The Grand Machinery of the World: Race, Global Order and the Black Atlantic

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Thesis submitted for the degree of

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Abstract

This thesis examines the ways in which the interwar global order came to be theorised by African writers, and those of African descent, in specific territories bordering the Atlantic. It asks how those views can inform a richer understanding of the construction of our contemporary world. In particular, it seeks to understand the centrality of race to the imperial order and to many of the oppositional projects that emerged in relation to the order. A global order perspective can, it is argued, help to explain the salience of race to the interwar world as well as its enduring power beyond that period.

Using as its primary sources the vibrant black print cultures and circuits of the interwar period, the thesis examines the close concomitance of national and transnational thinking during the 'Belle Époque'; the global vision of Marcus Garvey's black nationalism in the United States; the emergence of critical theorisations of colonialism across British-controlled West Africa; the languages of race and whiteness in interwar France, from the black press of Paris to the early texts of *Négritude*; and the role played by Haiti, Liberia, and Ethiopia—the only independent states of the period governed by Africans or African-descended people—as instantiations of the racialised nature of interwar sovereignty, targets of both imperial designs and anticolonial activism.

Interrogating the conceptual boundaries between race, nationalism, and pan-nationalism, the thesis suggests that such affinities are best understood not as abstractly-definable and opposing doctrines, but as political projects that have emerged historically in relation to global order as a whole and out of specifically enabling material conditions. As well as assessing diverse bodies of writing in terms of their contribution to international theory, the thesis explores how changes in material conditions and imperial infrastructures—particularly the spread of newspapers—facilitated a range of counter-readings of dominant discourses, imaginative acts of traversal, and other practices of oppositional power, whose consequences reach far beyond the interwar period.

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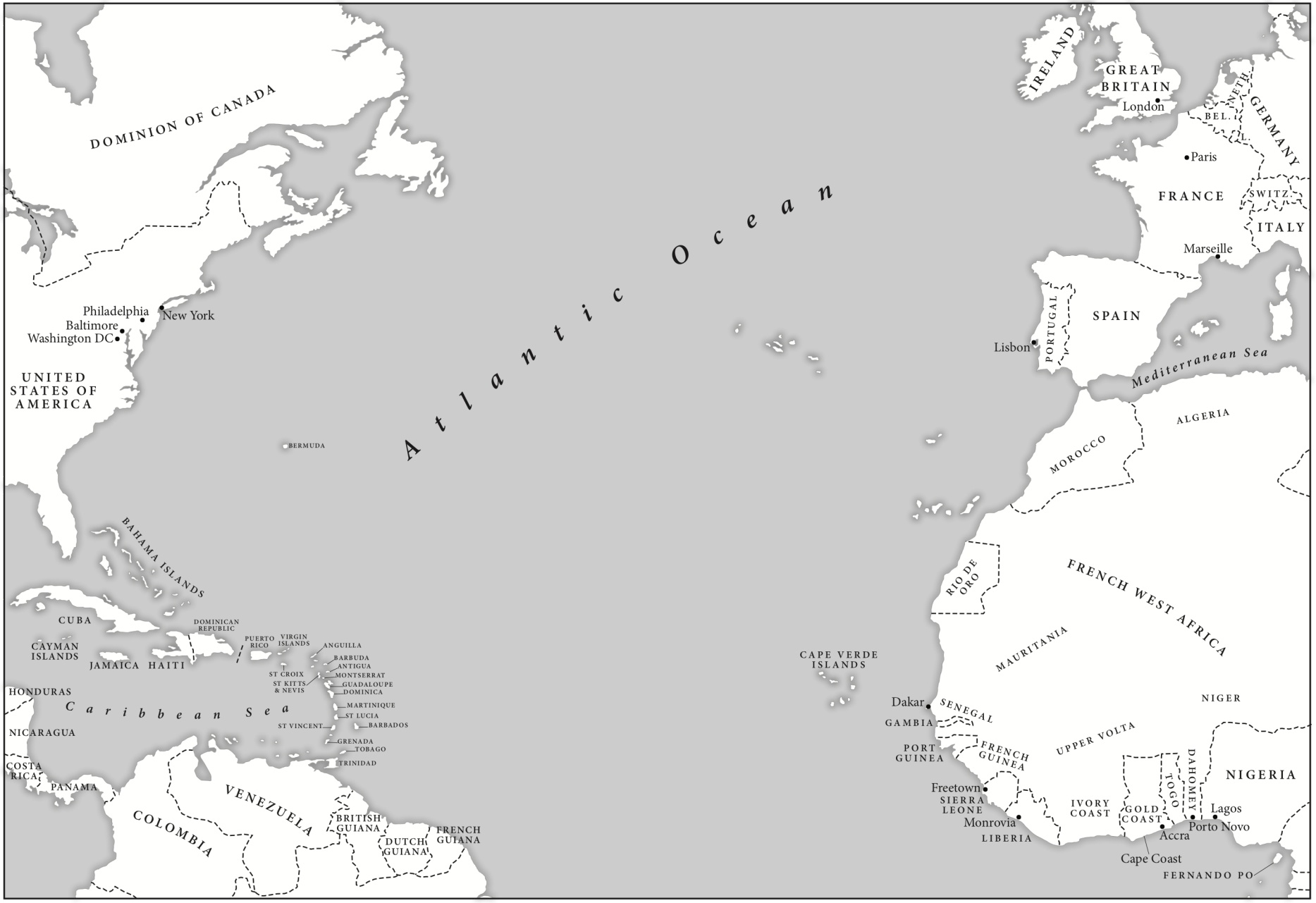
My siblings—Nussaibah, Usayd, Jumanah, Jinan—are responsible for conversations about politics that go back as long as I can remember.

Lastly, to my parents, who got me interested in the world: I dedicate this to you.



Map 1. ***The Interwar Atlantic***

Nations seek to disband, but their fragmented peoples take refuge in isolated regions from which nations rise again, like the phoenix.

—GIAMBATTISTA VICO

Introduction

Peter Abrahams was born to an Ethiopian father and a Coloured mother in a Johannesburg suburb in 1919. He ended up adopting Jamaica as his home: that was where he died in 2017, at the age of ninety-seven, after a lengthy career as a broadcaster and novelist. But his involvement in the pan-African cause—he was, upon his death, the last surviving member of a group that had included Kwame Nkrumah, George Padmore, Jomo Kenyatta, Amy Ashwood Garvey, and C. L. R. James—deepened most considerably neither in South Africa nor in Jamaica. It was in 1940s London that Abrahams met this loose collective of black activists and intellectuals who had become committed to the liberation of the African continent from colonial rule.[1] Like many of them, he found himself both attracted to and

[1] See William Grimes, 'Peter Abrahams, a South African Who Wrote of Apartheid and Identity, Dies at 97,' *New York Times*, January 22, 2017; and Abrahams' own compelling autobiography, *The Coyaba Chronicles*.

disappointed by the metropolitan left. 'What came across clearly,' he wrote later in his autobiography, 'was that communists, leading communists, no less than the members of the Working Men's Clubs, saw a difference between black and white.' While 'the movement, as a movement, said it did not recognise colour', it was undeniable that 'the people in it, those who led and controlled it, as well as those who followed it, were as colour-conscious as were the empire-builders.'

Since 'Marxism, communism, socialism' did not seem to 'have the automatic answers to the problem of the relations between the lighter and darker races of mankind', Abrahams wondered what the 'answer to prejudice' might be. He turned to George Padmore, the Trinidadian ex-Comintern official, pan-Africanist anticolonial militant, and close confidant of Kwame Nkrumah. Padmore responded that 'it was a matter of power. The world only respected power. The moment the Africans and Asians and Jews had political power, the world would respect them. Kwame Nkrumah with his great gift for sloganeering turned it into: *Seek ye first the political kingdom and all else will follow*. Pan-Africanism was to be the way to that political kingdom.'[2]

My purpose in this study is to explore the relationship between political power, race and the world that is so suggestively highlighted in this conversation between Abrahams and Padmore. It arises from a feeling that existing literatures on these topics do not sufficiently represent important dimensions of the political project to which Abrahams was referring. In the theoretical literature on nationalism, African and Asian nationalisms have often been represented as 'modular'[3] derivations of a form of political organisation

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[2] Ibid., 45.
[3] See especially Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 4: 'I will be trying to argue that the creation of these artefacts towards the end of the eighteenth century was the spontaneous distillation of a

that was first developed in Europe and in states governed by European settlers before being transplanted to other areas. The most influential works of nationalism theory all privilege Europe or the Americas; in none of them does Africa play any significant role. Only one discusses pan-Africanism—as a 'vague and unfocused' form of 'unification nationalism', whose 'political programmes appear very thin.'[4] West Africa, which mostly did not undergo a violent process of decolonisation and whose role in the Cold War was limited, is rarely discussed. Nationalism among African diaspora minority communities, such as in the United States or France, receives even less attention. In the field of international relations, meanwhile, the classical account of 'international society' and its expansion sees the modern state and the most significant patterns of interstate interaction as having developed first in the West before gradually expanding to include the rest of the world.[5] In each body of work, nationalism as a political project is seen to have found its ideal type, essence and apotheosis in the West. Only then was it—imperfectly—exported.

The glimpse offered by Abrahams into the world of black anticolonial and (to varying extents) 'nationalist' intellectuals in 1940s London does not, however, easily conform to this view. As Abrahams makes clear, Nkrumah and Padmore were directly

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complex "crossing" of discrete historical forces; but that, once created, they became "modular," capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains …' Nationalist theories which have broadly been termed materialist, such as those by Charles Tilly and Ernest Gellner, also strongly suggest a kind of modularity to nationalism even if they do not use the term. See note 4.

[4] Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 282–83. The key works in nationalism theory I am referring to are: Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*; Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*; Tilly, *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*; Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*; Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: Study in Its Origins and Background*.

[5] This is the classical account of the English school: see Bull and Watson, *The Expansion of International Society*; Bull, 'The Revolt Against the West'. Other schools of IR offer different accounts, but not fundamentally less Eurocentric ones.

motivated by the central 'problem of the relations between the lighter and darker races of mankind'. This global project connecting race and power *preceded*, and in a sense overshadowed, their nationalism. Like Abrahams and C. L. R. James—as well as a host of others, from the Négritude progenitors in Paris to the lusophone Africans who gathered in Lisbon at the *Casa dos Estudantes do Império*—they traversed the boundaries of race and nation, exile and belonging, diaspora and home, in ways that can seem perplexing according to existing theories of nationalism.[6]

In this study, I explore the implications of this global project and its connection to the politics of nationalism. My primary source material is drawn mostly from the francophone and anglophone black print cultures that emerged between 1919 and 1939 in cities bordering the Atlantic in Europe, the US and West Africa.[7] I argue that a range of nationalist discourses and projects which can be found in these texts emerged out of a theorisation of the global racial order that had been constructed through the unequal encounter between Europe and the extra-European world. This response helped to shape the trajectory of African nationalisms, but more generally it also pervaded the politics of the Third World in what Hedley Bull would later call its 'revolt against the West'.[8] The drive for international transformation and liberation at the heart of those movements was rooted here, in the widespread disillusionment among colonial intellectuals with the post-First World War order. The 'nationalist' political projects that emerged were constructed

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[6] On the lusophone connection, see Reza "Anticolonialism as Cosmonationalism,"
[7] By using these texts, I centre particular parts of the black Atlantic as a political and cultural space of circulation and exchange. The term was coined by Robert Farris Thompson in *Flash of the Spirit* and famously adopted by Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic* (15), where he urged scholars to 'take the Atlantic as one single, complex unit of analysis' and 'use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective'.
[8] Bull, 'The Revolt Against the West'.

in order to upset the balance of this order and what one interwar West African writer had called its resulting 'disequilibrium in human destinies'.[9]

A key aim of this study is to interrogate the mutual constitution of forms of nationalism and internationalism, asking how their concomitance can be understood in the context of the construction of a hierarchical global political and economic order through what has been called 'the globalization of international society'.[10] Looking at the interwar writing of black colonial intellectuals, I suggest the language of 'nationalism' and its apparently antithetical doctrines (internationalism, transnationalism, pan-nationalism) often obscures more than it elucidates. If these ways of political thinking are understood to be incompatible because they seem to correspond to different ethical visions of the world, their historical interconnectedness should warn us against a decontextualized and ahistorical separation between 'national' and other forms of thinking.

What is termed nationalism refers more accurately, I suggest, to a diverse range of attempts to mobilise a contingent form of political organisation that emerged at a particular historical juncture. The newly compacted world inaugurated through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the unprecedented power of European imperialism means that these attempts have always carried within them some vision of the world as a whole and their own position in relation to its hierarchies, ordering structures, modes of differentiation, institutions and values. Racial imaginaries were never separate from structures of global political, economic and social order. They existed in a set of jointly constitutive relationships with those structures, corresponding to the hierarchies of an international

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[9] De Graft-Johnson, *Towards Nationhood in West Africa*, 48.
[10] Dunne and Reus-Smit, *The Globalization of International Society*.

system that remained deeply stratified even while undergoing juridical levelling. I suggest that we can understand the apparently contradictory framing of political demands by black writers—often both nationalist and internationalist—only with reference to this context.

At the same time, I suggest there are lacunae in the discussion of race across history, critical race theory and international relations.[11] Though the intrinsic globality of race is repeatedly invoked in historical, ethical and sociological studies—think, for example, of Paul Gilroy's phrase 'the raciological ordering of the world'[12]—there have been few attempts to expand substantively upon that globality by explaining the precise relationship of race to the complex institutional configurations (political, economic, social and cultural) that have come to order the world and its populations. For this reason I suggest that some strands of international theory, particularly the concept of global order, can help us to think more clearly and systematically about the globality of race.

Meanwhile, within the field of international relations, the valuable and still emerging body of writing about race has largely focused on dominant visions of race in the West.[13] There has been far less discussion of the ways in which race was theorised from subaltern perspectives in international society, especially when it comes to Africa and the

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[11] Recent global history works that centre race include Magee, *Empire and Globalisation*; Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*; Schwarz, *The White Man's World*; Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*; Maier et al., *A World Connecting*; Behdad, *A Forgetful Nation*. For diplomatic and economic histories of the interwar that underline the role of race, see Boyce, *The Great Interwar Crisis and the Collapse of Globalization*; Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution*. For work on the role of race in resistance to racialised imperialism, see Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia*; Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia*. Theoretical works on race are discussed below.

[12] Gilroy, *Against Race*, 6.

[13] See the special issue of *Millennium*, 'Racialized Realities in World Politics' 46/2, January 2018. Recent writing about race in IR includes Manchanda and Shilliam, *Race and Racism in International Relations*; Gruffydd Jones, 'Race in the Ontology of International Order'; Shilliam, 'What the Haitian Revolution Might Tell Us about Development, Security, and the Politics of Race'; Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics*; Henderson, 'Hidden in Plain Sight'; Le Melle, 'Race in International Relations'.

African diaspora.[14] Part of the reason for this has been a tendency to begin discussions of race with existing theory before looking for corroborating empirical evidence, rather than beginning with, for example, the rich textual record of African continental and diasporic writing on race. This project is, then, designed to bring several perspectives on the same phenomenon into conversation with each other. It attempts to do so both explicitly and through the implicit connection of historical and archival methods with an international relations theoretical framework.

International Society and Global Order

A key suggestion I make in this thesis is that a particular understanding of global order can expand and deepen existing theories of nationalism and race. In order to explain my reasoning, I will briefly discuss here my use of two of the key theoretical tools I employ: international society and global order. Within the field of international relations, my interest is not in discussing my relationship to any particular 'school' of the discipline, with its various 'members' and 'founding fathers', but in locating some of my commonalities with a broad approach to the subject.[15] In a number of key respects, I have found the international society approach (or English school) an appropriate tradition to draw on for this study.

Most broadly, I share a view of the field as what Andrew Hurrell calls 'an integrating and synthesizing field of enquiry', united not by its methods but by the central

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[14] On the key exceptions to this trend, see note 100.
[15] I am sympathetic to Peter Wilson's characterisation of international relations 'not as a science, nor even an academic discipline, but as a socio-intellectual space' that is defined by its 'catholicity'. Wilson, 'E.H. Carr's The Twenty Years' Crisis', 2–3.

questions it seeks to address—among which the possibility of social order between political communities and the question of global inequality are, for me, especially significant.[16] The distinctive focus of the English school on the construction of a global international society, with its concomitant interest in that society's internal hierarchisation, on the one hand, and the various challenges to those hierarchies, on the other, matches my own perspective in this study.[17] This integrative and synoptic outlook, along with an interest in the problematique of order, opens up the concept of 'global order' as a space and subject of inquiry. I have found that concept particularly useful in this study; my use of it is explained in further detail below.

