fruits and defence against the unrestrained greed of invested capital'.¹⁹ Africa must be a 'co-ruler' of the world along with other peoples, and there can be no compromise on 'absolutely equal' political, civil and social power for Africa's citizens, both black and white.²⁰ In a striking inversion of the usual terms of argument, it is not so much justice that must be bestowed on the oppressed but *injustice* that has to *cease* on the part of those who 'lynch the untried, disenfranchise the intelligent, deny self-government to educated men, and insult the helpless'.²¹ There is also a scathing dismissal of the ways in which the time lags of inevitably uneven development in human societies form the basis of 'adventitious and idiotic' race hierarchies populated by demigods and apes, rather than accepted as part of the 'richness and variety of human nature'.²²

The London Manifesto is not without its own biases in favour of what it calls 'cultured black citizens', insisting that leaders from the black 'intelligentsia' are needed because the millions they sought to represent 'have not even what we have; the power to complain against monstrous wrong, the power to see and know the source of our oppression'.²³ At its ethical heart, however, is what it resonantly calls a 'habit of democracy' that must be 'made

to encircle the earth' not least because there was nothing uniquely European about a capacity for democracy.²⁴ Like liberty, democracy is not racially or culturally specific, as the colonizers would have it, 'the secret and divine Gift of the Few'.²⁵ In reality, 'no habit is more natural and more widely spread among primitive people or more easily capable of development among wide masses'; indeed, it could be implemented 'tomorrow', though some 'general control and guidance' might be needed.²⁶ Notably, in comparison to the more specifically Christian tone of the document of twenty years before, this text alludes to the twentieth century not just as that of the 'Prince of Peace' but also as 'the millennium of Buddha and Mahmoud' [sic], as well as 'the mightiest age of Human Reason'.²⁷ The real 'shame of the world' derives not from racial differences or developmental time lags, which are accidents of history, but from that which allows 'the majority of mankind to be brutalised and enslaved by ignorant and selfish agents of commercial institutions whose one aim is profit and power for the few'.²⁸ Capitalism and capitalist 'world organisation', in which 'the favoured few may luxuriate in the toil of the tortured many', are quite simply indefensible, the true blot on human civilization exacerbated by 'the outrageously unjust distribution of the world income between the dominant and suppressed peoples'.²⁹

Here, in its closing paragraphs, the London Manifesto made visible a fault line that would haunt metropolitan anticolonialism and debates on the left over the next decades. In the execution of capitalist crime, where the project of empire was inextricable from the project of capital, could it be that white labour 'is *particeps criminis* with white capital'?³⁰ The authors and endorsers of the manifesto were not claiming that white labour was not exploited, as is clear from the proximate declaration that the wealth and well-being of the rich 'rest on a pitiful human foundation of writhing white, yellow and brown and black bodies'.³¹ They also refuse to claim 'perfect-ness of our own', assigning black people responsibility for what the text calls 'failure to advance'.³² Instead, it places a more challenging question on the table: how could and should white labour assess its role in the project of imperialism given the extent to which, both consciously and unconsciously, not least through its share of the vote in modern democracies, it had 'been cajoled and flattered into imperialistic schemes'?³³ The manifesto is clear that this complicity, far from benefiting them, has had fatal consequences for white workers, as they 'are themselves today bound and gagged and rendered impotent by the resulting monopoly of the world's raw material in the hands of a dominant, cruel and irresponsible few'.³⁴ How could the problem of race in the context of global imperialism be addressed in its specificity and as it intersected with the question of class and the exploitation of labour? This question, as we shall see in the following chapters, became a lightning rod for debate.

A Rebel Sojourner in London

Anticipating points that would be made at the first LAI congresses, and then developed in the years to come, the London Manifesto put forward a difficult proposition.³⁵ The problem of labour versus capital would not be solved in England, it ventured, as long as a parallel

dynamic ‘mark[ed] the relations of the whiter and darker peoples’.³⁶ The exploitation of black, brown and yellow labour through imperialism – and the dangers of white working-class complicity in that exploitation – was not a topic being addressed frontally or consistently on the British left in the immediate post-war years. Indeed, as Satnam Virdee has pointed out, the much-vaunted British working-class insurgency in the post-war period, manifested in strike waves, was accompanied by race riots. Racism and xenophobic nationalism were frequently intertwined with labour militancy.³⁷ In an episode that encapsulates this intertwining, the well-known anti-slavery campaigner and anti-war activist Edward Dene Morel, famed for his exposure of Belgian atrocities in the Congo, wrote a shocking and sensational article titled ‘The Black Scourge in Europe’.³⁸ A member of the left-leaning Union of Democratic Control, and later a Labour MP, Morel claimed sensationally and with crude suggestiveness that France was ‘thrusting her black savages still further into the heart of Germany’ by sending troops from the colonies into the area.³⁹ He was referring to the presence of black troops. There, he averred, far from policing the area as they were supposed to, ‘primitive African barbarians’ with their unique ‘well-known physiological’ traits were ‘over-running Europe’ and busy raping or otherwise satisfying themselves on the bodies of white women, who consequently suffered particularly grave injuries often with ‘fatal’ consequences.⁴⁰ The article, written for the most widely read left-wing newspaper in Britain, was a mix of deep racism and breathless righteousness as it bemoaned the fate of white women at the hands of the ‘black menace’: ‘Sexually they are unrestrained and unrestrainable. *That is perfectly well-known*’.⁴¹ Whatever else Germans might be willing to let go, the article argued sympathetically, this rapine could never be forgiven. Insisting hysterically that the ‘abundance or otherwise of specific reports’ was ‘immaterial’, Morel’s argument was made in anti-capitalist and anti-militarist terms as it invoked the possibility of ‘black mercenaries being used against trade union and revolutionary movements’.⁴² Significantly, Morel repeatedly brought his unproved assertions back to the fate of the white working classes against whom this black weapon was being deployed. The casual slide from capitalist ‘lusts’ to the black slaking of those lusts is not especially subtle:

For the working classes the importation of negro mercenaries by the hundred thousand from the heart of Africa, to fight the battles and execute the lusts of capitalist Governments in the heart of Europe is, as I have said elsewhere, a terrific portent. The workers alike of Britain, France, and Italy will be ill-advised if they allow it to pass in silence because to-day the victims happen to be German.⁴³

Morel’s fevered article invoking ‘a terror and a horror unimaginable to the country’, facilitated by white degradation in the face of war, would also be developed into a pamphlet, *The Horror on the Rhine*, which found wide international circulation and went into no less than eight editions.⁴⁴

In the first instance, however, it was carried by the *Daily Herald*, the Labour Party newspaper edited by George Lansbury, then a serving MP, as a ‘revelation so horrible’ that it had no choice but to carry it. A subsequent article on the front pages of the newspaper lauded its own courage in publishing Morel’s article, adding: ‘The Labour movement and all other

people with a remnant of decent feeling demand the immediate withdrawal of the black troops and their return to Africa.’⁴⁶ While defending the newspaper against the idea that it was ‘encouraging colour prejudice’ and insisting, in a preface to Morel’s article, that it championed ‘the rights of the African native in his own home’,⁴⁷ Lansbury nonetheless wrote a supportive (unsigned) editorial titled ‘Brutes in French Uniform’ and subtitled ‘Danger to German Women from 30,000 Blacks’ in which he reiterated Morel’s claim that black troops with ‘primitive sexual passions’ were rampaging through Germany.⁴⁸ Later that year, following the publication of the pamphlet version, around which women’s organizations held meetings, both the Independent Labour Party and the Labour Party passed resolutions condemning the use of black troops by France. (Morel himself was a member of the Labour Party’s think tank on colonial issues, the Labour Party Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions.) The matter was also discussed in the ILP’s official journal, the *Labour Leader*, now under Fenner Brockway’s editorial hand. Morel’s salaciously overheated accusations, however, went largely unchallenged on the British left. As Robert C. Reinders has noted, Morel was known as a man who, to quote one co-worker, ‘had “agonies of sympathy with his beloved black man” ’ and unimpeachable ‘liberal credentials’.⁴⁹ The *Herald* also urged British women to rise up in support of their German sisters – a call enthusiastically taken up, among others, by the socialist women’s campaigner Ethel Snowden, as well as several women’s organizations.⁵⁰ Histories of the Labour left in Britain make little of the episode if they mention it at all, and it is not part of general knowledge about Morel, who is largely known as a champion of black rights and kindly defender of Africa.⁵¹ With Morel strenuously denying that his protest had been inspired by ‘racial bitterness’, the *Labour Leader* also gave space to him and others to discuss the issue without questioning Morel’s version.⁵² The pamphlet’s eighth edition carried endorsements from the Danish modernist writer Georg Brandes, the French communist writer Henri Barbusse, and Karl Marx’s grandson, the French socialist and editor Jean Longuet.⁵³