In addition, I have found the methodological flexibility and pluralism of the international society approach suited to my own goals, allowing me to move from intellectual and global history to historical sociology and international theory. And finally, partly as a result of this focus on the major global 'transition' and its attendant features and unresolved conflicts, the international society approach has created an intellectual space for a specifically Third World international relations perspective, to which a number of studies have contributed.[18] I see this study as working partly within that specific tradition, in order to elucidate, elaborate and explain that Third World view—the background to what became known as the North/South conflict and dialogue—with a view to exploring the prospects for long-term global social and political order.

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[16] Hurrell, "Keeping History, Law and Political Philosophy Firmly within the English School," 489.
[17] See Buzan, *From International to World Society?*; Little, "The English School's Contribution to the Study of International Relations"; Navari, *Theorising International Society*; Linklater and Suganami, *The English School of International Relations.*
[18] Lees, "The Dimensions of the Divide"; Rao, Third World Protest; Ayoob, "Inequality and Theorizing in International Relations."

It will nevertheless become clear that this work also differs from much of that which has been produced by international society theorists. In normative terms, I believe their work has too often reflected what Siba N. Grovogui has called 'the naturalization of Europe's role in history',[19] producing an account of European expansion that was not adequately sensitive to histories and structures of violence, genocide and oppression.[20] My work therefore shares with postcolonial theory a number of concerns, including the pivotal and enduring importance of Western imperialism, the intertwined histories of coloniser and colonised, and the peculiar predicaments of the postcolonial state and subject.[21] In that sense, it seeks to represent an instance of what Robert Young has called 'writing that looks back to the political commitment of the anti-colonial liberation movements and draws its inspiration from them'.[22] At the same time, I suggest ways in which the dominant understandings of temporality, nationalism and race within postcolonial studies could benefit from the material I uncover.

My adoption of 'global order' as a theoretical tool throughout this study arises, then, from an engagement with the international society tradition. But it is worth elaborating my own specific sense of the term and concept here, given its importance for

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[19] Grovogui, Beyond Eurocentrism and Anarchy, 39. He adds that this provides 'a justificatory trope for a structure of authority according to which the Rest rightfully and legitimately deferred to the West on international morality.' Edward Keene has pointed out that the traditional account presents a limited 'picture of the composition and ordering of international society as it would have been seen by a 19th-century European international lawyer.' Keene, "The Standard of 'Civilisation', the Expansion Thesis and the 19th-Century International Social Space," 654.
[20] See Philip Darby's critique cited in Zhang, "The Standard of 'Civilisation' Redux", 680–1.
[21] For wide-ranging views of postcolonialism as a field see Young, *Postcolonialism*; Parry, *Postcolonial Studies*; Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious*. In an IR context, see, Seth, *Postcolonial Theory and International Relations*; Geeta and Nair, *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations*; Shilliam, "Colonial Architecture or Relatable Hinterlands?"
[22] Young, *Postcolonialism*, 10.

what follows. Hedley Bull's well-known definition of 'order' as 'a pattern that leads to a particular result, an arrangement of social life such that it promotes certain goals or values' is useful as a starting point.[23] My view is that there are three broad ways in which we can conceptualise such order as operating on a global scale. The narrowest is in terms of its explicit institutional manifestations: the League of Nations from 1920, the United Nations from 1945, their associated organs and institutions, and the panoply of norms, rules and conventions which constitute the field of international law. From this perspective, the existence of a truly global political (and perhaps economic) order could only come into existence after decolonisation and the formation of the United Nations, which established the Westphalian state form as the ultimate container of sovereignty and aspiration for those seeking political autonomy and recognition. Here, 'global governance'—with its twin connotations of legal authority and technocracy—emerges as a vital concomitant of global order.[24]

A second and broader outlook on global order would, however, recognise that forms of such order clearly preceded the establishment of international organisations, given the occurrence of processes of state formation and intra-state society formation within the West alongside the imperial encounter and 'great divergence' between the West and the non-Western world.[25] Such processes produced clear patterns of interaction between political communities on a global scale, though there are no definitive dates here. Some, particularly those working within the English school, point to the creation in the nineteenth

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[23] Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 7–8.
[24] See Clark, "Legitimacy in a Global Order."
[25] Dunne and Reus-Smit, *The Globalization of International Society*; Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence*; Tilly, *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*.

century of 'the first global international system in history'; for '[w]hereas other societies, domestic and international, had conceived that they bounded heaven and earth, or that they stretched from sea to sea, the nineteenth-century society of 'civilized' states possessed the capacity to do so in practice for the first time.'[26] Others, especially those working in the Marxist international political economy or *Annales* traditions, might emphasise material factors — 'systemic cycles of accumulation', the evolution of 'world systems', 'uneven and combined development' on a world scale—as essential to the question of global order in this sense, evidently related to the political institutions that emerged but in no sense confined to them, or themselves necessarily directed by conscious acts of will.[27]

Finally, a third perspective would insist that any institutions and regimes of ordering are always linked to imaginative projects and therefore, in the case of global order, to the very ability to conceptualise order on a global scale. In this wider reading, the analytical distinction between statist order ('international society') and cosmopolitan order ('world society') is less easily drawn than may initially appear.[28] In specific terms, for example, we might point to Wilson's promise for a 'new world order' in 1919, or the spread of 'globalist' visions and ideas during the 1940s, as essential precursors to the order that was constructed after 1945.[29] But in more general and conceptual terms, we could insist

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[26] Gong, The Standard of "Civilization" in International Society, 5.
[27] Anievas and Matin, *Historical Sociology and World History*; Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*; Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century*.
[28] On that distinction, see Williams, "Pluralism, Solidarism and the Emergence of World Society in English School Theory" and Buzan, *From International to World Society?*
[29] For historical visions of global order, see the work of Duncan Bell, especially his edited volume *Victorian Visions of Global Order*; and Rosenboim, *The Emergence of Globalism*. Cemil Aydin's *Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia*, which explores global order visions in pan-Asian and pan-Islamic thought, is another key study. On Wilson's promised new world order, see Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment.*

that the idea of 'global order' is itself linguistically and historically located and contextualised. That would entail thinking about the emergence of the concept of 'globality' itself as representing a world that could be mapped, divided, and in some sense ruled, its differing political units becoming commensurable and requiring some form of cohesive and possibly centralised organisation. And this idea, which has a particular lineage in the spread of the state and the extinguishing of diverse alternative political subjectivities, also points to the deeply unequal epistemological privilege and power contained within the concept of 'global order' as it historically emerged.[30]

As has been recently pointed out, 'the imperial powers of the West had a global knowledge of the world in its entirety, which no indigenous culture that was more isolated and less communicative could possibly hope to possess, or to rapidly acquire.'[31] The role of technologies of travel and communication become crucial here by facilitating and transforming perspectives on the politically possible. Such technologies call to our attention what Duncan Bell has called 'the fundamental prior effect that the shifting perception of nature, and of the spatiotemporal dimensions of the world itself, had on the political imagination.' In this view, '[t]echnological change was important not only because it helped to meet imperial "goals," but because it reshaped the very identity of the goals themselves.'[32]

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[30] On the extinguishing of alternative political subjectivities, see Rao, *Third World Protest*, 72. The concept of globality is discussed in a very wide range of texts, among which Sebastian Conrad's, *What Is Global History?* provides a useful recent example. Rosenboim's *The Emergence of Globalism* and the first chapter of Shaw's *Theory of the Global State* contextualise globalism and globality respectively, while Escobar, in "Beyond the Third World", provides a decolonial critique of globality.
[31] Walter, *Colonial Violence*, 235.
[32] Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, 65.

Taking all this into account, my use of the term 'global order' tries to be attentive to the multiple meanings of the term. Like many others, I am not confident in the prospect of an easy or stable division between normative and analytical perspectives.[33] I am more interested in exploring the ways in which the very language of order and the ability to construct theories of its operation has been linked to the exercise of power, and not only metropolitan power but also colonised and subaltern power. Though I occasionally discuss the role of formal institutions of global interwar order like the League of Nations, I focus more on the second and third perspectives on such order—the older forms of global European and colonial ordering which evolved and interacted with those institutions, as well as the constitutive sense in which conceptions of order were themselves manifestations of international power.

Andrew Hurrell has reminded us that 'the language of "international order" or "global governance" is never politically neutral' and that the 'capacity to produce and project proposals, conceptions, and theories of order is a central part of the practice of power.'[34] This thesis is built, in part, on an elaboration of that idea. I suggest that the production of global order theory by black writers during the interwar period represents a 'practice of power'—but of subaltern and oppositional power—in the sense suggested by Hurrell. This pan-African discourse responded to dominant and powerful visions, producing alternative proposals and conceptions of order that interacted in important ways with the development of anticolonial nationalisms. But what is important for my general conclusion is that the consequences and effects of this practice of power cannot be reduced

[33] See Rengger, *International Relations, Political Theory and the Problem of Order*, 9–15.
[34] Hurrell, *On Global Order*, 21.

to the process of political decolonisation, because the construction of postcolonial states did not reflect the ultimate ambition of such writing or render its critique of imperial governance irrelevant.

My focus in this study on these constitutive political conceptions and their interactions with the materiality of print and language recalls Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, which looked at nationalism through a series of changes in conceptions of temporality, political authority and language. For Anderson, the rise of 'print languages' and 'print capitalism'—an unselfconscious process derived from the interaction of capitalism, technology and human linguistic diversity—precipitated the ascendancy of national (and 'modular') forms of imagined community as replacements for the preceding cultural systems.[35]

Mindful of the pitfalls of *Imagined Communities*—its blindness to non-nationalist political affinities, its linear periodisation, its disinterest in global unevenness, its excessive explanatory claims—I do not seek to impose the Andersonian view as a rigid explanation of nationalism.[36] But I do suggest that his important theoretical experiment, especially when re-located within international theory, helps us to think about the ways in which political affinities are materially rooted while also involving an inescapably subjective

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[35] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*. These ideas are given further treatment in a later work, *The Spectre of Comparisons*.

[36] A summary of these criticisms can be found in Ozkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism*, 132–136. Balakrishnan, *Mapping the Nation*, also contains a useful set of critical reflections on *IC*, as does Cheah, *Grounds of Comparison*; both include responses from Anderson. The point about periodisation is made by Said in *Culture And Imperialism*, 280. For a critique of Anderson's misrepresentation of Marxist theory on nationalism, see Desai, "Review Essay". For an attack on his focus on elites, see Guha, "Nationalism Reduced to 'official Nationalism'". On his privileging of print over orality, see Wogan, "Imagined Communities Reconsidered Is Print-Capitalism What We Think It Is?" For a questioning of the applicability of Anderson's theory to the Middle East, North Africa, and elsewhere, see Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914*, 204.

dimension of collective meaning, which cannot be understood apart from technologies of communication.[37]

Race and the Interwar World

In the following chapters, I explore why writers at various points of the Black Atlantic argued that race was operating in global order even where it was not directly invoked. How did those writers think about global order? The narrower sense of the term that I have discussed above *was* employed: they pointed to the role of the explicit manifestations of global order at the time, the League of Nations and the international law within which it was embedded. They did so especially when the League either acted or did not act in ways that were detrimental to the precarious sovereignties of Haiti, Liberia and Ethiopia (see Chapter 6). The ways in which, as Patricia Clavin has pointed out, 'Africa surfaced largely as a subject of interest for the Council and the secretariat at the behest of Western powers—an object of the League, not an actor in its own right',[38] was explicitly criticised by black intellectuals; within this context, the nefarious effects of treaties, occupations, and financial receiverships were highlighted.

But more common to the critical conceptions that I discuss in this thesis was a sense of the normative, constitutive and underlying forms of global order. These evidently existed in a relationship with the formal institutions. But they could not simply be reduced to those institutions, or to the explicit policies of the 'great powers'. Black writers in West

[37] For a discussion of this question in relation to African intellectual history and decolonisation, see Brizuela-Garcia, 'Literacy and the Decolonization of Africa's Intellectual History'.
[38] Clavin, *Securing the World Economy*, 7.

Africa, France and the US described the structures of unequal economic relations between colonies and metropolitan capitals, the role of capitalism in generating unevenness on a global scale, settler colonialism and its porous boundary with other forms of colonial regimes, and the singular significance of 'whiteness' as a norm embedded within Western-dominated international society. As Césaire's wry remark on the violence of slavery and colonialism—'Tout est dans l'ordre'[39]—suggests, it was the very normality and invisibility of these ordering structures and their effects that was called into question by this discourse.

As we shall see, a view from the perspective of these writers suggests a markedly different version of interwar order to that which has traditionally been put forward in historical accounts of the period that have minimised or scanted the question of race.[40] While the figures I examine belonged to varied political positions and traditions, their views of race tended to converge on some important points. They tended to see race not primarily or most importantly as a natural division of humankind, but akin to what Goldberg has called 'a worldly web of racial arrangement':[41] a form of globalised hierarchy embedded within an expanding, but deeply fractured, international society.

Within the field of international relations, the interwar years have typically carried a double valence, on the one hand representing the failure of an attempt to construct a liberal collective security order, and on the other marking the creation of the first global organisation of states. In the classical English school view, this period represented a late stage in the expansion of a European society of states, who enforced a standard of

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[39] Wilder, "Race, Reason, Impasse," 23.
[40] See, for example, the disappointing treatment of race in Michael Goebel's otherwise illuminating *Anti-Imperial Metropolis*, 58–62.
[41] Goldberg, *The Racial State*, 133–34.

'civilisation' on new entrants and thereby widened the scope of public international law.[42] That view has since been modified to take into account evident forms of social interaction between Europe and other parts of the world well before the official entry of new states into a Western 'family of nations', perhaps revealing instead 'a global international social system'.[43] Others have emphasised the shifts in an international balance of power during this period, with the rise of the US heralding a moment of hegemonic transition,[44] while Marxist approaches have focused on the inauguration of a new 'systemic cycle of accumulation' in which US-based capitalism came to occupy the centre of the world economy.[45] Notwithstanding the differences between these approaches, the generally accepted uniqueness of the post-Second World War global order—in which, as Holsti writes, '[s]tates are sacrosanct in a way not seen historically'[46]—means that the two decades which preceded it tend to be imbued with a transitional and preparative aura, paving the way for the eventual universalisation of the state.

But political and juridical transition and change during the 1920s and 1930s took place directly alongside the endurance of key forms of global inequality, hierarchy and stratification. One of the most important manifestations of such lingering disparity was

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[42] Bull and Watson, *The Expansion of International Society*.
[43] Keene, "The Standard of 'Civilisation', the Expansion Thesis and the 19th-Century International Social Space," 659. Key critical studies on the expansion thesis include Stivachtis, The Enlargement of International Society; Suzuki, Civilization and Empire; Neumann, "Entry into International Society Reconceptualised"; Zhang, "The Standard of 'Civilisation' Redux."
[44] Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers.*
[45] Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century*, 247–52. The rise of US capitalism is evidently a major part of the story for any economic account of the period. Europe's share of global economic output rose to nearly 50 percent in 1913, after which it steadily declined for a century. The share absorbed by the US continued to rise until 1950. Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, 60–61.
[46] Holsti, *Taming the Sovereigns*, 49. Other accounts emphasise different aspects of the postwar order, such as the scale and reach of US hegemony and empire. Of many possible examples of this latter type, see Desai, *Geopolitical Economy*.

world income inequality, which remained very high in comparative historical terms between states of the world 'core' (particularly what Thomas Picketty has called the 'inner core') and the 'periphery', not diminishing but increasing over the interwar years. It would not decline significantly until after 1980.[47] If the global order of the late imperial period appeared homogenising, what was produced in the context of such lasting global inequality was not a universalised proletarian subject but a far more differentiated body of subjects: a 'racial capitalism', to use Cedric Robinson's phrase.[48]

The failure to secure a lasting intra-European peace is the classic image of the interwar years, entrenched in the very naming of the period. But from a colonial perspective these years carry a different tenor, marked by the endurance of the colonial *ancien regime*, on the one side, and movements of unprecedented anticolonial uprising, on the other.[49] This combination precipitated the idea, for the first time, of a cross-continental anti-imperialist solidarity, which would become so significant for much of the international Left and Third World in the postwar years.[50] The contradictory imperatives giving rise to a differentiated 'racial capitalism' were also at work in the establishment of an international legal statist order marred by an inherent bifurcation, which promised the ideal of a non-

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[47] Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, 60–61. For a detailed discussion of these trends, see Arrighi, "World Income Inequalities and the Future of Socialism."
[48] Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 26. As Nancy Leys Stepan has written, '[t]he historical counterpart to the disembodiment of the individual citizen of modernity—an individual imagined stripped of all substantiation—was the ontologizing via embodiment of sex and racial difference, a rendering of groups as distinct in their biology and differentiated from an implicitly, white male norm.' Cited in Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race*, 10. We are usefully reminded by historians Jakes and Shokr in 'Finding Value in Empire of Cotton', 127, that such capitalism depends upon 'the systematic production of differences among human bodies and the work they perform,'
[49] The British Empire, for example, saw major uprisings in Egypt and Somaliland (1919), Iraq (1920), Ireland (1921-4), India (throughout the whole period), Palestine (1929), and Nigeria (1929), followed by a series of major strikes and labour disturbances in the Caribbean from 1934. See Carr and Hart, *The Global 1920s*; Manjapra, *M. N. Roy*, 73.
[50] A point made in Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis*.

racial 'family of nations' while assiduously denying the fulfilment of that ideal. Two central avenues for oppositional movements in the colonies were opened as a result: the first, a battle for national independence and equality within the existing juridical order; the second, a challenge to the foundations of that order itself, a critique of its fundamental duplicity and a championing of alternative forms of political subjectivity. (A possible third avenue, to push for alternative forms of political community *within* either empire or a new type of colony-metropole federal arrangement, has also been discussed in some recent literature.)[51] This is the essential context for what follows in the oncoming chapters.

As we shall see, the role played by race as an embedded hierarchising standard[52] within international politics became a central preoccupation of black writing on colonialism. In my case studies, taken from France, the US, and West Africa under British rule, I explore how black writers interpreted this shifting world. African Americans had not gained full citizenship by virtue of their participation in the First World War, as some had hoped. Instead, over the supervening years they faced systematic collective violence, lynching, segregation, discrimination, and surveillance.[53] All this took place alongside the national 'consolidation of a unified whiteness' that emphasised the primacy of white/non-white racial division, the implementation of an array of racially restrictive immigration policies, and the emergence of the American eugenics movement.[54]

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[51] See Wilder, *Freedom Time*; Cooper, *Citizenship Between Empire and Nation*. But this literature has evaded the question of structural political possibility and is notably absent a conception of order on a global scale. See Younis, "Against Independence."
[52] For a wide-ranging discussion of forms of hierarchy in IR, see Zarakol, *Hierarchies in World Politics*.
[53] See Krugler, *1919, The Year of Racial Violence*.
[54] Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 93. Over the period, the prohibition of Chinese immigration enshrined in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 endured; in 1922, the Supreme Court

For Africans and Antilleans in France, pressing questions of racism, citizenship and empire emerged in the context of the proliferation of anticolonial activity—particularly in what one historian has called the 'anti-imperial metropolis' of Paris—and the associated repression, surveillance and restrictions (especially on immigration) meted out by the France state.[55] Populations across the Caribbean continued to live under European colonial rule (or, in the case of Haiti, a severe US occupation) and articulated a host of related grievances. West African elites in coastal towns under British rule confronted an extension of the colonial project involving various forms of indirect rule and a concomitant diminishment in their own status.[56] For Britain, meanwhile, a rapprochement with the South African Boers,[57] persistent support for the restrictive 'great white walls' of its Dominions, and the strongly preferential treatment it extended to those colonies, indicated a racially-informed foreign policy with an array of domestic inflections.[58] As in the US,

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rejected Japanese efforts at naturalisation; in 1924, it ruled that a Sikh Indian man, Bhagat Singh Thind, was racially ineligible for US citizenship, thus revoking citizenship from many Indians; and in 1924, the National Origins Act established a system of national quotas that were designed to severely restrict immigration from southern and eastern Europe and to reinforce the near-ban on Asians. See Mazumdar, 'The Politics of Religion and National Origin: Rediscovering Hindu Indian Identity in the United States'; Buzan and Lawson, *The Global Transformation*, 193.

[55] See Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis*. For sources on interwar France, see Chapters 4 and 5.

[56] Bickford-Smith, 'The Betrayal of Creole Elites, 1880-1920'.

[57] In 1913, for example, 88 percent of South African exports and 91 percent of its overseas investment went to Britain. Such dependence continued decades after the Second World War. Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 386.

[58] For a sense of both the construction of and opposition to whiteness in relation to Britain, the Dominions and the rest of the empire, see Hughes, 'Contesting Whiteness'. Alastair Bonnett has shown how 'whiteness' in Britain represented an ambitious project of bringing working class life closer in affinity to the imperial project and its racialising categories. Bonnett, 'How the British Working Class Became White', 327.

there was widespread violence against black workers, particularly seamen, in Britain directly after the First World War.[59]

What were the consequences of this interwar order in terms of race? I suggest in this study that, as a versatile method of ordering unequal social relations on a global scale, the impact of race was double-edged.[60] Through its characteristically temporal apparatuses race ossified and fixed its subjects, but it also created for them a possible basis for cross-border solidarity, community and belonging.[61] Connecting bodies to the world, race gave a way for those it marked to develop a theory of the world. It was, as Christian Geulen has written, 'always a form of interpreting the entire world.'[62] By underwriting global unevenness and the key differentiating categories that had arisen in the governance of such unevenness, race was increasingly understood as having produced necessarily global subjects. They were 'not external to the international but always already of it', as Vivienne Jabri has written of the postcolonial subject.[63]

Far from being opposed to nationalism or the state, the globality of race intertwined with both, so that nationalisms were rife with racial imaginaries, notwithstanding the apparent contradiction between the hermeticism of nationalism and the transnationalism of

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[59] On the racial imagination in interwar Britain—a surprisingly understudied topic—see Rajabi, "The Idea of Race in Interwar Britain: Religion, Entertainment and Childhood Experiences"; Tabili, '"Keeping the Natives Under Control"'; Tabili, 'Black Salt'.
[60] On the versatility of race and its ordering capacity see Wolfe, *Traces of History*, 24.
[61] On the temporal fixity of race see Olender, *Race and Erudition*, xvii.
[62] Geulen, 'The Common Grounds of Conflict: Racial Visions of World Order 1880–1940', 73. Geulen's essay is an insightful assessment of the differing mobilisations of the concept of race during the key period of this study, but it is weighted heavily towards European and American discourses of race and exhibits an ideational bias, scanting the material rootedness of race in the world.
[63] Jabri, 'Disarming Norms', 386.

race.[64] As a result of the partial submerging of explicitly racial language, many black writers placed an emphasis on the act of *naming* race—identifying its enduring power, and advocating a kind of 'race consciousness'—as a potential 'practice of power'.[65]

What I am suggesting here is that processes of racialisation could be *read* by the subjects of the global racial order against the grain and used to build a form of international theory which pointed to the persistent stratification of international system. Since race as a series of 'classificatory regimes'[66] was intrinsically global, seeking to order populations around the world in relation to their unequal incorporation into the Europe-dominated order, one of its consequences was the potential for connecting previously-disparate populations across the world in new political projects. How should the world be ordered or re-ordered in light of the unequal encounter between Europe and the extra-European world? Every nationalism, no matter how apparently parochial, grappled with this question.

It is important to say something here about the role of international communism in that reading of global order. Much of the black radical writing I examine existed in a relationship with the discursive and political universe generated by interwar socialism, anarchism and communism, of which the most prominent institutional manifestation for colonial intellectuals and writers at this period was the Comintern. A number of studies have traced the journeys of black participants across the networks of international

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[64] Christopher Bayly made a similar point: 'Race theory, which became dominant at the end of the nineteenth century, purported to be a global historical theory. Yet its implications were almost everywhere worked out in the language of the nation-state'. *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914*, 237.
[65] Hurrell, *On Global Order*, 21.
[66] Wolfe, *Traces of History*, 24.

interwar Communism, from the Trinidadians George Padmore, C. L. R. James and Claudia Jones to the West Africans I. T. A Wallace-Johnson, Lamine Senghor and Kweku Bankole Awoonor Renner; and from the African Americans James Ford and Harry Haywood to Jacques Roumain, who founded the Haitian Communist Party, and Otto Huiswoud, who was born in Suriname.[67]

Given the generally rigorous opposition of the Communist parties in the West to colonialism *tout court*, often the only major political organisations in such countries to evince such a position, and combined with the Comintern's specific interest in what it called 'the Negro Question', raised by Lenin at the Second Comintern Congress in 1920 and becoming especially prominent in the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA), it is not surprising that black intellectuals critical of colonialism often gravitated towards the movement—though, as we have seen with Peter Abrahams, and as epitomised by Padmore's career, there was also a tendency towards disillusionment with its handling of race.

In one sense, then, my thesis seeks to build on a literature that has examined the relationship between pan-Africanism and Communism, exploring the important ways in which black activists and intellectuals worked within, influenced, and pushed at the boundaries of the USSR-based political movement or, as in the case of Padmore and

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[67] For an overview, see Agnew and McDermott, *The Comintern*. On African American Communism, see Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity*; Klehr and Firsov, *The Secret World of American Communism*; Howard, *Black Communists Speak on Scottsboro*; Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*; Dawahare, *Nationalism, Marxism and African American Literature*. On Pan-Africanism and Communism, see Weiss, *International Communism and Transnational Solidarity*; Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism*; Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom*. On the francophone dimension, see Racine-Furlaud and Bodin, *Le Parti communiste français pendant l'entre-deux guerres*; Dewitte, *Mouvements Nègres*.

Césaire, left it altogether, in light of their view of the specificity of black and African struggles (this is particularly evident in Chapters 4 and 5, where I look at the first close, then fractious relationship between black nationalists and the French Communist Party). But I also seek to suggest ways in which a distinctive analysis of global ordering and oppression arose from another source: the interconnected interwar black Atlantic print cultures which built upon a transnational black tradition of engagement with colonialism, race and the international political economy. In this sense, my analysis seeks to contribute to what Robbie Shilliam has called 'the critical retrieval of still-living hermeneutics cultivated by colonised peoples'.[68]

On Race: Existing Literatures, Globality and Sources

It will be clear by now that I share many of the concerns of those working in the fields of philosophy, cultural studies, diaspora studies, Black and Africana Studies, and the critical study of race.[69] Those fields are large and expanding, and it is not possible for me to summarise their many features here. But I would like to highlight in this section a number of points at which I hope this study can make a modest contribution. This section is

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[68] Shilliam, "Intervention and Colonial-Modernity," 1136. For an argument for the autonomy of the black perspective, see Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism*; a useful discussion of the historiographic shift towards the specificity of black radicalism can be found in Edwards, "Dossier on Black Radicalism." Makalani's study *In the Cause of Freedom* argues that in general, for black activists in the interwar Comintern, 'organized Marxism represented less the source and more the moment of their politics' (5).

[69] See, *inter alia*, Bobo, Hudley, and Michel, *The Black Studies Reader*; Bogues, *Black Heretics, Black Prophets*; Byfield, Denzer, and Morrison, *Gendering the African Diaspora*; Conyers, *Africana Studies*; Curry, *Extending the Diaspora*; Griffith, "Blackness Unbound"; Hall, Stuart, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora"; Hanchard, "Afro-Modernity"; Harris, *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*; Lemelle and Kelley, *Imagining Home*; McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom*; Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*; Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*; Price, *Dreaming Blackness*; Stephens, *Black Empire*; Wright, *Becoming Black*.

necessarily succinct; it lays out in a very general sense the overall framework for an argument which I then elaborate in the subsequent chapters. I begin by outlining some features of the prominent writing on race by Paul Gilroy, Michael Omi and Howard Winant, before exploring how my understanding of race seeks to contribute to questions they have raised.

Paul Gilroy has, throughout his career, examined at length black culture and counter-culture in relation to diaspora, belonging, nationalism, race and cosmopolitanism, often with a focus on questions in social and ethical theory.[70] In *Against Race*, the work I am most concerned with here, Gilroy puts forward a strong critique of the forms of belonging associated with race and nationalism. He argues that 'the old, modern idea of "race" can have no ethically defensible place' in a contemporary cosmopolitan political ethic of solidarity.[71] While such affinities among racialised groups with histories of oppression are understandable, they are inadequate and ultimately damaging, flattening more nuanced forms of belonging and opening the door to a deeply conservative politics of 'ultranationalism, fraternalism, and militarism' in the service of racial particularity. In the contemporary world, such ideas have had troubling aesthetic manifestations in a 'planetary traffic in the imagery of blackness', a form of 'racialized glamour' which has done 'nothing to challenge the everyday forms of racial hierarchy'.[72]

Gilroy adopts the term 'raciology' as 'a shorthand term for a variety of essentializing and reductionist ways of thinking that are both biological and cultural in

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[70] Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*; Gilroy, *Small Acts*; Gilroy, *Against Race*; Gilroy, *After Empire*; Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia*; Gilroy, *Darker Than Blue*.
[71] Gilroy, *Against Race*, 6.
[72] Ibid, 8, 21.

character'. Recognising their power is an 'essential part of confronting the continuing power of "race" to orchestrate our social, economic, cultural, and historical experiences' on a global scale—in other words, the 'raciological ordering of the world'.[73] But a contemporary crisis in race provides a welcome opportunity for a truly ambitious approach:

> to demand liberation not from white supremacy alone, however urgently that is required, but from all racializing and raciological thought, from racialized seeing, racialized thinking, and racialized thinking about thinking ... However reluctant we may feel to take the step of renouncing "race" as part of an attempt to bring political culture back to life, this course must be considered because it seems to represent the only *ethical* response to the conspicuous wrongs that raciologies continue to solicit and sanction.[74]

Other scholars are not so stridently rejectionist. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, prominent sociologists of race, are no less opposed to racial hierarchy and white supremacy. But they are far more equivocal about the concept of race itself and its potential future. It is 'a modern concept', they write, which shadows the familiar litany of the last half-millennia of global history, from the conquest of the Americas and the circumnavigation of the globe to the Atlantic slave trade and the rise of capitalism. And yet it 'also preserves premodern and irrational characteristics, most notably its "ocular" elements', that is, its undying 'reference to the human body'.[75] For them, attempts by race to define groups are 'fraught with confusion, contradiction, and unintended consequences' as 'supposed boundaries shift, slippages occur, realignments become evident, and new collectivities emerge. State-imposed classifications of race, for example, face continuing

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[73] Ibid, 72.
[74] Gilroy, *Against Race*, 41.
[75] Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 245.

challenges by individuals and groups who seek to assert distinctive racial categories and identities.'[76]

Elsewhere, Winant argues that race 'defines and organizes the world and its future, as it has done for centuries' and, like Gilroy, he suggests that 'the future of democracy itself depends on the outcomes of racial politics and policies as they develop in various national societies and in the world at large.' Unlike Gilroy, however, he is not optimistic about a race-less future. Instead, he expresses the hope that, 'like religion or language, race can be accepted as part of the spectrum of the human condition, recognized as human variability and difference, while it is simultaneously and categorically resisted as a means of stratifying national or global societies.'[77]

In this study, I hope to say something relevant about this debate. It will become clear that my approach to the question of race differs from all three scholars, though I find much to agree with in their work. In particular, I want to highlight a central problem I find with these accounts: the way in which all invoke the idea of race as a structure of global order without an adequate attempt to theorise how such a structure functions and interacts with the political, economic and social institutions of the international system. Despite Gilroy's promising use of the term 'raciological ordering of the world',[78] for example, the mechanisms and lineaments of that ordering and their specifically global valence remain obscure in his work; neither is the route from our contemporary racial order to his 'planetary humanism' ever made clear. For all his apt critiques of the pitfalls and dangers

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[76] Ibid, 105.
[77] Winant, "The Modern World Racial System," 41, 53.
[78] Gilroy, *Against Race*, 39.

of racial thinking, Gilroy can too often seem to be 'wishing away the problems of race', as one critic has put it.[79]

Similarly, Winant's tantalising observation that race 'defines and organizes the world' is essentially left at that, here as in his other work, as if the mechanisms by which a concept like race can both 'define' and 'organize' the entire world are unimportant or unrelated to the project of anti-racism. This is not an issue limited to these writers. Since at least 1944, when Hannah Arendt referred to racism as a *Weltanschauung* (worldview) of the West,[80] theorists who have written critically about race have often referenced its intrinsic globality with scarce attendant theorisation of that globality. Scholars have variously invoked 'a worldly web of racial arrangement'[81] and 'a complex, clay-like historical product of the capitalist world-economy';[82] they have argued that 'racial ideologies were constructed and concretized in a world-system'[83] and that race is one of the 'basic features of the modern world order';[84] they have asserted that it is 'always a form of interpreting the entire world'[85] and 'an outcome of imperialism's 'global reach'.[86] Yet few of these theorists have elaborated alongside these phrases any account of precisely why race is so constitutively global and how it functions on such a planetary scale.[87]

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[79] Bhasin, "Against Race," 1151.
[80] Arendt, "Race-Thinking before Racism."
[81] Goldberg, *The Racial State*, 133–34.
[82] Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race Nation Class*, 84.
[83] Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race*, 14.
[84] McCarthy, *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development*, 1.
[85] Geulen, "The Common Grounds of Conflict: Racial Visions of World Order 1880–1940," 73.
[86] Wolfe, *Traces of History*, 29.
[87] One key exception is Immanuel Wallerstein, whose approach to race has been one of the few to systematically elaborate a theory of its interconnection to the modern 'world-system'.