There was, however, one important dissenting voice and, importantly, it was that of a black man originally from the colonies. In early 1920, the poet and journalist Claude McKay, who would become a major figure of the literary and cultural phenomenon known as the Harlem Renaissance, had arrived in England from the United States (where he had relocated from his native Jamaica a few years before). At the time, McKay was a ‘scribbler’ who had also worked manual jobs for several years, including on the American railroad, before joining the staff of the left-wing magazine the *Liberator*. In the famous ‘Red Summer’ of 1919, which signified ‘at once the political repression of leftists and the bloody suppression of black rebellion’, McKay – shocked into bringing together his growing radical politics and his passion for verse – burst onto the scene with one of his most famous poems, the sonnet ‘If We Must Die’.⁵⁴ With its compelling last line envisioning defiance to the bitter end in the face of racist pogroms – ‘Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!’ – the poem was a recitative paean to black insurgency in the face of all-encompassing oppression. Having already witnessed white mobs in the United States launching brutal attacks on African-Americans, when McKay read Morel’s attack on the ‘black scourge’ in the *Daily Herald* shortly after arriving in London, his immediate response was to write a letter to the editor in

which he asked that his rebuttal be published. Lansbury, with great disingenuousness, reiterated that neither the paper nor Morel subscribed to racial prejudice, but nonetheless declined to publish McKay's riposte. McKay then contacted Sylvia Pankhurst, the suffragette, communist and antiwar agitator, who immediately agreed to carry it in her weekly, the *Workers' Dreadnought*, which at that time was functioning as the organ of the British Section of the Third International. In the pointedly titled 'A Black Man Replies', McKay was bullishly confrontational, determined to hold the British left to account, noting that it was thoroughly inadequate for an ostensibly progressive newspaper like the *Herald* to claim not to be 'encouraging race prejudice' and to 'champion native rights in Africa' while carrying the 'obscene, maniacal outburst' of Morel, who otherwise 'peddles his books and articles on "the poor suffering black"'.⁵⁵ The line between the acknowledged 'odiousness' of race prejudice and Morel's legitimized brand of paternalism was thin, he suggested, and hardly likely to take forward the urgent task of helping 'white and black peoples to a better understanding of each other'.⁵⁶ Professing complete ignorance of the ostensibly 'well-known physiological reasons' that made the white women in question particularly prone to injury, according to Morel, McKay noted with stark simplicity: 'Any violent act of rape, whether by white, yellow or black, civilized or savage man, must entail injury.'⁵⁷

McKay's intervention – which, astonishingly, remains the only major rebuttal of Morel's manifestly outrageous and unsubstantiated accusations – was important not only as a clear and direct exposé of the latter's unpardonable and absurd racism, but also in exposing the broader British left's persistent blind spot on race.⁵⁸ The whole truth, McKay was obliged to point out, was that white men also rape, black men can control their sexual proclivities as well as any other men, white men have fathered thousands of disowned children among the 'colored races', and the syphilis Morel accused the French black troops of carrying had been contracted by sexual contact with whites. Socialists might indeed do well to stop the French exploitation of North African conscripts (not 'mercenaries'), but not by peddling harmful racial generalizations:

During my stay in Europe, I have come in contact with many weak and lascivious peoples of both sexes, but I do not argue from my experience that the English race is degenerate. On the other hand, I have known some of the finest and cleanest types of men and women among the Anglo-Saxons.⁵⁹

With the memories of the American pogroms fresh in his mind, McKay was insistent that his rebuttal derived less from the fact of his being a black man himself than from well-founded anxiety at the inevitable 'further strife and blood-spilling between the whites and the many members of my race, boycotted socially and economically', that such propaganda would help incite.⁶⁰ In fact, the poet's powerful voice did bring to bear upon his intervention vital insights shaped by the experience of being a black man in a colonial and white-supremacist order. These enabled him to illuminate the British white left's racial and national biases, implicating it in the structures of white domination. They also helped him make the case for a serious and genuine universalism that was predicated not on white humanitarianism, but on taking seriously the fact of an unequal global order in which the black experience of racial-capitalist oppression had to be integral to an understanding of world history. McKay's use of

the ‘lens of race’ was not one that segregated black working-class experience as incommensurable with others; it allowed for common cause to be *made* in the face of racial stratification, rather than the identity of working-class interests being simply assumed. McKay was grappling with problems that retain urgency in our own times: how is it possible to come up with a shared vision of emancipation and social justice that has universal resonances and scope, but does not lose sight of vastly different historical experiences which often come into conflict with one another? How can an identity of class interests be constructed when the experience and operation of class also rely on a racial hierarchy? My argument in the remainder of this chapter, which looks at McKay’s work for the *Workers’ Dreadnought* and at the pioneering collaborative anthology *Negro*, edited by the poet Nancy Cunard, is that there were serious attempts during the interwar period to ‘teach race’ and make blackness matter on the British left, which, in tandem with the growing pan-African presence in Britain, are an important part of the story of metropolitan anticolonialism (and anti-racism). These pedagogical projects often took the form of collaboration and collective publishing in which radical white allies (both women in this instance) encouraged and facilitated the emergence of radical black anticolonial voices into the metropolitan public sphere, using their institutional and social networks to this end and often emerging as notable anticolonial figures themselves. These collaborations allowed for difficult, often awkward, conversations to take place, and were a vital part of the attempt to undo paternalism and replace it with a politics of radical, if often uneasy, solidarity. The universal would be aspired to through an understanding of the particular; world-historical knowledge would be accessed through the epistemology of the margins.

A ‘race man and a class man’

In 1919, when McKay arrived in London, he found a scenario of labour militancy without labour unity. There was tension on the London docks as unemployment rose, and impoverished white workers, a few disenchanted ex-service personnel among them, were encouraged to turn their wrath upon foreign seamen, many ‘dumped down on the English docks since the ending of the European war’.⁶¹ There had been race riots, many taking place in different British seaports, spurred by the belief that foreigners, particularly blacks and Asians, were taking jobs that white seamen should have; renewed attempts were made to enforce a union colour bar.⁶² In turn, various organizations of black and Asian workers and residents were formed to protest and challenge racist discrimination. In a few cases, ‘black British sailors protested about the employment of foreign white sailors’.⁶³ Not least due to the now extensive presence of black workers, including those who had served Britain in the war, race became a potent issue in the wider discussion of labour conditions and workers’ rights. ‘Amidst these racist riots’, Virdee reminds us, ‘no section of British society saw fit to recall how the British state and employers had scoured the four corners of its Empire in search of labour to fill the gap’ left by war-volunteer seamen.⁶⁴ Recalling the moment in his memoirs, and noting that it was a period of ‘great labor unrest’ in the Rhineland as well, McKay writes that his aim in ‘A Black Man Replies’ was to remind Lansbury of the duty of

‘a radical organ to enlighten its readers about the real reasons why the English considered colored troops undesirable in Europe, instead of appealing indirectly to illogical emotional prejudices’.⁶⁵ He also warned the politician and editor that ‘his black-scourge articles would be effective in stirring up more prejudice against the negroes’, to which Lansbury predictably replied that ‘he was not personally prejudiced against Negroes’.⁶⁶ McKay rightly saw this as irrelevant, since what was at stake was not a ‘personal issue’, but the ‘public attitude’ of the Labour journal. He did, however, acknowledge that the Labour MP had ‘energetically denounced’ the situation of the previous summer, ‘when colored men were assaulted by organized bands of whites in the English ports’.⁶⁷ He would note later that, while he was ‘not sentimental’ about his own race, ‘I hate oppression of subject races and peoples’.⁶⁸