What is missing from many of these bodies of writing, and what could help to resolve some of their tensions and aporias, is a global perspective which relates the question of race across both normative and ontological dimensions to the complex institutional configurations that have come to order and stratify the world and its populations: from international and regional organisations and international law to regimes of statehood, sovereignty, citizenship, cross-border travel, migration, security and welfare. I am suggesting here that critical theorists of race should be subject to some of the same criticisms that have been levelled at critical theorists in international relations—what Siba N. Grovogui has called the lack of 'sustained analyses of … structures of power and social relations in the different spaces or sites created by Western modernity' in their work, one result of which is a striking 'absence of concrete proposals on mechanisms for eliminating existing privileges'.[88]

This brings me to a concern about much contemporary writing on race in general: its still-limited source material. A number of scholars have sought to emphasise the rootedness of the critical study and theorisation of race in the political and intellectual struggles of racialised populations, especially in the African diaspora. Charles Mills has pointed out that 'oppositional ideas of race have shaped the consciousness of the racially subordinated for centuries.'[89] Omi and Winant emphasise the history of African American intellectual activity and activism that challenged dominant 'biologist' conceptions of race, destabilising its power.[90] Robert Vitalis has excavated some of the important African

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[88] Grovogui, *Beyond Eurocentrism and Anarchy*, 49.
[89] Mills, *From Class to Race*, xvii.
[90] Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 5–7.

American international thought of the twentieth century.[91] Robin D. G. Kelley has shown how the work of black historians writing in the *Journal of Negro History* conceptualised peoplehood, diaspora and belonging.[92] And historians like David Roediger have emphasised the foundational work of black intellectuals like C. L. R. James, W. E. B. Du Bois and James Baldwin for the contemporary theorisation of whiteness.[93]

These acknowledgements are salutary, of course, and I locate this thesis squarely within the trend they have inaugurated. But given the evident importance of the anticolonial and transnational context to so much of this writing, connected to the historical dynamics of the early twentieth century, interwar and early postwar world and the transition to a new global order, the range of writings by racialised populations that have been studied specifically in connection to the critical theorisation of race and whiteness has remained surprisingly limited.

Discussions of race pervaded West African political thinking during the 1920s and 1930s, for example, but such works are essentially missing from the theoretical literature on race—and that includes not only the writing of notable figures like Kobina Sekyi, Nnamdi Azikiwe and J. W. de Graft Johnson, but also the quotidian analysis that was published in the vibrant print cultures of Freetown, Lagos, Accra and Cape Coast.[94] So too is non-anglophone black writing on race essentially passed over in silence, with the exception of figures who have long been translated like Fanon, Césaire and Glissant. The

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[91] Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics*.
[92] Kelley, 'But a Local Phase of a World Problem'.
[93] Roediger, *Class, Race and Marxism*.
[94] I discuss this writing in Chapters 2 and 3. Neither have major secondary works on race in West Africa, like Hall's *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600–1960*, been read or discussed widely by race theorists.

gripping debates about race between black activists in interwar Paris, for example, which preceded and foreshadowed the major work of Fanon and Césaire, are missing; so is much of the lusophone writing of the anticolonial activists who gathered in Lisbon at the *Casa dos Estudantes do Império*.[95] And this is not to speak of the ways in which writers working in non-European languages, including African languages, also grappled with the racialisation of the world, an intellectual shift towards which the Yoruba saying 'Aiye d'aiye Oyinbo'—the world has become a white man's world—suggestively gestures.[96] In this study, I hope to expand the range of sources that we use to explore the historical theorisation of race and whiteness and the relevance of that theorisation for the present.

I want to make, briefly, one final critical point about these existing literatures. While the idea of race as constituting a series of (global) social structures is widely accepted, many scholars have nevertheless emphasised race primarily as a discourse derived from particular developments in European political thought. This is clear in Gilroy's definition of 'raciology', for example, 'as variety of essentializing and reductionist ways of thinking', and in his proposal to demand 'liberation … from all racializing and raciological thought'.[97] Such an idealist emphasis, I suggest in this study, is not sufficiently attentive to the embeddedness of race within the ordering institutions, discourses and norms of international society; nor does it take adequate account of the diverse and complex ways in which race came to be understood in what became known as

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[95] See Chapters 4 and 5. Meanwhile, the studies which have examined this francophone writing—cited in those chapters—have not generally assessed how they may contribute to theoretical writing on race. On the *Casa dos Estudantes do Império*, see Reza "Anticolonialism as Cosmonationalism."
[96] Crowder, *Colonial West Africa*, 16.
[97] Gilroy, *Against Race*, 41.

the Third World. And it fails to attend adequately to the interaction between race as a doctrine with a particular etymological, conceptual and political history and race as what Patrick Wolfe has called 'a set of classificatory regimes' operating on a global scale.[98] Meanwhile, arguments for rejecting languages, ideas and discourses of race as an a priori route to 'planetary justice' need to examine more closely how transnational anticolonial movements of the twentieth century conceptualised race, justice and the world—and perhaps especially why they did not always take 'rejectionist' positions in relation to race itself. This may help us to address the fundamental disagreement between Gilroy and Winant over the question of whether there is any space for the concept of race in a just world order.

In making this point, I do not mean simply to defend or champion all historical employments of the concept of race which came from subaltern perspectives. I accept that one may recognise the importance of race to political organising at a particular historical moment, and yet nevertheless argue with Gilroy that such efficacy has now been depleted or co-opted. But I suggest that we examine in more detail the many ways in which the concept of race was employed, described and used, for example across the Black Atlantic, without assuming that we can draw easy boundaries between 'nationalist' and 'internationalist' thinking, or that we can attribute particular discursive acts in any simple or direct way to 'lineages' of thought. In this sense, my argument is also directed at those contemporary perspectives on race among minorities in the West, or populations in the global South, that seek to present firmly demarcated, exclusionary and essentialist views

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[98] Wolfe, *Traces of History*, 25.

of racial 'belonging' and 'membership' with reference to narratives of historical injustice.[99] They would benefit, I believe, from the assessment presented here of the history of various types of black and African nationalisms and internationalisms, which—like those of Marcus Garvey—were in fact much more contingently tied to global visions, and less interested in policing racial borders, than some have later come to assume. Like many of those working in the fields of intellectual and conceptual history, I do not attempt to seek out unchanging and transmittable political ideas, but instead emphasise the connection between speech and action and the embeddedness of political thought in a linguistic and historical context.[100]

Methods, Print and Theory

I would like to end these introductory and theoretical remarks with a short discussion of the specific methods and texts I have employed in this thesis. Reading particular texts from the Black Atlantic in a thesis on international relations, I am evidently making a case for the use of such writing as a *source* of international theory and not simply an evidentiary pool. This is in deliberate contrast to the ways in which, as Edward Said wrote, 'the universalizing discourses of modern Europe and the United States' have rarely

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[99] As well as Gilroy, cited above, see Austin, *Achieving Blackness*, for a discussion in the African American context. India provides another apposite example of this troubling trend: see Baber, "'Race', Religion and Riots."

[100] See Tribe, "Intellectual History as Begriffsgeschichte" for a discussion of the similarities and differences between the German tradition of conceptual history and the Cambridge tradition of intellectual history. On the former, see also Busse, Hermanns, and Teubert, Begriffsgeschichte Und Diskursgeschichte; Richter, "Begriffsgeschichte and the History of Ideas." A case study for adapting the methods of conceptual history is Ward, "The European Provenance of Decolonization."

acknowledged 'that the colonized people should be heard from, their ideas known'.[101] The study of international relations has tended to reinforce that dominant discourse.[102] By contrast, I see the 'subalternized forms of mobility'[103] and exchange represented by the interwar Black Atlantic as having produced valuable international theory. And while my assessment of this writing focuses on its view of the interwar years, I highlight in the conclusion to this study the ways in which I believe it continued to be relevant long after the moment of political decolonisation. As black interwar writers recognised, the treatment by the interwar order of racialised populations provides essential source material for a theorisation of the role of race in the stratification of international society.

Newspapers: Sources and Limits

As I have explained above, my most significant body of source material is the francophone and anglophone interwar writing by black intellectuals from three number of key sites: Paris, the US and West Africa. Rather than examining official documents from international organisations, which is one standard route for international relations scholars, I have chosen to delve into the print circuits and networks of the interwar Atlantic, some of them subterranean and illicit, others more or less open. I have been especially interested

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[101] Said, *Culture And Imperialism*, 58. In a similar vein, Sanjay Subrahmanyam has recently criticised global intellectual history for its persistent positioning of the non-West as a mirror or foil of the West. Subrahmanyam, 'Beyond the Usual Suspects'.
[102] Africa is, for example, excluded from the volume by Acharya and Buzan, *Non-Western International Relations Theory*. The volume edited by Shaw, *Africa's Challenge to International Relations Theory*, contains many insights but rarely discusses African theorists. For important exceptions to this trend, see el-Malik, *African Political Thought of the Twentieth Century*, and in general the work of Siba N. Grovogui, Robbie Shilliam and Branwen Gruffydd Jones.
[103] Featherstone, 'Black Internationalism, Subaltern Cosmopolitanism, and the Spatial Politics of Antifascism', 1412.

in tracing the echoes and reverberations of particular ideas and phrases, like the American white supremacist journalist Lothtrop Stoddard's vision of a 'rising tide of color', across these circuits. Such echoes provide, I suggest, intriguing instances of travelling international theory from 'below'.[104] I also aim to emphasise how the work of the most famous interwar black intellectuals was situated within a set of diverse and interconnected print cultures whose lesser-known products also merit our attention.

My focus, then, is on newspapers: the *Negro World*, published by Marcus Garvey's organisation in the US, and the flourishing African American print culture within which it existed; the constellation of newspapers published in British-controlled West African coastal towns, primarily Freetown, Cape Coast, Accra and Lagos; and the newspapers produced by the multiplicity of black cultural and political organisation in interwar Paris.[105] I also make use of longer political works that were published in book form by figures such as Du Bois, Padmore, J. W. de Graft-Johnson, George Brown, Ralphe Bunche, and others (most of whom, it is worth pointing out, were also active newspaper writers or editors); as well as some fiction and poetry, particularly that which was published by francophone black writers like René Maran, Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Léon-Gontran

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[104] Said, "Travelling Theory," in *The World, the Text and the Critic*.

[105] For an outstanding study of some of these periodicals and an argument for the importance of interwar and transnational black print cultures, see Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*. The recent volume by Peterson, Hunter, and Newell, *African Print Cultures*, especially the introduction and the chapters by Leslie James and Karin Barber, is essential reading. Barber's *Africa's Hidden Histories* is a landmark text. Other relevant general studies include Putnam, "'Nothing Matters But Color': Transnational Circuits, the Interwar Caribbean, and the Black International"; Edmonds, "The Newspaper Press in BWA, 1918-1939"; Eschen, *Race Against Empire*. Specific studies relating to particular contexts (the Nigerian press, or African American newspapers) are cited in the relevant chapters.

Damas and Jacques Roumain. Alongside these texts I occasionally incorporate reports from the British, French and American police, intelligence and colonial services.

By focusing on newspapers, I build upon the findings of a range of historians: those of West Africa under British rule, who have emphasised the commanding role played by newspapers in articulating protest against colonial rule;[106] those of interwar African American culture and politics, who have shown the importance of self-education and newspaper publishing, which reached new level of mass participation and politicisation at this time;[107] and those of the Black Atlantic, who have underlined the role of newspaper networks in constructing racial, political and diasporic identities.[108] My focus on West Africa is also connected to the unique vitality of the region's press during this period. While important newspapers existed elsewhere on the continent, such as in East Africa, they were generally more limited in scope, scale and impact. As late as 1950, for example, the top five African-run Kenyan newspapers sold fewer copies per week than the Lagos-based *West African Pilot* sold in a single day.[109]

It is necessary for me to say here a few words about the limits to this study. I do not seek to provide a complete overview of the multifarious ways in which race operated in the interwar world; nor do I give a full or representative sample of all theories of race

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[106] Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria, 1880-1937*; Asante, *Pan-African Protest*; Ainslie, *The Press in Africa: Communications Past and Present*; Edmonds, 'The Newspaper Press in BWA, 1918-1939'.
[107] Digby-Junger, 'The Guardian, Crisis, Messenger, and Negro World: The Early-20th-Century Black Radical Press'; Simmons, *The African American Press*; Detweiler, *The Negro Press in the United States*; Eschen, *Race Against Empire*.
[108] James, *George Padmore and Decolonization from Below*; Putnam, '"Nothing Matters But Color": Transnational Circuits, the Interwar Caribbean, and the Black International'; Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*.
[109] Peterson and Hunter, 'Print Culture in Colonial Africa', 9.

across the Black Atlantic, which would have necessitated a far more detailed examination of the Caribbean. While I use the term 'Black Atlantic' as a shorthand, I do not seek to represent that space in its totality or comprehensively as a cultural world. I have instead taken the decision to focus on three of its specific vectors in detail which, I believe, provide distinct angles on a transnational experience: a view from the African continent (often missing from other, diaspora-centred accounts); a view from the premier rising power; and a view from the metropole of a declining, yet still powerful, imperial state. I believe these three spaces, each of which operates at a different scale, offer an important perspective on the interwar world, with many points of comparison. I could have expanded this perspective spatially, to include, for example, the Caribbean, or Eastern or Southern Africa, but only at the expense of some of the detail I have been able to include on my three chosen sites.

Because my focus is the changing structure of international society and its relationship to race, my discussion of these sources is also selective. I do not examine the important embrace and exploration of African and black cultural and artistic forms during this period, for example, which animated many across the African continent and diaspora, just as it famously found its way into Western cultures; nor do I discuss at length the question of language and the revival of indigenous languages in Africa, an important (though not uncomplicated or straightforward) part of the nationalist groundswell; nor, finally, do I examine important religious developments of the period like the revival of Vodou in Haiti, the rise of Ethiopianism across the continent and diaspora, and the spread

of Islam in West Africa.[110] My focus on race, which I treat as an intrinsically global concept, regime, and language, also means that I do not engage substantively with the emergence and evolution of identities such as those framed and understood in terms of ethnicity, whose relationship to race and empire is subject to significant debate.[111]

By passing over such developments, I do not mean to suggest that they were insignificant or without political implications. I did not attempt such an overview because it would, by necessity, have relied largely on secondary sources, resulting in a different kind of study—synoptic, but lacking detail. I have chosen instead to explore closely a more limited selection of sources, most of them primary sources, which I have been able to study at length—many of them, such as *La Race Nègre* in Paris, the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, and Marcus Garvey's *Negro World,* across the whole range of their extant issues.

As much as possible I seek to draw attention to the materiality of this theory, which often withstood or evaded repression in order to construct the vital print circuits that connected African-descended peoples in different global locations. This textual transmission—itself a product of an imperial world, in which the infrastructures of empires played a significant role in both fomenting and sundering solidarities—had an impact on the view of global order that came to be expressed, as I explain in the following chapters. Like Duncan Bell, I suggest that we should be mindful of the ways in which the

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[110] On the role of Haitian Vodou in pan-African interwar feminism and radicalism, see Magloire, Marina Sofia, "Whosoever Doubts My Power: Conjuring Feminism in the Interwar Black Diaspora." On Islam in West Africa, see Hiskett, "The Development of Islam in West Africa"; Harrison, France and Islam in West Africa, 1860-1960. On Ethiopianism, see Shepperson, "Ethiopianism and African Nationalism"; Moses, "The Poetics of Ethiopianism"; Price, "'Cleave to the Black'". On the influence of black culture in interwar France see Ezra, The Colonial Unconscious; Boittin, "In Black and White"; in the US, see Watson, *The Harlem Renaissance.*

[111] For an argument that empire was a 'source' of ethnicities and not only a means of mobilising them, see Darwin, "Empire and Ethnicity†."

technological possibilities enabled by a particular historical moment not only helped to meet pre-existing goals but also worked to shape those very goals and their location of the extent and limits of the possible.[112]

The use of newspapers, with all that newspaper production entails in terms of ephemerality, speed, repetition, bricolage, and political partisanship, is also intended to invoke theory of a different kind to the slow and deliberate works that tend to inspire scholarship in both international relations and postcolonial theory.[113] Black Atlantic theory was often produced at speed and disseminated with difficulty; its political analysis was also commonly contingent and shifting, responding strategically to events. In this way, I suggest we might also open up international and postcolonial theory to a body of writing that was produced by those rendered marginal or subaltern by imperialism, and who critically addressed imperialism in their writing, but who did not always consider themselves 'anticolonial'. This body of writing I want to contrast to the more systematised bodies of work and disciplines with which it shares affinities—international relations, postcolonial and Marxist theories in particular—not in order to suggest opposition but to insist upon the importance of a dialogue while advocating for the strengths of a heuristic approach to international theory.[114] By 'heuristic' I mean, following the OED, 'discovery or problem-solving, esp. through relatively unstructured methods such as experimentation,

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[112] Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, 65.
[113] Postcolonial studies has been willing to centre specific texts by those like Fanon and Césaire which were written at speed, often for newspapers, in a politically-committed context. But in general it has only done so when such texts were produced by thinkers already considered canonical. There has been surprisingly little interest in the broader dynamics and texts of the print cultures and circuits within which such works were published.
[114] For a convincing argument that international relations explanatory theories are already heuristically applied, see Humphreys, 'The Heuristic Application of Explanatory Theories in International Relations'.

evaluation, trial and error.'[115] This is closely related to what Meera Sabaratnam has called 'theory as a form of intellectual *strategy*'.[116]

Eurocentrism, Counter-Narratives, Contrapuntal Methods

I would like, finally, to make some comments which locate this study within a broader set of works of international theory that have addressed problems in the field's representation of the non-European world. Within international relations, the theoretical and epistemological dominance of the West, especially the United States, has been a topic of conversation and debate since Stanley Hoffman's characterisation of the field as an 'American social science' in 1977 and the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* a year later.[117] Over the following decades, scholars have attempted to address the apparent inapplicability of traditional international relations theory to the non-Western world (or Third World) and to recast international theory from the perspective of that world.[118] Some have explored alternative sources of international relations traditions, such as those in East Asia or the Muslim world.[119] Others have interrogated Western dominance or Eurocentrism in the field, asking how an altered view (often one that is explicitly postcolonial or decolonial) can challenge theoretical myopia and provincialism.[120]

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[115] ('Heuristic, N. and Adj.')
[116] Sabaratnam, 'IR in Dialogue … but Can We Change the Subjects?', 783.
[117] Hoffmann, 'An American Social Science'.
[118] See especially Neuman, *International Relations Theory and the Third World*; Acharya and Buzan, 'Why Is There No Non-Western International Relations Theory?'; Tickner, *International Relations Scholarship Around the World*.
[119] Acharya and Buzan, *Non-Western International Relations Theory*.
[120] Within a substantial and growing field, see especially Ling, *Postcolonial International Relations*; Geeta and Nair, *Power, Postcolonialism and International Relations*; Inayatullah and Blaney, *International Relations and the Problem of Difference*; Jones, *Decolonizing International*

This study shares many of the concerns of those who have worked to improve the position of the 'non-West' in the field of international relations. But if the writers, intellectuals, journalists and activists whose work I read here questioned and critiqued the power of Europe and the West in general, they tended to do so as participants—even if agonistic and subaltern participants—in a shared social experience. As shall be seen, these writers did not understand their enforced peripherality as placing them outside global order entirely; nor was outsiderness generally considered a desirable goal.