Already host to several campaigning South Asian organizations, including the India League, run by the redoubtable V. K. Menon, London in the era after the end of the First World War would also witness a steady inflow of intellectuals and campaigners from its West Indian and African imperial possessions. By the 1930s, frequently facilitated either by white allies or through black-run organizations and journals, radical black voices became more powerfully audible. Black sojourners like McKay would, as Cedric Robinson has argued, learn from the radical left milieu they encountered in the great imperial capital, but they would also bring to it their own experiences of anticolonialism and struggles against racial oppression, including pan-Africanism. It is tempting, given the brevity of his stay, to suggest, as Robert Reinders and Wayne Cooper do in their useful overview of McKay’s year in England, that, if there is a broader significance to that sojourn of otherwise ‘limited importance’, it is as a ‘case study of the disillusioned colonial’.⁶⁹ He is arguably deserving of more than ‘a footnote in modern British history as the first Negro Socialist to write for an English periodical’.⁷⁰ In one sense, McKay stands at the head of a long line of West Indian and African intellectuals – among whom C. L. R. James and George Padmore are only the best known – who formed productive, if sometimes fraught, alliances with radical figures on the British left, and helped shape the contours of interwar British anticolonialism. McKay (who was prevented from travelling to any colonies other than Jamaica after his spell in England, where he was put under surveillance by Special Branch) also brought a vital transatlantic dimension to bear on questions of race, colonialism and radical politics. While he may not have viewed himself to be speaking ‘as a black man’, McKay indisputably articulated a perspective honed by the experience of both colonialism and metropolitan racism. His partnership with Pankhurst was vital to that understanding being disseminated into a broader progressive and left-wing milieu. In inviting McKay to her printing office in Fleet Street and offering him a job as a reporter at the *Dreadnought*, where she also asked him to ‘dig up something along the London docks from the colored as well as the white seamen’,⁷¹ and to ‘write from a point of view which would be fresh and different’, Pankhurst appears to have recognized the pedagogical value for the British left of a powerful voice which could speak eloquently on race and empire.⁷² She tasked him also with reading newspapers from the colonies and marking items to bring to the attention of *Dreadnought* readers. McKay first got to know Pankhurst at an international club, which he described somewhat ambivalently in retrospect as a place full of ‘dogmatists and doctrinaires of radical

left ideas: Socialists, Communists, anarchists, syndicalists, one-big-unionists and trade unionists, soap-boxers, poetasters, scribblers, editors of little radical sheets which flourish in London'.⁷³ Later he would tell Nancy Cunard that, living in 'uncongenial' London, the club 'was altogether a foreign milieu' in which he had found refuge.⁷⁴

While the political partnership between McKay and Pankhurst was to last just about a year – she would be arrested later in 1920 over an 'inflammatory' article McKay had commissioned from a young sailor sent undercover to investigate conditions 'below decks', while he would return to the United States – it has both a symbolic and a material importance. Through Pankhurst's connections within 'the nest of extreme radicalism in London', McKay met figures such as Saklatvala and Lansbury, describing the latter contemptuously as symbolic of all that was 'pious and self-righteous in the British Labor movement'.⁷⁵ In each other, Pankhurst and McKay recognized constitutively dissident sensibilities, a willingness not only to challenge the establishment but also to put pressure on and transform their own oppositional milieus. Such partnerships and affinities, even when brief and sometimes uneasy, were the warp and weft of metropolitan anticolonialism. McKay wrote of his feminist employer: 'And in the labor movement she was always jabbing her hat pin into the hides of the smug and slack labor leaders. Her weekly might have been called the Dread Wasp. And wherever imperialism got drunk and went wild among native peoples, the Pankhurst paper would be on the job.'⁷⁶ McKay also described the *Dreadnought's* relationship to the more established *Daily Herald* as that of 'a little cat up against a big dog' and 'always spitting'.⁷⁷ Pankhurst's employment of McKay on clearly equal terms is particularly significant in a milieu where race feeling was far from absent, whether that took the form of hostility, paternalism or curiosity (George Bernard Shaw, for instance, would ask McKay why he preferred writing to pugilism).⁷⁸ What is very clear is that, despite occasional disagreements with Pankhurst – not least over her refusal to publish a 'scoop' revealing Lansbury's employment of strike-breakers in his sawmills – McKay left an impression on her and an imprint on the journal. Issues of the *Workers' Dreadnought* after McKay left show a determinate rise in international and imperial coverage, with particular attention paid to Ireland, South Africa and India.

McKay would also open up the fraught question about the relationship between race and class in the crucible of the Empire. In the very first piece that he wrote under his own name for the *Dreadnought*, in early 1920, McKay made the case for left-wing Britons to engage with anticolonial nationalism. Taking issue with some English communists who had remarked to him that they were not sympathetic to 'nationalistic' movements in India and Ireland, McKay, who would soon go on to a triumphal tour to the Soviet Union, opined that 'for subject peoples, at least, Nationalism is the open door to Communism'.⁷⁹ English revolutionaries ought not to be 'unduly concerned' about the manner in which blows against imperialism – and, thereby, capitalism – were struck.⁸⁰ McKay's short piece was itself structured by productive tensions: on the one hand, he criticized organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP) for failing to recognize that 'the Negro question is primarily an economic problem' that would not be solved by admitting a few chosen ones into white society through wealth and attainment.⁸¹

On the other, McKay conceded, such efforts did develop ‘race-consciousness in the Negro and made him restive’.⁸² Here he was drawing on his own fraught experience with Garveyism, where, despite disagreements with Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association, he could see that black people ‘oppressed by the capitalists, despised and denied a fighting chance under the present economic system by white workingmen’, could find means of self-assertion through black nationalism.⁸³ In making the radical case for nationalism, McKay argued, somewhat optimistically, that people ‘who are strong enough to throw off an imperial yoke’ would not ‘tamely submit to a system of local capitalism’.⁸⁴ What McKay had begun to theorize was the necessarily dialogical relationship between race and class in the post-1917 era, in which European empires still held global sway.

One of McKay’s recurrent concerns, evident in both his response to Morel and his later writing for the *Dreadnought* under the pseudonym ‘Leon Lopez’, was the way in which divisions between white and non-white workers were instigated by and played into capitalist and imperialist hands: ‘The whole plot is so obvious and yet the nicely fed and clothed labour officials play the capitalist game to perfection, by stirring up the passions of the workers against aliens (and need I add Jews?)’.⁸⁵ The roving reporter ‘Leon Lopez’ describes going down to the docks and seeing the devastation wrought by unemployment with ‘scores upon scores of seamen, white, brown and black, waiting wistfully for an undermanned ship’. As Lopez wonders what will unfold as a consequence of these conditions, his question is answered by a screaming headline in a local newspaper: ‘CHINATOWN SCANDAL. WHITE GIRLS AND YELLOW MEN’. After a few sharp words for the ‘kept press’ and its disingenuous fascination with what ‘our English girls find in these foreigners’, McKay/Lopez proposes this: ‘The dockers, instead of being unduly concerned about the presence of their coloured fellow men, who, like themselves are the victims of capitalism ... should lead the attack on the bastilles, the bonded warehouses along the docks to solve the question of unemployment.’⁸⁶ Only a year later, McKay would publish, in Russia, *Negry v Amerike* (The Negroes in America), which is described by one critic as arguably ‘the first ever black-authored monograph theorizing the relationship between race and class’, and criticizing the left-wing elision of the race issue.⁸⁷ In turn, McKay’s class radicalism was not always congenial to those who believed that organizing around race was the way forward for black Americans. He did, however, write to Marcus Garvey urging contact and alliances between ‘radical Negroes’ and ‘white radical movements’: ‘To me they are the great destructive forces *within* while the subject races are fighting without ... We have a great wall to batter down, and while we are working on one side, we should hail those who are working on the other.’⁸⁸ As Winston James notes, McKay was ultimately dialectical, ‘a race man and a class man’.⁸⁹

While clearly committed to colonial freedom even during the *Dreadnought* years, Pankhurst herself would become a full-time anticolonialist by the late 1930s, in the wake of Italy’s invasion of Abyssinia – an event which would galvanize both pan-Africanists and British critics of empire (see [Chapter 7](#)). During the attacks on black workers in London, she had challenged those who were justifying them, making the connection between imperialism abroad and racism at home:

Do you think the British should rule the world or do you want to live on peaceable terms with all peoples?

Do you wish to exclude all blacks from England?

If so, do you not think that blacks might justly ask that the British should at the same time keep out of the black peoples' countries?⁹⁰

While some of Pankhurst's *Dreadnought* editorials before 1920 were clear in their commitment to Irish and Indian self-determination, the latter achieved 'either by taking it herself, or by a British Revolution extending it to her', something of McKay's influence can be seen not only in the increased coverage of international issues in the wake of his tenure on the weekly, but also in an even greater emphasis on colonial insurgency as itself inspirational to the working classes of Britain, requiring not just solidarity but also emulation.⁹¹ In early issues, unsigned *Dreadnought* pieces (likely to have been written by Pankhurst as editor) deprecated the 'colour bar' in South Africa, and took issue with moderate reformers like Annie Besant being seen as representatives of Indian aspirations. The influence of Saklatvala – who also contributed several articles to the *Dreadnought* around this time – is clear here. Later issues of the journal, however, took pains to point to the growth of 'great insurgent movements in Ireland, in India, in Egypt', suggesting, as Jones had once suggested to the Chartists, that they should 'cause Communists to consider deeply: why are these movements so flourishing and so capable of action, whilst the working-class movement is languishing in apathy and ineptitude?'⁹² An editorial noted that Britain too needed 'a movement that is moving', as was the case in India, where a 'vast revolt' was in the making; India would also give confidence to Ireland's anticolonial movement. Pankhurst would also deprecate Labour's weakening of its internationalist inheritance in not offering 'strenuous opposition' to the weakly reformist 1919 Government of India Act, and accuse the party of lacking in 'the sturdy democratic fibre of the Chartists'.⁹³ After a tussle with the newly formed Communist Party of Great Britain over control of the *Dreadnought* when she was released from prison in 1922, Pankhurst ran the paper for two more years before it folded. She would not return to journalism and public life again till the early 1930s, though she did write a book on India in 1926. While the book itself is not especially remarkable – one among many overarching histories of the region that seek to understand it in historical context – it does attempt to delineate the manifold ways in which colonial rule has had to resort to repressive measures for its survival, including legislating against 'disaffection'. Pankhurst also considers the resources for democratic and egalitarian government already embedded in Indian vernacular traditions, comparing the village *panchayats* to the Russian *mir*. To the extent that empire attempts to render subject populations 'dumb' through the force of the machine, the claims of the civilizing mission are rendered void: 'Civilisation must indeed be written down as a failure, if it could find no better means of spreading knowledge than is provided by the sword, and no nobler motive for doing so than that of exploitation'.⁹⁴

'Though still white': Black Voice and the Extraordinary Dreams of Nancy Cunard

YOUR BOOK IS MARVELOUS. LANGSTON.

*Voices crying in the wilderness
At so much per word
From the white folks:
'Be meek and humble.
All you niggers
And do not cry
Too loud.'*

Langston Hughes, 'To Certain Negro Leaders'

In 1931, McKay, now an established figure on the cultural landscape of Harlem, wrote an enthusiastic letter to a woman who had invited him to contribute to an anthology she was putting together:

We poor Negroes, it seems to me, are literally smothered under reams of stale, hackneyed, repetitious stuff done by our friends, our moral champions and ourselves ... We most of us live in fear of the fact of ourselves. And can hardly afford to render even the artistic truth of our own lives as we know and feel it; but it is unimaginable that you could be handicapped or allow yourself to be by the social-racial reactions that hamper us sometimes unconsciously even. And so I hope the stuff you are going to put out will be a revelation and inspiration to us.⁹⁵

Given a literary context where black voices – his own and those of Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen, among others – were in fact expressing the 'artistic truth' of black lives with increasing vividness and power, McKay was being more than a little self-deprecating. He was right, however, to suggest that his addressee could potentially make good use of her cultural capital as a white author to put into the public domain a collaborative piece of work which would be fresh and revelatory. She was Nancy Cunard, a British aristocrat descended from the shipping baron Samuel Cunard, though by no means the wealthy 'heiress' the media sensationally portrayed her as. Already something of a celebrity as a poet, writer, journalist, art collector, artistic muse, music aficionado and publisher, Cunard had written to McKay to solicit a contribution for her anthology, *Negro*, originally titled *Colour*. The owner of the Hours, a small press which published European avant-garde work, and also a discerning collector of African artefacts, Cunard wanted to curate a panoramic work that would at once function as a cultural history of African and African-American life and as a forum for black liberation globally.⁹⁶ The case which had galvanized her, as well as many others in Britain and continental Europe, to think about the problem of racism and white supremacy was the that of the so-called Scottsboro Boys, the nine young black men in America who had been tried and summarily sentenced (eight of them capitally) for purportedly raping two white women. As was obvious to many, there was no evidence of their guilt; the prosecution was based on the testimony of the two women, one of whom recanted. The League against Imperialism was one of the key constituents of the European Scottsboro campaigns, and Cunard was alongside, operating in Paris, London and New York. Her involvement and networks brought high-powered figures to the international defence of the Scottsboro nine, including Ezra Pound, Albert Einstein (a patron of the LAI who had also come out in support of the Meerut detainees) and Charlie Chaplin.⁹⁷ The communist-led Scottsboro front also represented, not least through its transatlantic dimensions, the yoking together of anti-racism

and anticolonialism in a global frame. In Britain, the campaign drew on the momentum generated by the smaller Meerut campaign, attracting many of the same key figures, including Saklatvala and Bridgeman. As a response to that moment, the *Negro* anthology constitutes a declaration that the raced voices of the colonized-in-struggle would henceforth have to be central to the project of decolonization. Symptomatic of this centrality was the change of the anthology's title from *Colour*, with its emphasis on racial oppression, to *Negro*, with the agency and voices of black people in the foreground.⁹⁸ The anthology not only produces 'blackness as an inescapable presence', but places the historical condition of blackness as a necessary particular through which it would be possible to think in world-historical terms.⁹⁹

Cunard's personal motivations for putting together this monumental volume have been the subject of much salacious and excessively psychoanalytical speculation; these need not detain us, not least because they detract from the importance of the anthology's insistently collective dimensions. While it is certainly true that her romantic relationship with the African-American jazz musician Henry Crowder, to whom she dedicated the volume, and concomitant alienation from her viciously racist mother, Emerald (Maud) Cunard, were shaping factors in Cunard's life at the time she undertook the project, these factors, or theories of 'self-abnegation', are less interesting and significant than the work's own intellectual contours, both as Nancy Cunard conceived of them and as they actually emerged in a volume of quite remarkable collective genius. Testimony to the coalitional nature of resistance itself, the book emerged as necessarily collaborative. It was rooted in Cunard's friendships with black musicians, writers, artists and photographers, and her sense that any resolution of the 'Negro question' would require engagement with the histories and struggles of black peoples across the globe. In later correspondence with Dorothy Padmore, Cunard would recall that George Padmore, who would become a close friend, was 'the principal and most important of the many contributors to the large African section of the work', and would declare her own indebtedness to his 'stupefying' knowledge of Africa, 'with its great complexity of conditions in all the diverse colonies, the comparisons to be drawn between them, the knowledge of local laws and circumstances, and how much more'.¹⁰⁰ Cunard has been justifiably described as herself a living black internationalist network; equally, the text, and Cunard's editorship of it, were made possible by the black internationalist moment, one in which learning about and from the lives of others was constitutive of solidarity.¹⁰¹ As one critic has noted of *Negro*, drawing on Walter Benjamin, 'assembling, collecting, and curating as a cultural and aesthetic practice can make occluded and excluded histories visible'.¹⁰² Cunard described her own 'arduous anthological road', to which sustained study was integral, as one that 'held many surprises'; before commencing it, she had asked herself whether she could 'not learn a great deal in Africa, of the Africans themselves, they in their endless diversity'.¹⁰³ Certainly, Cunard's personal papers make clear that an enormous amount of work went into the making of the anthology, with copious notes, drawings, maps and letters among the preparatory materials for it. Signing off letters of solicitation addressed to a 'Dear Collaborator' with 'Yours for the freeing of the innocent Scottsboro boys and the true emancipation of the Negro peoples', Cunard worked into the anthology a unique

combination of harrowing accounts of oppression and exhilarating portraits of black music, art and literature. The latter spoke to the existence of plentiful cultural and political resources for liberation and reconstruction. Scholarship has sometimes been befuddled by a text that is collaborative on a global scale, moving between representations of oppression and resistance, and attempting, despite the strong editorial presence of Cunard, to facilitate black self-representation in all its diversity. With photographs of jazz musicians and African art interleaved with visual depictions of lynching, *Negro*, some critics have suggested, is hampered by the lack of ‘an overarching narrative’ and ‘relies on the juxtaposition of many unrelated or loosely related materials’.¹⁰⁴ But this is to overlook the volume’s explicit investment in heterogeneity as both content and form, setting itself as it does against monolithic and flattening narratives of blackness. The eminent African-American academic and critic Alain Locke wrote to Cunard after receiving his copy, describing it as

the finest anthology in every sense of the word ever compiled on the Negro. When I saw the announcements, I feared a scrap book, but by a miracle of arrangement, you have built up a unity of effect and a subtle accumulative force of enlightenment that is beyond all contradiction and evasion. It is just the kind of thing needed at this time; and all of us are grateful.¹⁰⁵