What we find throughout much of the Black Atlantic writing I examine in this thesis is an attentive counter-reading of the 'White Atlantic'[121]— 'a surreptitious counter-narrative',[122] in Said's words. This counter-reading was part of a broader process of the adoption and subversion of the technologies of imperial modernity—language, literacy, travel—across the colonised world. Powerful and oppositional conceptions of global order were therefore bound together, though evidently in unequal ways. I am suggesting that a compacted and hierarchical world has produced forms of international theory not as separate and incommensurable bodies of work, but as readings and counter-readings of the same variegated reality—the 'singular modernity' of the first truly global order.[123] Such

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Relations; Grovogui, *Beyond Eurocentrism and Anarchy*; Rao, *Third World Protest*; Manchanda and Shilliam, *Race and Racism in International Relations*; Shilliam, *The Black Pacific*.

[121] There is an absence of scholarly literature on the 'White Atlantic', but there are tantalising references to it in Mills, "Unwriting and Unwhitening the World," 210, and Stam and Shohat, *Race in Translation*, xv. I do not mean to suggest here that the 'White Atlantic' was monolithic, simply that it was a identifiably coherent discourse which bore a relationship to imperial power.

[122] Said, *Culture And Imperialism*, 283.

[123] See Jameson, *A Singular Modernity.* This statement is also informed by work within the emerging field of readership studies, such as Jonathan Rose's *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, which has examined how marginalised groups within societies have read and understood canonical texts, making a convincing case for an intellectual history 'from below', Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*. Two illuminating studies that are especially relevant to this study are McHenry, *Forgotten Readers*; and Newell, *Literary Culture in Colonial Ghana*.

counter-readings are, of course, often produced under adverse conditions; they may also be freighted with a sense of political urgency and purpose. But those conditions are not always disadvantages. As the Lagos-based *Comet* put it in March 1935: 'Ours may be a voice crying aloud in the wilds of the African Bush. But in the African Bush, away from the turmoil of a super-civilization, one has time for mature reflection.'[124]

I am interested, then, in what Taraq Barkawi and Mark Laffey have called 'the mutual constitution of European and non-European worlds and their joint role in making history,'[125] and not in attempting to locate a vantage point entirely exterior to Europe. Methodologically, such a project involves what Said called a 'contrapuntal' technique, in which the 'overlapping territories' and 'intertwined histories' of all those implicated in the imperial encounter are acknowledged.[126] Pinar Bilgin and Geeta Chowdhry have offered valuable suggestions for how we might develop the contrapuntal method for use in international relations.[127]

Outline of the Thesis

My focus in this study is the interwar period, but I begin with a short discussion of the period immediately preceding it: the high imperialism of the 'Belle Époque' (1871-1914). In the prologue, I address the concomitance of racial, national, pan-national and imperial thinking during those years, and suggest important ways in which the foundations of the interwar years were laid at this time.

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[124] March 2, 1935 - Men and Matters. Two Sick Men of Africa, And After?
[125] Barkawi and Laffey, 'The Postcolonial Moment in Security Studies', 329.
[126] Said, *Culture And Imperialism*, 56.
[127] Bilgin, '"Contrapuntal Reading" as a Method, an Ethos, and a Metaphor for Global IR'; Chowdhry, 'Edward Said and Contrapuntal Reading'.

The first chapter inaugurates the main period of study with an assessment of African American newspaper writing on sovereignty, race, and nationalism during the interwar period. With a focus on Marcus Garvey's newspaper *Negro World*, the chapter addresses the complex interpenetration of the discursive invocation of black sovereignty, the prefigurative expression of loyalty to a black 'nation' with its attendant temporal imaginaries, and the myriad internationalisms expressed within Garveyite black nationalism.

Chapters 2 and 3 move to interwar West Africa under British rule, exploring a range of texts—mostly African-run newspapers, as well as some important books—with a view to understanding how West African visions of global order were shaped at this time, particularly with regard to their assessments of the potential for freedom and advancement under imperial rule. These texts, I suggest, contained important theorisations of race, sovereignty and the idea of 'white prestige'; propounded ideas of racialised economic dependency; and expressed concern about the fundamental instability of black subjecthood and political existence under white domination. All these lines of thought would have significant consequences for understandings of the scope of possibility under colonial rule.

Chapters 4 and 5 examine the interwar French Empire through a range of texts produced by African and Antillean political activists, writers, poets, and intellectuals in interwar Paris. Throughout these texts, which occupied differing political positions and ranged from surrealist Négritude poetry to the black nationalist newspaper *La Race Nègre*, I find that a multidimensional exploration of the role of race took place that was characterised by acts of imaginative traversal outside the boundaries of the French empire-state to locate the specifically global significance of race. By placing the French interwar

empire-state in the context of a broader interwar imperial order, I suggest that many of these writers developed important and positions, with lasting value, about the scope of possibility for freedom under French rule.

Chapter 6 looks at Haiti, Liberia, and Ethiopia. During the interwar period, these states were the only spaces of juridical sovereignty for African-descended peoples in the world. Each had its sovereignty severely curtailed or extinguished during this period, whether through occupation (Haiti), formal investigation by the League of Nations alongside US-led financial receivership (Liberia), or invasion (Ethiopia). The chapter outlines the dominant discursive framework of the 'White Atlantic' in relation to those states, before assessing a range of Black Atlantic responses: both to the dominant discourse, and to the experiences of the states themselves, the very existence of which were understood as a systemic challenge that undermined the racialised ordering of the interwar imperial order.

Finally, the conclusion seeks to draw together many of the theoretical strands of the thesis, explaining its significance for our understandings of the globalisation of international society, the construction of the Third World, and the enduring power of race in global order.

Prologue: the Belle Époque

I am concerned in this study with the years between and including the two world wars. But in this short section preceding the main period of study I address, briefly, its vital pre-history.[1] The period which became known in the West as the Belle Époque (1871–1914) was characterised by an apparent paradox: the intensification of national feeling within states and empires at the same time as the expansion of racial and pan-national feeling between them. I want to suggest here a way of connecting those two sets of affinities together that does not see them as theoretically opposed ideal types, but as intimately connected forms of affinity that bore a relationship to the type of political and economic order being constructed across the world.

Nationalism, Pan-Nationalism, Whiteness

It is well known that the Belle Époque was a time when Europe became 'a society of states founded on the national principle', as one traditional history has it.[2] What is less commonly observed is that these states experienced at this time an abundant proliferation of affinities premised upon the idea of races or ethnicities that somehow transcended, straddled, or connected disparate territories and that were 'united by blood', as the panegyrist to 'Greater England', John Robert Seeley, wrote in 1883.[3] These visions engendered projects seeking to connect peoples across formal state or imperial boundaries: in Britain, its Dominions, and the US ('Greater England'); Latin America and 'Latin Europe' (pan-Hispanism, pan-

[1] For a longer discussion, on which this section is based, see Younis, '"United by Blood"'.
[2] Schnerb, *Storia generale delle civiltà: il XIX secolo*, 6:211.
[3] Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, 50.

Latinisim); European countries (pan-Europeanism); German-speaking lands (pan-Germanism); states of the Americas (pan-Americanism); and Slavic territories (pan-Slavism).

The transnationalism and nationalism of this period both emerged in relation to the global order then being constructed through imperial capitalism. The Berlin Conference of 1884–5 marked a new era of European colonial expansion and control: 'By about 1880, there was a fundamental disequilibrium between Europe and most parts of the less-developed world. Never had one continent possessed so immense a power advantage over the other or been in such close contact with them.'[4] This divergence was the basis for the core-periphery order which underwrote global economic inequality and which was enforced through the social scientific, cultural, and legal distinction between 'civilisation' and 'barbarism': categories that correlated to Europe and the colonised world respectively.[5] In this sense, we can see 'race' as arising 'primarily as a mode of expressing and sustaining the core-periphery antinomy', as Immanuel Wallerstein has argued, a concept thereby 'related to the axial division of labour in the world-economy.'[6]

Yet within the overarching framework of a core-periphery order centred on Europe and reliant on notions of race and civilisation, the question of the composition of the 'core' and the status of its component units remained. Against all expectations and with apparently clashing foreign policy objectives in the Americas, Britain and the US experienced a 'great rapprochement' during the 1890s, fuelled by a sense of racial

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[4] Fieldhouse, *Economics and Empire, 1830-1914*, 461.
[5] The precise dating of the 'great divergence' is subject to debate. For our purposes, the debate over origins is less important than the fact that the core-periphery divergence reached an apex during the Belle Époque in terms of wealth distribution, formal colonial control, and—not coincidentally—the hegemony of a scientific and popular discourse on civilization and race. See O'Brien, 'Ten Years of Debate on the Origins of the Great Divergence (Review No. 1008)'.
[6] Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race Nation Class*, 79–82.

commonality and a joint project for ordering the world.[7] The relationship of Britain to its other settler territories—Australia, Canada, New Zealand—also became closer rather than more distant during this period. This process, which James Belich refers to as 'recolonization', involved 'a grand cross-class, transnational alliance', with significant results for the shaping of the global political economy.[8] Meanwhile, in the 'Latin world', Anglo, Slav, and German ascendancy during the Belle Époque stimulated the construction of competing transnational alliances.

How were these pan-movements, many of which seem obscure today, connected to the imperial nationalisms of the Belle Époque? Both pan-nationalism and nationalism conformed to varying levels of the same phenomenon: visions of community that traced the contours of the Anglocentric core-periphery global economic and political order and sought to secure within its hierarchy a place for particular sub-groups of the imperial core, or to try and stake a claim to that core for those whose position within it was less assured. Far from contradicting each other, these affinities were therefore mutually reinforcing: making claims at the global level (racial pan-nationalism) and building political projects at the continental or regional level (nationalism) respectively.[9] With the erection of an overarching scaffolding of whiteness, race remained a concept flexible enough to allow intra-imperial competition while also maintaining imperial unity in the most significant respects. In this sense the Belle Époque represented what Osterhammel has called 'a

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[7] For a convincing argument that Anglo-Saxon racialised identity was at the core of this rapprochement and that it shaped interstate relations, see Vucetic, *The Anglosphere*, chap. 1.
[8] Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 367. These affinities endured beyond this period, of course. 'I feel myself a citizen of the Empire,' wrote The Viscount Alfred Milner in his influential *Credo*, published posthumously in 1925. 'I feel that Canada is my country, Australia my country, New Zealand my country, South Africa my country, just as much as Surrey or Yorkshire.' (Kennedy, *Britain and Empire, 1880-1945*, 112.)
[9] A similar point is made by Immanuel Wallerstein: race and nationalism are 'both claims to the right to possess advantage in the capitalist world-economy.' Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race Nation Class*, 82.

general strengthening of the "white" position in the world',[10] the apotheosis of what Paul Keal refers to as a 'society of empires' and Charles Maier as a world of 'imperial coalitions'.[11]

Technological change played a crucial role during the Belle Époque in shaping political visions. Pan-nationalisms required the emergence of technologies permitting imaginative connections between populations that may previously have been imagined too distant and scattered to be politically joined.[12] This was the era when 'space was "annihilated" on the global scale.'[13] The Belle Époque correlates roughly with the most intensive period of migration in human history, when over 50 million people from China, 50 million from Europe, and about 30 million from India emigrated from their homes as a result of the expansion of European imperialism, the subjugation of China and India, and the increasing affordability of travel technologies.[14] These migrants received starkly different treatment: the bordering carapace of the imperial core and its white colonies stiffened in the face of Asian 'competition' but relaxed for appropriately 'white' renewal. The racial affinities involved, from Anglo-Saxonism and pan-Slavism to the more generous framework of whiteness, all found in the new technologies of travel and communication not only a series of channels for metastasization, but also routes for envisioning political community on a bigger scale. Far from being rendered obsolete by technology, race was in an important sense constructed by it.

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[10] Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*, 60.
[11] Keal, *European Conquest and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*; Maier, 'Leviathan 2.0', 50. See also Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa*, 14.
[12] This point is made in relation to 'Greater Britain' by Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, 65.
[13] Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*, 86.
[14] Manning, *Migration in World History*.

The Belle Époque in the Colonised World

The Belle Époque was a period of severe instability and war for the colonised world and semi-periphery: China's 'century of humiliation', the decisive blow against Indigenous peoples, the Berlin Conference. Within this maelstrom, however, concerted attempts were made to respond intellectually to the challenge of unequal interaction with Europe, giving rise to a 'striking new critical self-assertiveness',[15] which translated—just as it did in the imperial core—into a marked expansion of transnational affinities. For the colonised world and its diasporas this period was therefore significant not only due to the formal extension of imperialism, but also because the West ceased to be what Christopher Bayly has described as 'both an *exemplar* and *controller* of modernity':[16] paradoxically, at the same time as European empires reached their apex, the hegemony of association between 'Europe' and modernity was breached.

If the Belle Époque saw the emergence of organised activity in the colonies that is often considered proto-*nationalist*—the Indian National Congress (founded in 1885), Egypt's 'Urabi revolt (1879-1882), China's Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901)—it was also the period of the blossoming of *pan-* and *trans*national affinity in the colonised world, which often preceded organised activity along apparently nationalist lines: the institutional establishment of pan-Asianism (1880), pan-Islamism (1884), pan-Africanism (1897), pan-Indianism among Native Americans (1880), and pan-Arabism (1904), not to speak of more localised but significant religious movements like the Singh Sabha (1873), Arya Samaj (1875), Ethiopianist (1884), and Ahmadiyya (1889).[17] The transformation is so striking that

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[15] Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World*, 67.
[16] Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914*, 12.
[17] For these dates I take the establishment of, respectively: the pan-Asian organisation Kôakai; Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani's establishment of the first pan-Islamic magazine, *al-Urwah al-Wuthqa* (The Indissoluble Link); the founding of The African Association by Henry Sylvester Williams; the beginning of the Progressive Era; the founding of the League of Arab Fatherland in Paris; the

by the turn of the century it has been argued that 'pan-coloured or race thinking had become *the ideology of the colonized peoples*' whose 'utopian programmes' had 'become the symbols of resistance to or protest against the injustices of European rule and the racist ideology that justified it'.[18] From this point on, another scholar writes, 'nationalist and reformist intellectuals all over the world had to envision their future and destiny in terms of this dominant narrative about pan-national identities'.[19]

Forms of transnational affinity in the colonised world, like pan-Islamism and pan-Africanism, were established in their modern forms and flourished during the Belle Époque. As with the pan-movements of the imperial metropoles, the spread of these movements was related to new spaces of imaginative possibility opened by technology: particularly the expansions of travel, literacy and print, whose importance in political and religious movements of the colonised world during this period has long been recognised.[20] The proponents of pan-Africanism and pan-Islamism at this time were directly involved in a reading of their hegemonic counterparts, a crucial contributor in the shaping of their own visions—perhaps most significantly in terms of a theorisation of whiteness and the racialised nature of sovereignty.[21]

Political, social, and economic structures in globally dispersed locations for the first time became systematically theorised as a 'global colour bar'. In much of the colonised world we can identify an apparent relationship between the expansion of communication capacities at this time, especially print cultures and travel abilities, and the broadening in

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formal establishment of the Singh Sabha movement; the establishment of the Arya Samaj movement; the formation of the Tembu tribal church; and the founding of the Ahmadiyya movement. See Hertzberg, *The Search for an American Indian Identity*, vii.; King, *Orientalism and Religion*; and Ali, *Pan-Movements in the Third World*.