Nancy Cunard in her print studio in France

As Jane Marcus has argued, the relative neglect of Cunard, ‘an autodidact, a self-made intellectual and political organiser’, in literary scholarship is striking.¹⁰⁶ She suggests that the absence of Cunard in histories of both modernism and the Harlem Renaissance has been made possible by either dismissing her contribution to various fields of knowledge or belittling her as ‘an English heiress slumming in search of sex with black men’.¹⁰⁷ (When Cunard arrived in the United States to commence research for the book, she received voluminous amounts of horrifyingly racist and misogynist hate mail suggesting that sex with black men was her main aim.)¹⁰⁸ It could be argued that it is precisely Cunard’s deliberate undoing of the lines between modernist aesthetics and political engagement with race and empire, as well as the emphasis she placed on the raced black voice, that accounts for why she has, ‘until recently, been culturally and historically marginalized or ignored’.¹⁰⁹ The story of *Negro* is one in which Cunard occupies the position of an auteur, but one who makes clear the importance of colonized and oppressed black people representing themselves. Cunard’s own interventions in the volume are better situated as part of the project of constructing solidarity through the anthology’s form, rather than ‘hierarchizing the interpretation of its

contents'.¹¹⁰ Similarly, there is little sense of Cunard's 'refusal to acknowledge her race and class privilege as a white vanguard poet and activist'; if anything there is an insistence that, while white supporters must use their connections and resources, it was imperative for blackness to be central.¹¹¹ Indeed, it was a question not of 'including' black voices, but of reconfiguring the understanding of world history to make black experience central to it – what Robin Kelley calls 'the quest to situate black and brown peoples at the center of world history'.¹¹² Throughout her writing career, privately and publicly, Cunard was insistent on the need for the colonized and oppressed to speak for themselves: 'It is very good to have a book on Africa by an African', she wrote of *Africa Answers Back* by Prince Akiki K. Nyabongo.¹¹³ 'Permit me to ask', she ventured in a scathing letter to the *Spectator* magazine on the topic of race and racism, sent sometime in 1931, 'if you have ever discussed the subject with the person best qualified to speak on it: with the Negro himself?'¹¹⁴ In preparing the anthology, Cunard positioned herself as both a student of black life and a curator of its enormous diversity – succeeding, as one interlocutor noted, in bringing together its many dimensions in a 'variegated and comprehensive' volume. 'What a marvellous, magnificent piece of bookmaking it is!' noted another correspondent.¹¹⁵ She freely sought and received the advice and assistance of writers like McKay, who put her in touch with various Jamaican contacts, and Hughes, who regarded her as 'one of my favourite folks in the world'.¹¹⁶ The volume was not easy to place with a publisher; in addition to carrying an explosive combination of radical politics and a direct confrontation with racial and colonial ideologies, it would require hundreds of pages of typesetting. The expensive printing (£1,500 – a small fortune) of the volume, published by Wishart in London after being turned down by publishers like Jonathan Cape and Victor Gollancz, was ultimately, and with a degree of poetic justice, funded by libel suits brought by Cunard against publications which had carried stories about her supposed liaisons with black men, such as the radical singer and actor Paul Robeson. Marcus is right to suggest that Cunard was 'very much aware of the form of the anthology as cultural capital', deliberately producing 'a weighty and dignified tome' that would materially represent the weight of black contributions to art, politics, letters and music. It was 'necessary' not only to make this book, but to make it 'in this manner', Cunard notes in her foreword.

Negro is regarded, even by some of its detractors, as a stupendous textual achievement, motivated by what Cunard described as 'the longing to fight'.¹¹⁷ As early as 1932, McKay had told Cunard that, since her book 'is so different in spirit and plan from anything that had been done before ... it might become when it was published the rallying-point for a strong new expression'.¹¹⁸ Introducing an abridged version in 1970, Hugh Ford noted pithily: 'One of the most astonishing facts about *Negro* is its existence; another is its author'.¹¹⁹ Famously weighing eight pounds and nearly three inches thick, it brings together 250 articles written by 150 different people, the large majority black – from the United States, the West Indies and various African countries – but also several white authors from the United States, France and Britain.¹²⁰ Samuel Beckett undertook many of the translations from the French, as did Cunard's cousins, Victor and Edward.¹²¹ Other already famous names who contributed to it

included Ezra Pound, Langston Hughes and André Breton; a significant number of authors included were black women. Within its 855 pages – which cover the United States substantially, but also Africa, the Caribbean, South America and Europe – 385 illustrations are to be found, including photographs of artworks. Manifestos, photography, sculpture, political analysis, historical retrospectives, ethnography – the volume covers a remarkable breadth of non-fictional genres, in addition to several pages of poetry and music, all aimed at elucidating not only the diversity and significance of black cultures, but also the history of enslavement, colonization and resistance. It was constitutively heterogeneous, a contrapuntal ensemble showcasing black voices of different political stripes. One contributor, Eugene Gordon, observes: ‘In general, the anthology is excellent, because it has brought together in one volume the opinions of persons who think about the negro in *different ways*’.¹²² At the same time, the common condition of oppression, from ‘the docks of Sierra Leone’ and ‘the diamond mines of Kimberley’ to the ‘banana lands of Central America’ and the ‘streets of Harlem’, made blackness not just one political standpoint among others, but one vested with an epistemic privilege out of which a transformative critical analysis might emerge on a global scale.¹²³

Certainly, part of Cunard’s motivation, described in her satirical broadside against her mother and her friends in the London intelligentsia, ‘Black Man and White Ladyship’, was to address those willed gaps in historical understanding that gave enslavement and colonialism their justification – the lack of written records, supercities and machines:

‘In Africa,’ you say, ‘the Negro is a savage, he has produced nothing, he has no history.’ It is certainly true that he has not got himself mixed up with machinery and science to fly the Atlantic, turn out engines, run up skyscrapers and contrive holocausts. There are no tribal Presses emitting the day’s lies and millions of useless volumes. There remain no written records; the wars, the kingdoms and the changes have sufficed unto themselves. It is not one country but many; well over 400 separate languages and their dialects are known to exist. Who tells you you are the better off for being ‘civilised’ when you live in the shadow of the next war or revolution in constant terror of being ruined or killed? ... How come, white man, is the rest of the world to be re-formed in your dreary and decadent image?¹²⁴

In her own initial planning notes for the volume, even as she knew that music, art and photography might be central, Cunard would explicitly solicit ‘outspoken criticism, comment and comparison from the Negro on the present-day civilisations’ across continents.¹²⁵ Cunard wanted the anthology to be one among many correctives to what she regarded as the prejudiced and paternal handling of African topics by so many white writers. One of the most innovative and politically significant curatorial principles governing *Negro* is the illumination of connections between languages, art, music, literature, folklore and customs, on the one hand, and resistance, organization, movements, achievements, leadership, protest and self-assertion, on the other. Thus, the 800-odd pages give us not a seamless but a textured, sometimes unwieldy, constellation of writers, genres and themes, from Zora Neale Hurston on black forms of ‘expression’ to short biographies of Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth and Phillis Wheatley; from harrowing descriptions and photographs of actual lynchings to memoirs of racism, accounts of starvation in Cuba and labour conditions in Jamaica; from poetry by Langston Hughes to sheet music for songs to Barongo proverbs and polemics on the state of Africa and the West Indies by Hughes, George Padmore and Ben Azikiwe. Far

from being articulated from the perspective of a European understanding of universalism, the anthology sought to understand universalism itself differently, as articulated from multiple sites, and as a rather more textured ideal than had been rendered by colonialism.¹²⁶ To put it in Aimé Césaire's resonant words, what was being mooted was 'a different idea of the universal. It is a universal rich with all that is particular, rich with all the particulars there are, the deepening of each particular, the coexistence of them all'.¹²⁷

Irina Rasmussen Goloubeva has observed that 'Cunard's anthology ventures into ideologically treacherous ground', risking accusations of 'the European appropriation and re-contextualization of African art'.¹²⁸ Cunard has not been immune to such charges. Yet, these would only have traction if the authorship of the anthology could be defined as solely Cunard's, or its main purpose an exercise in European modernism. Accusers would, however, need to overlook the extent to which the anthology aspired to produce an understanding of the universal that was precisely not reducible to the European, or even to modernism. As Goloubeva indicates, it is necessary to be attentive to the 'world-historical' dimensions of the anthology – but also, I think, to its iterative interest in the black contribution – African, African-American and West Indian – as *constitutive* of 'world history'.¹²⁹ In this light, it is, as Warren Friedman suggests, 'remarkable that *Negro* has largely disappeared as a cultural and historic document', if nonetheless symptomatic of how the privileged archives of anticolonialism have been so partially and patchily put together.¹³⁰ Forged in a crucible which brought together avant-garde culture, communism, anticolonialism, jazz and anti-racism, *Negro* is anything but a footnote. Rather, it is a collective document – or, as Raymond Michelet, Cunard's collaborator on the anthology, saw it, a *livre collectif* of anticolonialism as necessarily constituted by contending voices from the colonial and transatlantic peripheries.¹³¹ Peter Kalliney suggests that *Negro* 'constitutes one of those very special sets of circumstances in which white and colonial intellectuals were almost, but not quite, equal partners in an institution of cultural production'.¹³² While it is the case, as McKay's comments also make clear, that white allies like Cunard had access to more powerful networks and institutional resources than black writers, for Cunard herself the equality of participants in the *Negro* project was key; white contributors to the anthology were not paternalist mentors but 'honest defenders, admirers of the Negro on an exactly equal footing'.¹³³ The anthology itself, in other words, enacted solidarity through cross-racial alliances. It was, in many ways, as Hugh Ford suggests, an effort to bypass the discourses of 'extending' rights in favour of the assertion of something like 'black power'.¹³⁴ What Cunard was trying to avoid for black voices is, ironically, what happened to her in the end – written out of cultural history, 'marginalized by being transmuted into an iconic figure', and thereby converted into a containable 'cultural footnote'.¹³⁵ The relative neglect of *Negro* is not, then, simply a signifier of missing individual pieces in a modernist puzzle, but also part of the larger and even more consequential elision of crucial dialectical strands in the history of anticolonialism.

While some attention has been paid to its place in the history of modernism, and, via Brent Hayes Edwards's important work, to its role in 'recording' black internationalism, the *Negro* project has been largely overlooked as a central text in its own right in the annals of

anticolonialism and in the history of specific endeavours to form transcontinental and cross-racial alliances of resistance.¹³⁶ Its importance really lies in its unashamedly exploratory and reverse-pedagogical aims – Africa teaching Europe, colony teaching metropole, and, in some cases, black teaching white. With resistance as its central thematic, *Negro's* subversive potential can be gauged from the fact that it was banned as seditious by colonial administrations in parts of Africa and the Caribbean. As Cunard makes immediately clear in her foreword, the most important aspect of the anthology of some 150 black and white voices (although two-thirds are of African heritage) is its emphasis on 'spirit and determination' in struggle as a response to oppression. Throughout, there is a sense of black life as fundamentally shaped by resistance to oppression and attempts to crush that resistance; the anthological 'panorama' which documents both phenomena is for the 'recording of the struggles and achievements, the persecutions and the revolts against them, of the Negro peoples'.¹³⁷ In this sense, the scandal of Scottsboro is metonymic, 'part of the effort to force into the dumbest and most terrorised form of subjection all Negro workers who dare aspire to live otherwise than as virtual slaves'.¹³⁸ Seriously engaged as it is with music and art (sheet music is included), the *Negro* anthology has its own keynote; 'the chord of oppression, struggle and protest rings, trumpet-like or muffled, but always insistent throughout'.¹³⁹ Black art, education, letters and music are important as documents of a 'diverse genius', and a 'spirit of determination ... to break through the mountain of tyranny', even as some black people cleaved to the idea that 'justice will come to them from some eventual liberality in the white man'.¹⁴⁰ Writing in 1932, when the glittering hopes of 1917 remained a beacon for many, Cunard is open about her own conviction 'that it is Communism alone which throws down the barriers of race as finally as it wipes out class distinctions'.¹⁴¹ As one critic has noted, 'far more important than speculations about what the Soviet Union may have accomplished (and did not) in terms of race relations, is the appeal of revolutionary rupture to open the present moment to alternative visions and possibilities outside of European cosmopolitanism'.¹⁴² Although Cunard was never herself formally allied with the Communist Party and many of her contributors were not communists, the anthology was put together at a historical moment when communism clearly provided a compelling vision of internationalism and cross-racial solidarity. In one sense, then, the anthology puts black and white voices in engagement not only with each other, but also with communist internationalism. At the same time, the anthology's dialogical attempt to bring together multiple voices across national, racial and political lines sets itself within a longer history of alliances of solidarity between Europeans and non-Europeans: 'From the beginning of the Anti-Slavery struggle to the present-day official and social obstructions of the Colour-bar there have been voices to protest against the infamous treatment of coloured people.'¹⁴³ It is with a black fellow-traveller's voice that the volume opens – Langston Hughes's 'revolutionary voice of liberation' insisting famously: 'I, too, am America.'¹⁴⁴

While there is not the space here to discuss the entirety of the *Negro* volume, one recurrent feature demands our attention. In the context of the emergence of twentieth-century anticolonialism as a decisive rejection of theories of tutelage and trusteeship, the shared critique of paternalism common to many otherwise diverse essays is striking. In one of the

first essays in the volume, a mock-anthropological polemic against segregation and racism shot through with barely concealed anger, the African-American singer Taylor Gordon amplifies Cunard's own introductory repudiation of the idea that the white man was in Africa for the black man's good: 'The caucasians [sic] are queer people. They think that any other people that can't see things as they do are to be pitied and cared for. That if there's ever an eternal peace among men, it will be because of their generosity.'¹⁴⁵ It is almost impossible, given the way the literary sphere is segregated, to 'read what the Negro really thinks'.¹⁴⁶ Other writers, like the African-American scholar of Romance languages John Frederick Matheus, are no less stringent about the structural absences that facilitate both racism and paternalism: 'European ignorance of the African Negro is monumental, and misinformation concerning the American Negro ridiculous, but in most cases not a bigoted prejudice, but sheer lack of knowledge.'¹⁴⁷ Many essays in the volume seek to correct this ignorance, not least around black agency and the ways in which black struggle exerted pressures upon and elicited transformations in Western polities. An unsigned article, taken from the left-wing journal *The Liberator*, notes that while abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison often took fright at the thought of slave rebellions, believing words and pleas would suffice, actual rebellions often had the effect of furthering the cause of freedom: 'Anti-slavery sentiment flared up even in the Southern States immediately after the Nat Turner rebellion. A number of petitions were circulated in Virginia, to the effect that, since the slaves had proved themselves so ready to fight for their liberty, it was hopeless to try to keep the Negroes enslaved.'¹⁴⁸ The fact that slave revolts had essentially been written out of histories accounted for the undue prominence given to gradualism and petitioning in the abolitionist tradition. An article by Du Bois, taken from his journal *The Crisis*, also speaks of a long history of slave revolts, going on to observe with calm audacity that, quite apart from the black role in Emancipation, black agency had forged America itself. Democracy in America 'has been developed because of the pressure of the slaves for freedom and recognition'; American women as a whole gained more status because 'the Negro woman was a working woman before she was a housewife', whose example spread to white working women; Negro art – music, literature, dancing – made a 'permanent contribution to American civilisation'; and public schools were an 'accepted institution, primarily because of the insistence of Negroes on free education'.¹⁴⁹ Black labour had, of course, been fundamental to the making of America. Noting that black people had always 'reacted and reacted sharply' to their surroundings, Du Bois invokes a tradition of 'many strong individual Negro thinkers' across the Americas, as well as the success of the Haitian revolt.¹⁵⁰ Yet Western thought routinely played down black agency, preferring instead the 'widely held assumption that there is no inner reaction among the Negroes; that you are dealing with a people who, while they are swayed by certain primitive feelings and instincts, are not thinking and planning or moving in any self-motivated ways'.¹⁵¹ Michel-Rolph Trouillot makes a similar point when he notes that the Western historiography of the Haitian Revolution routinely trivializes 'the slaves' independent sense of their right to freedom and the right to achieve this freedom by the force of arms'.¹⁵²

Du Bois's essay was prefaced by a critical and somewhat crude demolition job from Cunard which both rehearsed the hostility of the Communist Party towards him and the

NAACP and insisted that ‘the Communists are ... *the only* defenders of the oppressed Negro masses’.¹⁵³ Given Cunard’s leanings, and despite its undoubted political diversity, the weight of the volume comes down on the side of communism as the only social form which would end both racial and class exploitation. James W. Ford, an erstwhile vice-presidential candidate fielded by the Communist Party, wrote an essay for the volume called ‘Communism and the Negro’, which also attacked the NAACP as ‘petty bourgeois Negro reformists’.¹⁵⁴ While accusing reformists (with more than a touch of purple prose) of attempting ‘to hide and destroy the revolutionary traditions of the Negro masses’, Ford too – ironically, in much the same vein as Du Bois – paid homage to slave rebel leaders like Denmark Vesey, Gabriel Prosser and Nat Turner, as well as to the Haitians; all of these examples illustrated that liberation was not ‘something to be handed down, or denied, from above’.¹⁵⁵ Reformism is the enemy, whether offered as ‘a favour from above’ or solicited by the ‘boot-licking diplomacy’ of the ‘Negro petty bourgeoisie’, whose ‘misleaders’ both make use of and hinder the liberation struggle by winning petty concessions from power without insisting on radical change.¹⁵⁶ Liberalism too is identified as a problem, shamelessly peddling illusions ‘such as the “possibility” of liberation without a struggle against imperialism, of real democracy under robber capitalism, of emancipation from the skies’.¹⁵⁷ Cunard picks up on this theme in her own comprehensive essay on the history of Jamaica with an assessment of the importance, but also the limitations, of Marcus Garvey’s back-to-Africa movement: ‘He does not see that the white imperialists will never *give*, but that they must be *forced*, and for this that the actual condition, the system itself, must be revolutionarily changed.’¹⁵⁸