[18] Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa, 1900-45*, 9.

[19] Aydin, 'Pan-Nationalism of Pan-Islamic, Pan-Asian, and Pan-African Thought', 674.

[20] Robinson, 'Technology and Religious Change'; Khalid, 'Muslim Printers in Tsarist Central Asia'; Khalid, 'Printing, Publishing, and Reform in Tsarist Central Asia'; Oberoi, Harjot, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*.

[21] See Younis, '"United by Blood"', 491–504.

scope of political thinking. These developments were potentiated by the First World War, which had a number of significant effects. It brought colonial soldiers to the fields of battle, including in Europe, facilitating new intercolonial connections and leaving expatriate populations in cities like Paris with lingering resentments over an unpaid 'blood debt'. As the Harlem-based radical Hubert Harrison would write in 1921 of African Americans: 'Our enforced participation in the First World War brought us into contact with the wider world of color, and we have learned from that contact much that has enlightened us.'[22] The war also destabilised the post-Berlin Conference colonial order, depriving Germany and the Ottoman Empire of their colonies and inaugurating a new discourse of colonial governance under the Mandates system. It precipitated the Russian Revolution, with ideological effects that reverberated over the following decades. And, as we shall see in the subsequent chapters, it definitively shifted French colonial policy away from 'assimilation' and towards 'association', a development mirrored in the expansion of British 'indirect rule'.

[22] Hubert Harrison, 'Wanted: A Colored International,' *Negro World*, May 28, 1921.

Perhaps in that distant time scholars may write books to prove that the world-renowned and world-conquering Anglo-Saxon race never really existed, except in the imagination of rapt poets, and was only a mythical, legendary race.

—WILLIAM H. FERRIS, *The African Abroad* (1913)

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Black Nationalism's Global Vision

Describing how he had come to lead the largest mass movement of African-descended peoples in modern history, Marcus Garvey explained in an autobiographical account that he had grown up in Jamaica 'with other black and white boys' and had only gradually been made aware of the racism of whites. He recalled his separation from a white friend at the age of fourteen: 'Her parents thought the time had come to separate us and draw the color line. They sent her and another sister to Edinburgh, Scotland, and told her that she was never to write or try to get in touch with me, for I was a "nigger".' With his social circle racially narrowing, Garvey became increasingly interested in politics, and in 'the injustice done to my race because it was black.' He travelled to South and Central America, elsewhere in the Caribbean, and Europe: everywhere, he found the situation of black

peoples to be similar. 'I asked: Where is the black man's government? Where is his King and his kingdom? Where is his President, his country, and his ambassador, his army, his navy, his men of big affairs? I could not find them, and then I declared, "I will help make them".[1]

Marcus Garvey founded a movement seeking to unite all those of African descent for the purpose of collective uplift. Known as a 'black nationalist' organisation and famous for its valorisation of Africa, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) exploded worldwide during the 1920s. It peaked at almost a million members, with up to three million active participants spread across 800 chapters in dozens of countries.[2] 'When you bear in mind the slenderness of his resources, the vast material forces and the pervading social conceptions which automatically sought to destroy him,' wrote C.L.R. James later, 'his achievement remains one of the propagandistic miracles of this century.'[3] Though short-lived as a movement of mass participation, the effects of the UNIA reverberated long after the organisation had peaked. They contributed to a transformation of political activity across the African continent and diaspora whose breadth is only recently being discovered.[4]

This chapter is centred on an analysis of Garvey's newspaper, *Negro World*, in the context of an interwar United States in which racist policies endured and deepened, visions of whiteness expanded, and African American newspapers flourished. By examining black nationalism in the US, I intend to illuminate a number of key themes of this study at an important vector of the Black Atlantic. My overarching claim—that Black Atlantic

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[1] Hill, *The Garvey Papers I*, I:4–5.
[2] Shilliam, 'What about Marcus Garvey?', 379–80. For more key references on Garveyism, see notes 4 and 114.
[3] James, *C.L.R. James Reader*, 300.
[4] See, for example, Ewing, *The Age of Garvey*; Hahn, *The Political Worlds of Slavery and Freedom*; Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*; Vinson, "'Sea Kaffirs.'" In particular, studies of the role of women in Garveyism have enriched our understanding of the movement. See, among many others, Blain, "'We Want to Set the World on Fire'"; Leeds, "Toward the 'Higher Type of Womanhood'"; Byfield, Denzer, and Morrison, *Gendering the African Diaspora*.

nationalisms were not simply 'modular' derivations of dominant European forms—is evidenced by a close reading of *Negro World* and associated texts. I show that the black nationalism put forward in those texts was tied to a global vision, in which African Americans were repositioned alongside 'the other darker skinned peoples of the word'.[5] Through interpretations of global events, readings of proponents of whiteness like Lothrop Stoddard, and the drawing of connections between the condition of African Americans and others across the colonised world, the *Negro World* put forward a 'surreptitious counter-narrative'[6] about global order. It understood its political project fundamentally in relation to that order.

Far from the inward-looking provincialism often associated with nationalism, I argue that interwar black nationalism was built upon a global vision. Theories about the transnationalism of whiteness—'the worst enemy', according to Garvey—fed into its discursive project. Black nationalism was constructed in opposition to dominant discourses about race, time and sovereignty. Enabled through a flourishing world of newspapers in which, as one African American publisher wrote, 'with drops of ink, we make millions think',[7] it sought to remake conceptions of the self among African Americans and others across the African diaspora. In the process, it aimed both to understand and to challenge the global racial order that had emerged through the colonial encounter and which endured throughout the interwar years. Far more than is traditionally recognised, black nationalism in the US inhabited race in order to subvert its global operation.

The United States Between the Wars

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[5] Hill, *Garvey Papers II*, II: 27 August 1919 – 31 August 1920:499.
[6] Said, *Culture And Imperialism*, 283.
[7] Digby-Junger, 'The Guardian, Crisis, Messenger, and Negro World: The Early-20th-Century Black Radical Press', 263–64.

Buoyed by its surging economy, the United States entered the period following World War I as a power to which, the British Foreign Office wrote in 1929, 'there is no parallel in our modern history: a state twenty-five times as large, five times as wealthy, three times as populous, twice as ambitious' as Britain. It was 'almost invulnerable'.[8] But, as I shall suggest in this chapter, an expanded field of operations and increased material influence did not rid the US of its racial fixation, which seemed only to deepen during these years. African American politics had to grapple with the possible reasons for that fixation. Black nationalism between the wars emerged in this specific context: the enduring, even worsening, persecution of an African-descended racialised minority in an unprecedently powerful state.

When an 'interwar retreat from globalization' from the late 1920s saw the collapse of global capital markets and the erecting of barriers to trade and immigration,[9] the US was first among powers that adopted 'race' as a means of differentiating between immigrants. Such efforts built upon previous measures, of which the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act had constituted the first prominent example, to delineate the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable migrants.[10] Within this broader continuity, there was also a shift: away from the absolute prioritisation of the 'Anglo-Saxon' and towards what Matthew Jacobson has called the 'consolidation of a unified whiteness'.[11] The 1920s saw the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, which had up to six million members in 1923, the explosion of anti-black

[8] Tooze, *The Deluge*, 463–64.
[9] Frieden et al., *International Political Economy*, 415.
[10] Mazumdar, 'The Politics of Religion and National Origin: Rediscovering Hindu Indian Identity in the United States'; Buzan and Lawson, *The Global Transformation*, 193.
[11] Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 93.

collective violence, and the terror of officially-sanctioned lynchings. Mass black migration away from the South was one major outcome of this maelstrom.[12]

The period preceding the First World War had seen the shrinking of Reconstruction-era rights for African Americans and the cementing of a domestic juridical and de facto edifice designed to regulate, contain and restrict black life. At the turn of the century, the accepted model of African American advancement was that of Booker T. Washington: self-improvement through (separate) technical training guided by white philanthropy, a careful avoidance of any vocal challenge to institutional racism, and a relationship to the outside world—particularly Africa—that was usually mediated through the auspices of the US or another colonial power.[13] That model was already being challenged in the first decade of the twentieth century.[14] The First World War catalysed a major upheaval in its operation, transforming the relationship of many African Americans both to the outside world and their own state.

For African Americans, the battlegrounds of the First World War, which the US entered in 1917, were not only to be found in Europe. Despite some white opposition to the enlistment of African Americans, when the draft actually began blacks found themselves more likely to be immediately inducted than whites.[15] American entry into the war sparked a 'black scare' that took place within a sweeping crackdown on the left. Six departments

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[12] Juguo, *W.E.B. Du Bois*, 83.
[13] Washington's example is especially apposite here: his memoir, *Up From Slavery*, was distributed in its Spanish-language translation in Cuba by the US government; the German colonial administration invited his students to Togo; officials sought advice on the replication of his model in settler territories like South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, as well as in Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and the Gold Coast. Ewing, *The Age of Garvey*, 35.
[14] In particular, through the idea of the 'New Negro'—a powerful metaphor for a transformation in attitudes towards white power and an associated cultural renaissance, which emerged as a 'major discursive cornerstone' an reconfigured the role of the black activist and intellectual. Gates and Jarrett, *The New Negro*, 2.
[15] They also disproportionately evaded the draft, with a delinquency and desertion rate almost triple that of whites (though often this was because they were declared as delinquent much quicker, without due process). Ellis, *Race, War, and Surveillance*, 76.

of the federal government and several local agencies 'maintained a constant watch on the activities of black civilians and soldiers and equal rights organizations and publications' whose 'loyalty' to the US was seen as suspect.[16] Left-wing organisations found themselves functioning within a heightened atmosphere of suspicion in which communications, meetings and ideas were carefully monitored for signs of dissent.[17]

The question of African American 'loyalty' had coincided, from the late nineteenth century, with tensions ensuing from the rise of significant populations of immigrant background in the US politically organising in 'ethnic blocs': the famous 'hyphenated Americans' whom Theodore Roosevelt declared in October 1915 to be a threat to the nation.[18] Woodrow Wilson, in his annual address to Congress two months later—which was 'applauded enthusiastically'—warned that foreign-born citizens 'have poured the poison of disloyalty into the very arteries of our national life … Such creatures of passion, disloyalty, and anarchy must be crushed out.' These would be major themes in the Presidential election of 1916.[19] For Wilson, loyalty to the nation was 'not a self-pleasing virtue' but an absolute and incontrovertible obligation that had at its 'heart the absolute principle of self-sacrifice', extending to 'your life itself if your country calls upon you to do so'. Any 'disloyalty,' meanwhile, 'must be absolutely crushed.'[20] By the spring of 1917, the vast majority of African American newspapers and leaders believed that black people had little choice but to fully participate in the war effort, despite the unpopularity of Wilson

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[16] Ibid., xvi. See also Barbeau, *The Unknown Soldiers*; and Nelson, *A More Unbending Battle* for a discussion of African American participation in the war.
[17] Marcus Garvey was at this time working as a street orator in African American communities and was an adept navigator of this atmosphere. See Ellis, *Race, War, and Surveillance*, 82.
[18] Jordan, *Black Newspapers and America's War for Democracy, 1914-1920*, 60.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., 61.

within the black community. But 'the level of enthusiasm with which they pushed this message varied considerably.'[21]

The rhetorical rejection of imperial citizenship by interwar black nationalists must be seen in this context: a pyretic situation only further fuelled by the Zimmerman Telegram, published in March 1917, which exposed a supposed Mexican conspiracy to foment a race war in South. Part of this, known as the Plan of San Diego, involved the joining together of Mexicans, Native Americans, and African Americans to establish the independence of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and California, including the return of Native American lands.[22] The plan 'seemed to authenticate ancient terrors'.[23] Some African Americans felt it necessary in response to emphasise their own 'loyalty' even at the expense of other groups, pointing out that they had fought for their country in multiple wars, unlike recent immigrants. Others found this type of argument unpalatable. But many would have agreed with James Weldon Johnson that 'even if there can be no sense of patriotism … the bald truth is that the Negro cannot afford to be rated as a disloyal element in this nation. Imagine the results if he should for an instant arouse against himself the sentiment which is now directed against the pro-German element.'[24]

At the same time as enforcing national 'loyalty', the war helped to construct transnational solidarities. Black men recruited to serve in the war from Africa, the US, and the Caribbean sometimes found that 'the battlegrounds of Europe became potential sites of Pan-African solidarity and lessons in the vulnerability of empire', as the historian Robin Kelley has written.[25] This was the moment at which, another historian writes, the 'whole

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[21] Ellis, *Race, War, and Surveillance*, 4.
[22] In fact, this plan had already been known to the US government for two years and not considered a serious threat. See Ibid., 7. The main work on this topic remains Tuchman, *The Zimmerman Telegram*.; see also Sandoz, *Rebellion in the Borderlands*.
[23] Ellis, *Race, War, and Surveillance*, 10.
[24] Ibid., 15.
[25] Kelley, 'But a Local Phase of a World Problem', 1056.

world now realized that the Negro problem was no longer local in the United States or South Africa, or the West Indies, but international in its scope and possibilities'.[26] 'Reports from a reliable source,' stated a British Cabinet Office report in 1919, 'indicate that the Negro agitation is beginning to assume international proportions.'[27]

African American Print Cultures Between the Wars

The readings of global order contained within the forms of Garveyite black nationalism that flourished in African American interwar political culture were contingent upon the post-Reconstruction explosion in African American literacy and newspaper production. This section will outline and detail that explosion, which is essential in comprehending the materiality in both formation and transmission of these political ideas.

The flourishing of the African American press was especially significant given that the conditions of enslavement meant the black population had been 90 to 95 percent illiterate in 1860. Such illiteracy rapidly dropped—it was 70 percent in 1880; by 1910 it had plummeted to 30.4 percent.[28] Between 1865 and 1900 over 1,200 black newspapers were established.[29] It was also during this period and the interwar years that the African American press moved from being targeted at a relatively elite audience to becoming a mass-circulation media. 'Never before,' one scholar points out, 'had the printed word had as much impact on the everyday lives of middle- and lower-class Blacks. Or, the *Chicago Defender*'s publisher Robert S. Abbott put it: 'with drops of ink, we make millions think.'[30]

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[26] Cited in Ibid.
[27] Hill, *Garvey Papers II*, II: 27 August 1919 – 31 August 1920:153.
[28] Detweiler, *The Negro Press in the United States*, 6. Detweiler's study, published in 1922, remains the landmark work in this field.
[29] Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 8.
[30] Digby-Junger, 'The Guardian, Crisis, Messenger, and Negro World: The Early-20th-Century Black Radical Press', 263–64.

This was the era of pioneering black publications like the *Guardian*, *Crisis*, *Messenger* and, as we shall see, the *Negro World.* The *Chicago Defender*, which described itself as the "World's Greatest Weekly", was founded in 1905 and quickly expanded its circulation through 'sensational reporting and uncompromising attacks on the treatment of blacks', especially lynchings; it is widely credited as a central factor in pushing the great northward migrations of African Americans during this period.[31] In Somerville, Tennessee, in February 1919, whites issued an order than no 'colored newspapers' could be circulated in the town; every 'darkey' was told to read the *Falcon* instead, a local white paper edited by a Confederate veteran.[32]

Before the war, whites on the whole had been largely oblivious to this transformation. When the editor of *Des Moines Bystander*, a 'colored weekly', took a range of 'Negro papers' before a white audience, 'nothing evoked so much curiosity … The papers were eagerly passed from hand to hand and thumbed carefully as though to make sure they were real.'[33] 'The very existence of the black press, let alone its changing tone, had gone largely ignored by white Americans before the war,' finds a recent study. 'African Americans read white daily newspapers as well as their own wide and growing choice of weekly and monthly journals, but hardly any whites read the black press.'[34]

Newspapers were lent, borrowed, circulated. The custom of a group of African Americans listening as someone read the paper aloud was recorded as 'common' in 1922: 'every Negro who can read does read a race paper'—as well, often, as a white paper.[35] In *The Voice of the Negro*, a 1919 compilation of writings from the African American press, its editor wrote that the:

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[31] Ellis, *Race, War, and Surveillance*, 63.
[32] Detweiler, *The Negro Press in the United States*, 1.
[33] Ibid., 4.
[34] Ellis, *Race, War, and Surveillance*, 105.
[35] Detweiler, *The Negro Press in the United States*, 7, 10.