Frequently illuminating the connection between imperialism abroad and racism at home, the anthology as a whole is also unstinting in its criticism of the ‘colour bar’ in both Britain and the United States. In a damning account of how the colour bar operates in British hotels, Cunard attacks the ‘vicious and scandalous actions of the English against people of colour’, many of whom are subjects of the British Empire or ‘other white capitalist nations’.¹⁵⁹ Her angry account here includes a letter by Reginald Bridgeman on behalf of the LAI to the British Home Office protesting racial discrimination in hotels, but to no avail, leading Cunard to observe bitterly: ‘“Teach niggers their ‘place’ ” is as much the government view as it has ever been.’¹⁶⁰ Domestic metropolitan fights against racism were connected to the global anticolonial struggle, as an article taken from the *Negro Worker*, edited and probably authored by George Padmore, observed: ‘The British ruling class, frightened by the growing revolts of the colonial peoples for national freedom and self-determination on the one hand, and the solidarity struggles of white and coloured workers in England on the other, are intensifying racial and national chauvinism.’¹⁶¹ Once again, liberalism, with its petitioning advocacy of ‘better’ race relations – the reference here is to the League of Coloured Peoples – acted ‘to put a brake upon the growing resentment of the coloured workers and students against the shameful way in which they are being treated in this so-called democratic country’.¹⁶²

The historical example of free Haiti runs through several essays, underscoring the history and relevance to the present of black resistance and self-emancipation. But it is Ethiopia

which provides a contemporary focal point for discussions of black self-assertion and independent governance. As we shall see, within two years of the publication of *Negro*, the invasion of Ethiopia would also become a rallying point for anticolonial organization. In 'Ethiopia Today', a piece which would later cause him to be pilloried by some communists as supporting a feudal reactionary emperor, Padmore observes that the huge symbolic importance of that nation derives from the fact that Ethiopians are 'the first non-European peoples since the Haitian Revolution to defeat the white race at arms'.¹⁶³ Ethiopia's closest contemporary in this regard was the republic of Liberia, which, however, suffered from a heavy US capitalist presence, and was 'mortgaged to the Firestone Rubber Company, thanks to the machinations of Yankee dollar diplomacy'.¹⁶⁴ The very fact of Liberia, 'that a Negro republic exists in Africa' at all, writes Ben N. Azikiwe (Nnamdi Azikiwe), the prominent Nigerian nationalist and later first president of independent Nigeria, 'naturally makes the white man conscious of the psychological effect of this on the self-determination of other indigenous natives'.¹⁶⁵ That in itself explained the several incursions made upon Liberia's sovereignty by European powers, including Britain. Liberia also gave the lie to another cherished colonial idea: that the black man had no 'political capacity' for self-rule. Azikiwe is defensive about the charge that Liberia was guilty of forced-labour practices, admitting that these must be eradicated but pointing to the hypocrisy in singling the black republic out when other African colonial possessions were guilty of the same, including 'the incompetent semi-sovereign state of the Union of South Africa'.¹⁶⁶ Ultimately, the republics of Haiti and Liberia 'withstand the buffets and assaults of imperial countries' to show that 'the Negro ... is capable of directing his political destiny and that 'the African is a natural statesman' with plenty of institutions of governance to draw on: 'If his past history reveals such genuine evidences of political capacity, then his future needs no further comments or conjectures ... Take it or leave it.'¹⁶⁷ On the same topic, the Harlem writer George S. Schuyler notes that the exploitation of labour is hardly unique to Liberia, for in 'the richest country in the world', the United States, millions 'were absolutely dependent upon grudging charity for their few crumbs of daily bread. No one was secure.'¹⁶⁸ In the hinterland of Liberia, on the other hand, in village after village, all denizens work, eat and have shelter because 'the land, on which all depend for a living, cannot be bartered or sold by a few individuals but belongs to the tribal collectivity, and therefore cannot be disposed of'.¹⁶⁹ The future Kenyan leader Johnstone (Jomo) Kenyatta would also observe in his contribution to the anthology that 'forced labor has no limits under the rule of British imperialism', which liked to call it 'communal labor'.¹⁷⁰ Africa had its flaws, but the imperial powers were in no position to call themselves superior.

If the project of *Negro* was to lay out a panoramic history of black life and struggle across continents, using the tools of ethnography, among others, it was also a counter-history of Western imperialism and, relatedly, of 'whiteness'. The last sections of the book prefigure later modes of 'colonial discourse analysis' in offering scathing and detailed examinations of the discursive modes and justificatory narratives of imperial apologetics – a kind of reverse ethnography. The Surrealist Group in Paris, for instance, contributed an essay translated by Samuel Beckett, resonantly entitled 'Murderous Humanitarianism', which observed: 'The

white man preaches, doses, vaccinates, assassinates and (from himself) receives absolution. With his psalms, his speeches, his guarantees of liberty, equality and fraternity, he seeks to drown the noise of his machine-guns.¹⁷¹ Inverting the usual terms of both ethnography and the civilizing mission, the pioneering Nigerian educationist T. K. Utchay undertakes to examine ‘the most barbarous thing in modern civilisation’; ‘white-manning’, he writes, is ‘a technical word to describe one of the world’s strangest actions ever in existence’ whereby one set of human beings think themselves superior to another simply by accident of a ‘white skin’.¹⁷² The term can be extended to those not of a white skin who, nonetheless, defer to white supremacy. ‘White-manning’ is, by definition, an identity politics focused on the entitlements of a particular racial type; it enables a person, ‘by virtue of his white skin, to ask and claim first consideration in every walk of life, in health, in position, in comfort and in luxury’.¹⁷³ This includes, of course, a far greater cut of the material pie – wages twelve times those of the black man, for instance. ‘White-manning’ is not an inherent quality, Utchay stresses, but in fact an historical *response* to resistance at the point when ‘the black man wants to share in the natural and unlimited liberty enjoyed by the white’.¹⁷⁴ For practitioners of ‘white-manning’, paternalism met with gratitude was acceptable: ‘The picture used to be the figure of a white boy stooping over his willing black pet. The white man pitied and determined to raise the black man’s condition to that of a civilised being, and set himself to work.’¹⁷⁵ However, a black person’s claims to being equal were deemed insupportable: ‘How can he be? To me this is insolence.’¹⁷⁶

Negro’s interest in universalism as constituted by thick particulars means that the tendency of the anthology is to reject both positivism and radical alterity. The anthology’s critique of colonial discourse is paired with extensively researched and detailed accounts of diverse African cultural resources and political institutions, some of which have been decimated by the colonial encounter, while others could provide the basis for independent polities to draw on. Especially interesting here are the contributions of Cunard’s collaborator on the volume, the young Frenchman Raymond Michelet, whose work features prominently towards the end. In ‘African Empires and Civilisations’, Michelet delineates at great length the tremendous diversity of various African polities and political institutions, taking pains to note, without unduly romanticizing them, that many states ‘enjoyed genuine prosperity’ as well as indigenous industries, several of which were now gone forever.¹⁷⁷ ‘“Primitive” Life and Mentality’ takes on Western colonial renditions of black thought in order to demolish the ‘extenuating’ notion of the inferior negro whose modes of thought and living are utterly different: ‘The system of forcing people to work for the exclusive benefit of their masters, on lands that have been stolen from them and under conditions verging on slavery, if not worse, very soon creates its own ideology, namely, that these people are, by definition, inferior and only receive the treatment they deserve.’¹⁷⁸ It is an ideology facilitated by the complete lack of interest in understanding how the indigenes of these stolen lands actually think, since the travellers and colonists who wrote accounts of these cultures were ‘less interested in what a thing meant than in how it looked and how they looked beside it’.¹⁷⁹ At best, there is some cursory acknowledgement of the picturesque and the beautiful, but ‘the white men on the spot are in no way concerned with understanding the natives, but only with extracting from

them the maximum'; 'imperialists of learning' are represented by the likes of one major intellectual who holds forth on the supposed 'pre-logicism' of the 'black mentality', but 'has never spoken with an African in his life':¹⁸⁰