> colored people of America are going to their own papers in these days for the news and for their guidance in thinking … Wherever in all the land there is a considerable Negro population there is a Negro newspaper … The Negro seems to have newly discovered his fourth estate, to have realized the extraordinary power of his press. Mighty as the pulpit has been with him, the press now seems to be foremost. It is freer than the pulpit, and there is a peculiar authority in printer's ink. His newspaper is the voice of the Negro.[36]

As was recognised at the time by Frederick Detweiler, black newspapers did not simply 'reflect' life; but helped to create it, by setting themes for discussion and positing foci of attention. 'The press supported by the Negro comes in this way to be a means for making his life significant to himself,' observed Detweiler. 'The long years of slavery resulted in the impression that the black man did not count in the real world. But now, on the printed page, not only does a man's name appear before his fellows, but the whole race seems to become articulate to mankind.'[37]

The need for an independent black press was often expressed as a fundamental element of any African American political programme. Speaking to a largely white audience in London in 1928, Marcus Garvey explained that 'your Press does not express our feelings and opinions on the matter. It expresses yours'.[38] Such disquiet with the dominant white press—a sense that it misrepresented black life and views—was widespread. In response, 'black journalists waged battle on behalf of "the race" by printing indictments of America's racial injustices, monitoring and criticizing the white media and the statements of white leaders, praising messages complimentary to blacks, and condemning racist utterances,' as a study of black newspapers in this period describes.[39]

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[36] Cited in Ibid., 16.
[37] Ibid., 268.
[38] Garvey, *More Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, 65.
[39] Jordan, *Black Newspapers and America's War for Democracy, 1914-1920*, 2.; Hill, *Garvey Papers II*, II: 27 August 1919 – 31 August 1920:386. Hill gives the higher estimation of 283,571 for the *Defender*'s 1920 circulation.

The *Chicago Defender*, which energetically encouraged black non-cooperation with Southern racism—particularly by championing emigration—saw its circulation skyrocket during the war, and by 1920 it was selling at least 230,000 copies each week. Part of this success lay in its 'ingenious scheme' of distribution, using black railroad porters, black stage shows, clandestine labor-recruiting agents, and returning World War I veterans.[40] Success was also due to the paper's 'militant approach to racial equality and its violent criticism of the South.[41] Whites often complained about its influence. It is 'a disturbing element among the negroes at this time', reported an agent of the Bureau of Investigation in Florida. For Durand Whipple, chairman of Arkansas State Council of Defense in July 1917, it was 'more than a coincidence that in many homes in this city where the household servants have hitherto been well-behaved, we have been finding copies of the *Chicago Defender*.'[42] Blacks were said to 'grab the *Chicago Defender* like a hungry mule grabs fodder'—'even the sharecroppers are subscribers.'[43] '[T]here is now a more fertile soil in which to plant seeds of extreme radicalism,' reported a memo for the Director of Military Intelligence in 1919. 'The avidity with which the newspaper-reading negroes are buying and reading a periodical like THE MESSENGER demonstrates this fact … Beyond a doubt, there is a new negro to be reckoned with in our political and social life.'[44]

Black publications fought for civil rights domestically, but they were not limited to the national sphere. They helped to create what Benedict Anderson has termed 'collective subjectivities'— an imagined world, a set of readers in communion—that could

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[40] Jordan, *Black Newspapers and America's War for Democracy, 1914-1920*, 33.
[41] Cronon, *Black Moses*, 25.
[42] Ellis, *Race, War, and Surveillance*, 25.
[43] Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 75–76.
[44] Hill, *Garvey Papers II*, II: 27 August 1919 – 31 August 1920:491.

be linked by race as well as by nationality, and thus extend far beyond national borders.[45] As Wilson Moses has noted, by the early twentieth century '[m]iddle class magazines distributed through literary clubs, church groups, and lodge halls carried the Pan-Africanist message to the ordinary blacks – the bell hops, elevator boys, and drug store clerks who were the stable working class … Sentimental magazine fiction was filled with Ethiopian rhetoric and imbued with black nationalist ideals.'[46] In the interwar period, black newspapers boasted of their internationalist credentials: the *Crusader*, for example, wrote that it 'serves ... the colored people of the world', 'circulates in nearly every big town in the U.S.' and 'has circulation in the West Indies and Panama, in South America, and in the coastal districts of West, East and South Africa, penetrating as far as Kano on the Nigerian railway, as far as Coquilhatville on the Congo river, and in South Africa as far as Pretoria.'[47]

The *Negro World* emerged, then, in the context of a golden age of African American print culture. Established in August 1918 as a weekly, and continuing publication until 1933, it quickly stood out, in the words of one historian, as 'one of the most remarkable journalistic ventures ever attempted by a Negro in the United States'.[48] Within six months it had become a leading black weekly, being sold at pool-rooms, dance halls, convenience stores, and beauty shops.[49] The end of the war saw its circulation skyrocket, reaching perhaps 75,000 in 1921.[50] Readership was significantly higher than circulation, due to the custom of passing newspapers on (especially within UNIA divisions) and reading

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[45] It is surprising that Anderson's work has not previously been applied in this context, given the remarkable expansion of the African American press and the concomitant spread of black nationalism.
[46] Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925*, 219.
[47] Langley, 'Garveyism and African Nationalism', 158.
[48] Cronon, *Black Moses*, 45.
[49] Harold, *The Rise and Fall of the Garvey Movement in the Urban South, 1918-1942*, 41; Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 73.
[50] Ewing, *The Age of Garvey*, 112. An earlier study by Moses gives a peak circulation figure of 50,000. Moses, *Creative Conflict in African American Thought*, 252.

aloud.[51] Being a vendor of the newspaper could be dangerous: Malcolm X would 'talk often', according to a friend, 'about how his father used to get brutalized and beat up on the corner selling Marcus Garvey's paper.'[52]

The impact of the *Negro World* can be found across the historical record. Along with the *Defender*, it 'enjoyed comprehensive circulation and discussion in almost every urban and rural southern black community.'[53] More than other African American newspapers, its influence extended internationally. Jomo Kenyatta, the future president of Kenya, was reported by C. L. R. James to have said in 1921 that: 'Kenya nationalists, unable to read, would gather round a reader of Garvey's newspaper, *The Negro World*, and listen to an article two or three times. Then they would run various ways through the forest, carefully to repeat the whole, which they had memorised, to Africans hungry for some doctrine which lifted them from the servile consciousness in which Africans lived.'[54]

Adam Ewing has described how the *Negro World* was sent through international post and carried secretly by black sailors, reaching the docks of Cape Town by 1919, from where it was dispersed widely in both urban and rural settings in South Africa. 'Garveyist literature was concealed inside food shipments, distributed along bicycle paths, and dispersed along the vast "human chain" of information and migration that connected the region and fed the escalating and coercive demand for cheap, rootless, and exploitable labour.'[55] According to one study, compared with the *Guardian*, *Crisis* and *Messenger*. it remained 'the most consistently radical Black newspaper in early-20th-century America'.[56]

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[51] The obituary of a former enslaved person and Garveyite from Louisiana, who died aged 116, 'explained his love of hearing the Garvey speeches read from the front page, as he had never learned to read.' Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 117.
[52] Marable, *Malcolm X*, 52.
[53] Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*, 76.
[54] James, *C.L.R.James Reader*, 300.
[55] Ewing, *The Age of Garvey*, 91.
[56] Digby-Junger, 'The Guardian, Crisis, Messenger, and Negro World: The Early-20th-Century Black Radical Press', 280. My study of the *Negro World* in this chapter disproportionately examines the earlier issues, from 1919 to 1922, though I have also consulted—and occasionally

'The Worst Enemy': Whiteness, Temporality and Global Order

In this section, I move to discussing one of the central elements of my reading of Garvey's newspaper: its theorisation of whiteness and white power in the context of global order. The global view of the *Negro World* shows how 'nationalists' associated with the UNIA were not only the inheritors of ideas from previous generations, as has sometimes been implied: they developed their thinking anew in relation to the interwar global order and with an eye trained on their own ambivalent statuses as racialised citizens of an emerging global hegemon. For many of these figures, as Robin Kelley has highlighted, 'ethnic nationalism and internationalism were not mutually exclusive'.[57]

Such an apparent contradiction is resolved only with an assessment of the *Negro World*'s understanding of race and whiteness: not as nationally-bounded phenomena, but as globally-constituted ordering structures that materially privileged some populations over others. The *Negro World* imagined black nationalism as a racial project defending the collective economic and political self-empowerment of Africa and its diaspora. But it did so only as a result of a view of existing global power hierarchies defined by race, in which African Africans constituted part of the collective struggle of 'darker peoples' against white world supremacy. One of the most striking ways in which the threat of whiteness was pictured was as a project that threatened the literal extermination of 'darker', and particularly African, peoples. The power of Garvey's arguments for black nationalism cannot properly be understood outside this context. As Richard Digby-Junger has

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refer to—later issues. The reason for this early bias is connected to the repression faced by the UNIA by the US government, which put into question Garvey's own ability to re-enter the US, where he never gained citizenship (he was eventually deported). As Robert Hill has perceptively written, from July 1921 Garvey's 'retreat from radicalism'—born of his 'decision to seek a resolution of his conflict with the American state'—prompted a decisive shift in his discussions of national loyalty, and he repeatedly emphasised the 'loyalty' of his members to their respective states. Questions of anticolonial solidarity and pan-Africanism did not disappear, but they did fade with time. Hill, *The Garvey Papers I*, I:lxxxiv

[57] Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 124.

perceptively argued, Garvey's 'contention that Black nationalism was the only salvation against race genocide was as serious an ideological weapon as the 1886 Haymarket bomb.'[58] In the context of the transformation in collective consciousness marked by the flourishing African American press, a theorisation of whiteness was central to the combined projects of black nationalism and internationalism: a re-situating of black Americans alongside 'the other darker skinned people of the world.'

The Rising Tide of Color and Global White Power

One of the most significant aspects of the *Negro World*'s black nationalism was its intertextual ability to cite and repurpose the texts of whiteness into a counter-narrative about global order. Foremost among those texts was a book published by an American journalist less than six months after the end of the First World War: *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* by Lothrop Stoddard. A surprise global sensation, the book warned of the 'revolutionary, even cataclysmic, possibilities' that had been raised by the 'frightful weakening of the white world during the war'. 'White solidarity,' Stoddard argued, had been 'riven and shattered'; the 'colored world' was meanwhile becoming 'welded' by 'the instinct of self-preservation' into 'a common solidarity of feeling against the dominant white man'. In 'many a colored breast' had awakened the 'bitter resentment of white predominance.' A 'determination to get rid of white rule' seemed 'to be spreading like wild-fire over the brown world to-day' and the threat loomed of a 'pan-colored war of liberation'. 'One thing' was 'certain: the white man will have to recognize that the

[58] Digby-Junger, 'The Guardian, Crisis, Messenger, and Negro World: The Early-20th-Century Black Radical Press', 280.

practically absolute world-dominion which he exercised during the nineteenth century can no longer be maintained.'[59]

The Rising Tide of Color was seized upon not only by white supremacists, but also by a range of radicals across the Black Atlantic. It presented, if read against the grain, penetrating insights into what Garvey called the 'prophets' of whiteness, as well as a virtual agenda for what has since been called 'colored cosmopolitanism'.[60] When, in October 1921, President Warren G. Harding quoted from *The Rising Tide of Color* in a famous speech on race relations, Marcus Garvey telegraphed his congratulations to President Harding.[61] Hubert Harrison, a prominent black writer and organiser, sent Stoddard a congratulatory note on his book, sparking a two-year correspondence between the two writers.[62] 'White men of power are discussing its facts and its conclusions with bated breath and considerable disquietude,' Harrison wrote in the *Negro World*. 'Here is a book written by a white man which causes white men to shiver. For it calls their attention to the writing on the wall.' Though its author 'remains an unreconstructed Anglo-Saxon', the book 'should be widely read by intelligent men of color from Tokio to Tallahasse.'[63] At a meeting of the United Negro Improvement Association in Washington, DC, a speaker was recorded by a US government spy as recommending *The Rising Tide of Color* to his audience. The 'yellow, the brown, the red, the black have something in common against the white,' explained the speaker. 'What one colored people has done, another may do.'[64]

It was through a reading of texts like *The Rising Tide of Color*, alongside a reckoning with the enduring racism of the US and the harshness of the conditions faced by

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[59] Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy*, 9–13, 48, 56, 83, 97, 228.
[60] Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism*.
[61] Cronon, *Black Moses*, 194.
[62] Ewing, *The Age of Garvey*, 78.
[63] Harrison and Perry, *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, 306–9.
[64] Hill, *Garvey Papers II*, II: 27 August 1919 – 31 August 1920:449. The speaker was quoting a report from the *Washington Eagle*.

the African diaspora elsewhere that the *Negro World* came to develop its view of whiteness as a structure of global power. This structure possessed a temporal lineage which extended backwards for centuries and which would continue to endure unless a radical break were made with it. As Marcus Garvey declared in a speech in 1919, the transcript of which was printed in the *Negro World*:

> Tell me that I must live everlastingly under the domination of a white man, that I must bequeath to my children white overlordship, then I say, let me die now, Almighty God. If there is no better future in the world for me than to be the slave of a white man, I say, take the life you gave me. I do not want it. You would not be my God if you created me a slave to other men …[65]

The 'Anglo-Saxon, the white man' was, Garvey explained, 'the worst enemy that the Negro has ever had' who had subjugated the 'Negro' for 'five hundred years.' The UNIA was described as 'the greatest movement in the world, because it is the only movement today that is causing the white man to tremble in his shoes'.[66] Meanwhile 'the voice of conscience' was 'playing on that pale face all the time'; 'having stolen everything he has from one dark race or another, he only lives in dread of the day when the dark races will come together as one man and demand it back from him.'[67] A letter to the newspaper the same year, discussing the history of Africans in the Caribbean, described how 'the Anglo-Saxon race of those islands, although in the minority, took the reins in one hand and the whip in the other. Our burden was heavy and our journey was long, and we groaned under the pressure of our oppressors without any relief.'[68]

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[65] "Hon. Marcus Garvey, Foremost Orator of the Race, Delivers Brilliant Speech in Philadelphia," *NW*, November 1, 1919.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] "West Indians – What of the Future," *NW*, October 11, 1919.

The second mode of understanding white temporality was as a threat to the survival of those it racialised. This mode was often accompanied by a bold assertion of a black and African future, which sometimes fed into a broadly 'nationalist' discourse but was also often wider and with less rigid boundaries than the label 'nationalism' would suggest. The *Negro World* argued in 1919, for example, that it was possible that black peoples could collectively raise their status in the eyes of whites. But it was first necessary to understand that the 'Anglo-Saxon is so constituted that he can never respect a man or race that continually appeals to his sympathy.'[69] 'For the past three hundred years the Caucasian has seen in the Negro something to be exploited and subjugated,' ran another editorial the same year. 'But gradually he is seeing in him a human being to be developed and given a chance to rise.'[70]

The future of African-descended peoples was asserted, then, in direct opposition to the foreshadowing of a future of subjugation and potential extirpation of the racialised subjects of white supremacy. In one 1923 issue, under front-page banner headline reading 'Negro Race Going Forward to the Point of Destiny', Garvey argued:

> we are approaching the time when the Negro peoples of the world will have [to] … go forward to the point of destiny as laid out by themselves, or must sit quiescently and see themselves pushed back into the mire of economic serfdom, to be ultimately crushed by the grinding mill of exploitation and be exterminated ultimately by the strong hand of prejudice … On every side we hear the cry of white supremacy—in America, Canada, Australia, Europe, and even South Africa. The whole world of white men are becoming nervous as touching their own future and that of other races. With the desire of self-preservation, which naturally is the first law of Nature, they raise the hue and cry that the white race must be first in government and in control. What must the Negro do in the face of such a universal attitude but to align all his forces in the direction of protecting himself from the threatened disaster of race domination and ultimate extinction.[71]

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[69] "Socialism and the Negro," *NW*, October 11, 1919.
[70] "The Riots Once More," *NW*, October 11, 1919.
[71] "Negro Race Going Forward to the Point of Destiny," *NW*, March 24, 1923.