In this system the savage appears as a kind of dismantled creature, bound to his environment, his group, food, dwelling, wife or wives, law of his clan, etc., by a variety of 'mystical participations', which are presented with the utmost extravagance by M. Lévy-Brühl and his school. It is on this account, we are informed, that the behaviour of the Negroes is inexplicable and unreasonable ... so that it is really nothing, but the old legend dressed up to the latest times.¹⁸¹

Only by working expropriated land for the European and learning Christian morality is the black person deemed to emerge 'from their vale of folly and ignorance into the light of pure reason'.¹⁸²

It is not just Michelet's attack on questionable stereotyping that is of significance here. More valuable is his refusal of both absolute difference and total equivalence in approaching black cultures – or what Césaire describes as the Western ethnographic 'insistence on the marginal, "separate" character of the non-whites'.¹⁸³ Even as he rejects 'the model white rationalist ... as the archetype of truth and practical wisdom', Michelet charges existing inquiries into black life and thought with making

no attempt to understand how these 'strange' thoughts and actions may be an integral part of life itself, profoundly human and often evincing, what is more, an acute perception of reality and an ability to harness its most hidden resources – so acute indeed that it cannot immediately be apprehended by the narrow, cocksure brain of the European (or American) positivist.¹⁸⁴

Rather than compare degrees of closeness to or difference from 'the model white rationalist', Michelet advocates studying specific historical and ecological circumstances in which, for instance, some people 'were at liberty to develop in themselves to a high degree certain modes of perception and of action, apparently extra-scientific, but symptomatic in effect of reality quite as real, if not more so, as [sic] the positivist world of the European'.¹⁸⁵ Michelet is talking here of that which is deemed to be 'magical' and 'bizarre', pointing out through a series of examples that many beliefs that seem 'strange have only to be examined with a little attention to become perfectly human and normal'.¹⁸⁶ It is possible to identify historical specificities and cultural particularities without taking them to be 'the sign of a singular mentality'. The mind, in certain circumstances, can relate differently to the magical or the ineffable without therefore being incapable of reason or ratiocination. Scientific and experimental modes of thought are not absent in Africa, as shown by the existence of everything from metal-works and medicine to weapons and weaving looms. Michelet anticipates something of Césaire's famous polemic against Eurocentric assumptions here: 'That the West has invented science. That the West alone knows how to think; that at the borders of the Western world there begins the shadowy realm of primitive thinking, which, dominated by the notion of participation, incapable of logic, is the very model of faulty thinking.'¹⁸⁷ Significantly, Michelet diagnoses the widely held colonial belief in the African's 'positively chronic *inaptitude* to learn or receive fresh vigour from any alien source whatsoever' as a *colonial* failure – a failure to read resistance to 'European importations' as a

reasoned and deliberate choice, a failure ‘to realise that their refusal to abandon their way of living does not arise from an inability to assess for what it is worth the substitute proposed to them, but on the contrary from a definite act of preference and with full knowledge of what they are doing’.¹⁸⁸ The European Positivist, however, is so hampered by his own pompous imagination and determination to impute inferiority that all evidence, including that of ‘a particularly rapid and accurate ratiocination’, ceases to matter.¹⁸⁹ Here, Michelet draws on the example of African languages, both the specific ‘richness of their vocabularies, forms, locutions’ and the existence of equivalents for European terms.¹⁹⁰ Given their inability to grasp the complexities of African thought, Michelet asks, could the truth be the inverse of the standard claim – that the real ‘arrested mentality’ is, in fact, that of the European anthropologist? Michelet’s alternative reading of Africans refusing to be treated by a white doctor, frequently cited as ‘another example of Negro stupidity and fastidiousness’, suggests that, once again, it is black resistance that is at stake.¹⁹¹ Drawing on the work of M. Leroy, Michelet points out that many Africans repudiated white doctors because they justifiably associated European medicine with brutality and violence. This was a point Fanon would also make years later in his essay ‘Colonialism and Medicine’: ‘It is necessary to analyze, patiently and lucidly, each of the reactions of the colonized, and every time we do not understand, we must tell ourselves that we are the heart of the drama – that of the impossibility of finding a meeting ground in any colonial situation.’¹⁹² In his closing essay to *Negro*, ‘The White Man Is Killing Africa’, Michelet lists, alongside a comprehensive index of colonial crimes, multiple colonial insurgencies, from French West Africa to British Gambia, and from the Gold Coast to Nyasaland and South Africa, and observes acerbically: ‘THE NATIVES ARE EVIDENTLY SO WELL SATISFIED WITH THE NEW RÉGIME OF PEACE AND HAPPINESS BROUGHT IN BY THE EUROPEANS THAT AMONG THE RISINGS WHICH EACH GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTS TO KEEP DARK MAY BE ENUMERATED ...’.¹⁹³ A long list of uprisings follows, from French Guinea and the Ivory Coast to Nigeria, Cameroon and Madagascar.

Towards Ethiopia: Re-centring Africa

McKay pulled his piece from *Negro* when Cunard told him she could not afford to pay for the work, at which point an extensive correspondence appears to have come to an end along with a budding friendship.¹⁹⁴ In a stern penultimate letter, McKay informed Cunard that his own romanticism about literature was ‘different from those nice people’s who ask and expect artists to write, sing and perform in other ways freely and charitably for a cause while they would not dream of asking the carpenter, caterer and others who do the manual tasks to work for nothing’.¹⁹⁵ Both Pankhurst and Cunard would go on to become stentorian and committed voices on the British anticolonial left, and both would speak out forcefully against the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, as well as against fascism in Germany, Italy and Spain. Pankhurst would excoriate Britain for standing by while ‘Ethiopia was vanquished’, attributing this failure to colonial thinking whereby ‘this is only Africa, this is not a White Man’s country’.¹⁹⁶ She would repeatedly insist that the rank and file of the British labour

movement had to understand that ‘imperialism is intimately bound up with its own enslavement to the capitalist system. International solidarity is a sentiment which only attains a sturdy growth among those who are convinced that capitalism has had its day.’¹⁹⁷ For her, there were clear continuities between anticolonialism and anti-fascism, both of which involved the exercise of violence, governmental and extra-governmental, in the service of the capitalist state. In May 1936, after the invasion of Ethiopia/Abyssinia, Pankhurst launched the *New Times and Ethiopia News*, which remained in circulation for twenty years and would be a prominent campaigning organ against fascism and colonialism. It provided an important forum for black nationalism, not least in the form of a regular column titled ‘Africa for the Africans’.¹⁹⁸ Like Cunard, Pankhurst grasped the value of African history being written by Africans. From the time McKay had been involved in it, her paper provided a forum for black academics and journalists; unlike many on the white left who dismissed Haile Selassie as a feudal relic, she developed a friendship with the emperor, understanding his positive symbolic value for black anticolonial campaigners.

‘Poets are the trumpets that sing to battle.’¹⁹⁹ With this in mind, Nancy Cunard hoped to put together another volume after *Negro*, this time ‘a short symposium of poetry’ that would ‘make a record of the Negro’s rising spirit against oppression’. To be titled ‘Revolution – the Negro Speaks’, the book never materialized, although she drafted and sent out a call for contributions for a collection of poems which, as far as possible, should be ‘inspired by some revolutionary event, some phase of the struggle in Negro history, past and present’.²⁰⁰ Her aim was to commemorate insurgency, revolutionary events and resistance struggles in black history, once again emphasizing the black subject not as ‘slave’ or ‘victim’ but as a ‘revolutionary-born’.²⁰¹ Cunard would remain heavily involved in the Scottsboro case in the decade that followed, having already launched the Scottsboro Defence Fund in London. She would work as a journalist, like Pankhurst – whose *New Times and Ethiopia News* she wrote for – frequently filing pieces for the Associated Negro Press, as well as various West Indian newspapers, on topics such as the invasion of Ethiopia, the Spanish Civil War, black intellectuals in Britain, and ‘race relations’. After she died in 1965, alone, depressed and ill, T. K. Utchay would note that he had named a school ‘Cunardia’ after her, and that she would always have a place in African hearts as one who ‘suffered slander, ostracism and loneliness because of us’.²⁰² Whether or not it became, as McKay hoped it would, ‘the rallying-point for a strong new expression’, *Negro* is now recognized as ‘ahead of its time, bursting with ideas whose time had only come in the intervening years or have yet to come’.²⁰³ Many of those ideas would be elucidated by black intellectuals in the decades that followed. The invasion of Ethiopia by Italy in 1935, involving the slaughter of 275,000 Ethiopians, would also bring together many London-based black intellectuals and their allies, including Jomo Kenyatta, C. L. R. James and George Padmore, who would join the likes of Pankhurst, Bridgeman and Cunard in another coalition, the International African Friends of Abyssinia, that would once again put blackness – and Africa – at the centre of its analysis.