In the same issue, another article described white supremacy as 'the Keynote of Western Civilization', one manifestation of which was the economic dependency of African Americans on whites. The article argued that 'America's attitude toward the Negro is that of white supremacy' and even raised the possibility of mass starvation among African Americans.[72] During the 'race riots' of 1919, an editorial claimed that '[m]obs of white men all over the world will continue to lynch and burn Negroes so long as we remain divided among ourselves.'[73] 'If you do not wake up you will go back into slavery,' readers were told.[74]

Whiteness and Extinction

The *Negro World*'s admonitions on the threat of extermination under a racialised order reflected a counter-reading of what Patrick Brantlinger has called 'extinction discourse'—the long-standing idea in European thinking that 'savagery' was 'self-extinguishing', producing a 'fantasy of auto-genocide or racial suicide' that 'has helped to rationalize or occlude the genocidal aspects of European conquest and colonization.'[75] Examples of this dominant discourse were, at times, reprinted and recontextualised for the audience of the *Negro World*. In 1925, the US Congressman Horace Henry Powers was quoted in the newspaper as arguing that 'the weak, the ignorant, and the slothful races cannot expect to remain undisturbed in their habitat', since '[w]e cannot leave them to their indolent siesta if they hold in accidental and unconscious keeping the energies needed for advancing civilization … Will the world wait for child-peoples to grow to the measure of these requirements when it can displace them with better stock?' To this advocation of genocide

[72] "The Views of the U.N.I.A. on the Race Problem Are Upheld," *NW*, March 24, 1923.
[73] "Editorial," *NW*, October 11, 1919.
[74] "Mrs. Capers, Black Cross Nurse, Thrills Charleston Audiences," *NW*, March 17, 1923.
[75] Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings*, 2.

the *Negro World* merely added a knowing aperçu: 'the white race certainly is well protected by its racial thinkers and prophets, who warn their people continuously of the dangers ahead.'[76] The 'white man', Garvey said elsewhere, was 'thinking all the time, never resting, never sleeping'.[77]

Garvey's speeches in the newspaper's early years can be read as employing a Social Darwinist analysis—the idea of the weak races giving way to the strong—within a framework of implicit moral condemnation that belied the supposed naturalness of that order: a counter-narrative to texts like Stoddard's. In a speech printed in the paper in 1919, for example, Garvey argued that if 'the Negro' did not 'take the initiative and do for himself … he is going to die … he is going to die economically under the yoke of Britain, of France and of Germany. He is going to die in the next one hundred years if he does not start out now to do for himself.' The recent anti-black collective violence had shown, he argued, that when competition for jobs became intense white solidarity brushed aside high-minded rhetoric on socialism. In the near future, he predicted 'millions are going to starve … Do you think the white industrial captains are going to allow the white men and the white women to starve and give you bread?' readers were asked. 'To the white man blood is thicker than water.'[78] The same year, Garvey explained in the *Negro World* that 'Republicans, Democrats and Socialists are the same to us, because they are all white men, and to our knowledge, all of them join together and lynch and burn Negroes.'[79]

It is vital to underline that this conception of white power emerged in relation to a specific view of a global racial order as reflecting the subjugation of the 'darker' colonised world to the 'white' core. As we have seen in the Prologue, this was a view that emerged

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[76] [Untitled article] *NW*, March 28, 1925.
[77] Garvey, *More Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, 25.
[78] "Hon. Marcus Garvey, Foremost Orator of the Race, Delivers Brilliant Speech in Philadelphia," *NW*, November 1, 1919.
[79] Hill, *Garvey Papers II*, II: 27 August 1919 – 31 August 1920:466.

during the height of the Belle Époque in both the imperial centres and in the colonised world; a critique of it fuelled the pan-movements of the colonised world. A prominent sense in African American interwar writing of transnational white power—often thought of as imperial collusion amongst the states of the global core—ran through the period, spread through technologies of print. A leaflet being distributed by a black physician, James E. Henderson, during the First World War, thus explained that white imperialism had 'gobbled up practically the entire earth's surface, exterminated or subjugated the natives, seized, exploited their land and resources, and denied all colored races rights and citizenship'. Now, 'dark-skinned people the world over' sought 'a re-apportionment—a redistribution of the earth's surface.'[80]

Hubert Harrison, an influential Harlem-based radical an early mentor of Garvey, was editor of *Negro World* from 1920 to 1922. Harrison argued that the anti-black violence following the First World War showed 'that while white people spoke of patriotism, religion, democracy and other sounding themes, they remained loyal to one concept above all others, and that was the concept of race.'[81] 'Until the white men of this country can put patriotism ahead of race,' he wrote in his diary, 'I shall not.'[82] By 1938, another African American writer, George Schuyler, would argue that 'these years have seen the … rise of the White Internationale and the gradual rise of the Black Internationale in opposition; not powerful opposition as yet, perhaps, but containing vast potentialities of which the white world is all too painfully cognizant.' This 'Black Internationale' had arisen in response to a situation in which 'Black, brown, and yellow alike were maligned and Jim-crowed on every side and in every place. Everywhere white people took precedence over darker people.' But the 'New Negro' was no longer willing to stand for this. He was 'the

[80] Ellis, *Race, War, and Surveillance*, 44.
[81] Harrison and Perry, *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, 83.
[82] Ibid., 370.

Damoclean sword dangling over the white world.'[83] The Jamaican poet Claude McKay, running into trouble with the colonial authorities in Morocco, felt that 'even in Africa I was confronted by the specter, the white terror always pursuing the black. There was no escape anywhere from the white hound of Civilization.'[84]

It was precisely this view of the co-constitution of global inequality and imperial racialisation that undergirded much of Garvey's nationalism and made it at the same time a form of internationalism. 'It is a blot on justice and humanity,' ran one article in the *Negro World* in 1919, 'that the whites, who constitute less than one-third of the world's population, assume to control the world, and I declare that a justice and humanity that do not recognize racial equality are scarcely worthy of the name.'[85] In 1923, another article argued that 'this white man's civilization' had 'succeeded in destroying itself' and that 'out of the debris and the ashes of that civilization will arise a newer and better civilization' which the 'colored races are peculiarly suited to establish, especially those who have not been contaminated with the vices of white civilization'.[86] The fracturing of the core of global order caused by the First World War was read by the *Negro World* just as it was read by Stoddard: as the weakening of white solidarity vis-à-vis the colonised world. 'If White People Accepted the View of the Absolute Need for Subserviency of the Black Race for the White, What Justification Can There Be for the Use of Black Troops By One White Nation Against Another White Nation?' asked the paper pointedly in 1919.[87]

I have been discussing in this section the ways in which white power was conceived in the *Negro World*, particularly during the early years of the newspaper, as a

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[83] Gates and Jarrett, *The New Negro*, 149–54. Schuyler moved sharply to the Right during the McCarthy period, publishing in 1947 *The Communist Conspiracy against the Negroes*.
[84] McKay, *A Long Way from Home*, 233.
[85] "The World in Unrest," *NW*, November 1, 1919.
[86] "Thousands of loyal members fill Liberty Hall," *NW*, May 5, 1923.
[87] *NW*, October 11, 1919.

structure of oppression in both synchronic and diachronic terms, which had shaped the history and threatened the future existence of Africans. A vision of such racialised power—and the suggested 'nationalist' response to it, as we shall see below—has often been seen to replicate dominant ideological motifs and frames: Social Darwinism, self-help, race-thinking, a kind of collectivist *realpolitik*. But what has less often been observed is that Garvey's newspaper was closely connected to another critical conception: that of white power's deep-rooted globality, its consolidation in the structure of global order, and its generation of inequality between the 'white' imperial powers and the colonised 'colored races'. In the next section, I expand upon the idea of racial and pan-'coloured' solidarity in the *Negro World* and some of its precursors and contemporaries.

'The Other Darker Skinned People of the World': Diaspora and Coloured Cosmopolitanism

The very titles of the *Negro World* and its parent organisation, the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), denote a sense of collectivity based upon race. Garveyism became known, not inaccurately, as 'racial chauvinism'[88] and as a 'back to Africa movement'.[89] In much of the popular press, the movement was generally represented—much as the Nation of Islam would be in later years—as a simple-minded inversion of white chauvinism. Yet this view of Garveyism and the texts it produced are misleading, in particular because they occlude the global vision that lay at the heart of such solidarity-building. The *Negro World*'s racial self-help doctrine was developed in relation to global order as a whole. This positioning was central to the shift of many African Americans, including many Garveyites, to identifying as part of the 'colonised world'—as

[88] A term used by the Comintern: see Lemelle and Kelley, *Imagining Home*, 36.
[89] See the article "Back to Africa Movement," in South Africa's *Abanti-Batho*, November 11, 1920. Cited in Limb, *The People's Paper*, 439.

collectively racialised subjects of the global 'core'—and, therefore, questioning the putative loyalty owed to the imperial state of which they were nominally citizens. As Wilson Moses has pointed out, 'Garveyites were not mere racialists; *Negro World*, despite its bombast and its unquestionable ethnocentrism, often displayed surprisingly cosmopolitan content.'[90] This particular brand of what Nico Slate has called 'colored cosmopolitanism'[91] saturated a nationalism that might initially appear hermetic and exclusionary.

Before founding his own newspaper, Garvey had been steeped in the idea of a transnational solidaristic world of the 'darker races' propounded by *The African Times and Orient Review* (*ATOR*).[92] The journal had been founded in 1912 by Dusé Mohamed Ali—an actor, playwright, activist, journalist, and editor of mixed Egyptian and Sudanese background.[93] For Garvey, who was employed as a young man in London to work on *ATOR*, the experience was fundamental in his training as an editor and publicist, but also for developing his worldview (Ali would later become a regular contributor to the *Negro World* and head of its Africa section.)[94]

Others who influenced Garvey had also expressed strikingly similar concepts of pan-coloured solidarity. Hubert Harrison, for example, had founded the Liberty League in

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[90] Moses, *Creative Conflict in African American Thought*, 291.
[91] Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism*.
[92] For other publications influenced by *ATOR,* see Winkiel, *Modernism, Race and Manifestos*, 162, though Winkiel mistakenly refers to *ATOR* as 'The Ethiopian Times and Orient Review'; see also Geiss, *Pan-African Movement*, 224. An article Garvey wrote for *ATOR* predicted 'West Indians' would be key to uniting the African race, 'who before the close of many centuries will found an Empire'. Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism*, 69.
[93] He would later go on to found *The Comet*, based in Lagos, and become a prominent figure in interwar West Africa. Ali was unpopular with authorities of the time: a British War Office report called him 'a mongrel Soudanese-Egyptian … [who] dabbles in any sort of mischievous agitation which comes to hand. Hill, *Garvey Papers II*, II: 27 August 1919 – 31 August 1920:314.
[94] Though later, Ali 'was still telling anyone in London who would listen that because of Garvey's "laziness and general worthless character" he had been discharged from his messenger job in 1913.' Cronon, *Black Moses*, 43. Ali also wrote a fictionalized portrait of Garvey in "Ere Roosevelt Came". See Hill, *The Garvey Papers II*: liv; Hill, *Garvey Papers VI*: The Caribbean Diaspora, 1910-20:55.

1917 with the express intention of carrying out 'an international as well as a national duty to the seventeen hundred millions [who] are colored—black and brown and yellow'. For 'the 250 millions of our brethren in Africa' the League felt 'a special sympathy' and would 'work for the ultimate realization of democracy in Africa'.[95] Later, in a 1919 article for the *New Negro*, Harrison proclaimed that:

> as long as the Color Line exists, all the perfumed protestations of Democracy on the part of the white race must be simply downright lying. The cant of "Democracy" is intended as dust in the eyes of white voters, incense on the altar of their own self-love … But it becomes more and more apparent that Hindus, Egyptians, Africans, Chinese and Haytians have taken the measure of this cant and hypocrisy. And, whatever the white world may think, it will have these peoples to deal with during the twentieth century.[96]

Harrison celebrated the postwar world in which he saw 'the darker races, chafing under the domination of the alien whites … everywhere showing a disposition to take Democracy at its word and to win some measure of it – for themselves'. He suggested that 'before the Negroes of the Western World can play any effective part they must first acquaint themselves with what is taking place in the larger world whose millions are in motion'. Since 'our problem here is really a part of a great world-wide problem, we must make our attempts to solve our part [and] link up with the attempts being made elsewhere to solve the other parts. So we will profit by a wider experience and perhaps be able to lend some assistance to that ancient Mother Land of ours'.[97] Elsewhere, he evoked 'the confraternity of colored peoples' and again emphasised that 'the first great international duty of the black man in America is to get in international touch with his fellows of the downtrodden section of the human population of the globe and establish business,

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[95] Harrison and Perry, *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, 92.
[96] Ibid., 100.
[97] Ibid., 101.

industrial and commercial relations with them.' 'We need to join hands across the sea,' he wrote; 'We must link up with the other colored races of the world.'[98]

These views were carried into early editions of the *Negro World*. In a lucid article published in the newspaper in 1921, Harrison wrote that '[w]e must … learn a lesson from those others who suffer elsewhere from evils similar to ours. Whether it be Sinn Fein or Swadesha, their experiences should be serviceable for us.' He proposed a congress of 'darker races', which would counterpose a 'stark internationalism of clear vision' against the 'pseudo-internationalism' of global capitalism:

> Today the great world majority, made up of black, brown and yellow peoples, are stretching out their hands to each other and developing a "consciousness of kind." They are seeking to establish their own centres of diffusion of their own internationalism, and this fact is giving nightmares to Downing Street, the Quai d'Orsay and the other centres of white capitalist internationalism.

The *Negro World* grew out of the seedbed of *ATOR* and the Liberty League. Addressed to 'Africans at home and abroad', it evoked a sense of diaspora that connected black communities in the Americas with Africans through the crucial context of the history of enslavement, colonialism, and their positioning at the edges of an international society centred on whiteness. Far from the naïve nativism that it became known for, much of the language of the *Negro World* in relation to Africa can be read as a series of claims to sovereign capability that were designed to undermine, discursively, the precepts of the world's racial ordering. In 1919, Garvey reported victoriously that he had been told by 'a prominent African … a few weeks ago the natives cleaned out every white man they found in Sierra Leone.'[99] And in a front-page editorial in 1928, Garvey explained that 'we are

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[98] Ibid., 219.
[99] "Hon. Marcus Garvey in First Public Appearance Stirred Large Crowds at Philadelphia Meeting," *NW*, Oct 11, 1919.

witnessing an increasing encroachment upon our rights on the Continent of Africa by the adventurous European races'. But there was 'absolutely no reason why the four hundred million Negroes of the world should not make a desperate effort to reconquer Africa from the white man … Why should we allow them to exploit and dominate the land of our fathers?'[100]

Connecting with an African diaspora, as promoted by the *Negro World*, involved both nationalist and anti-nationalist rhetoric. In 1919, for example, Garvey referred to diasporic Africans as 'scattered children of the bleeding Fatherland':[101] a markedly nationalistic tone. But when the *Negro World* was addressed to 'Blackmen all over the world' and African American members of the UNIA were said to 'know no nationality in service to race',[102] there was a clear sense of weakening the separate national or imperial identities of African peoples in favour of a pan-racial identity. 'Scattered as we are in alien countries,' wrote Amy Jacques-Garvey in 1925, when Marcus Garvey was in prison, 'and subjected to rules, inimical to our united interests, we have suffered materially from men of our own race, who for a paltry sum would ingratiate themselves with us and secretly work to destroy our organization.'[103] 'The new Negro,' she wrote elsewhere, 'envisions mother Africa stretching out her bleeding hands to her scattered sons and daughters, bidding them to return home'.[104] 'All sensible men know,' ran an article in 1923, 'that Africa, and Africa alone, will be the solution of the great Negro problem.'[105]

Garveyism's relationship to Africa shifted over time, from a haughty assumption of diasporic leadership to one that was much more open to the Africans liberating

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[100] "Editorial," *NW*, April 21, 1928.
[101] Hill, *Garvey Papers II*, II: 27 August 1919 – 31 August 1920:356.
[102] "Editorial," *NW*, July 7, 1923.
[103] "See All; Hear All; Say Nothing," *NW*, March 14, 1925.
[104] "Why White Men Want Africa," *NW*, April 18, 1925.
[105] "Africa Startles the World," *NW*, April 24, 1923.

themselves from colonial rule. Central to this shift was the 'coloured cosmopolitanism' at the heart of the *Negro World*, which positioned the idea of pan-African solidarity within a broader 'coloured world' that encompassed all those who had been subjected to imperial racialisation and who thereby shared a common project for a new global order. As a result, the newspaper did not only report and reprint articles from other newspapers on issues affecting people of African descent across the world, but also reported on a world of rising anticolonial struggle.

'Negroes must now combine with China, India, Egypt, Ireland and Russia to free themselves in the future,' read one article in 1919; 'Colored Peoples Everywhere Asserting Their Rights to Self-Determination' read another in 1923.[106] To take a sample of just a few months, the newspaper reported in 1925 on the Rif War ('Riffian Tribesmen in Gallant Struggle for Independence'), the threat to Liberia's independence posed by Firestone Rubber; the departure of Sir Hugh Clifford, the British Governor of the West Coast of Africa ('Natives Rejoice as the Tyrant Leaves Nigeria'); and the rise of pan-Arabism ('Great Uprising Planned to Drive Europeans from Asia and Africa.')[107] The *Negro World* also began reprinting articles from the African press, especially the *Gold Coast Leader*, when these critiqued the colonial administration, often furnishing them with new and stronger headlines. One article from the *Gold Coast Leader*, for example, reprinted in the *Negro World* in May 14, 1927, was given the new title: 'Long, Long Ago Should Africa Have Hacked at the Coils of the Hydra-Headed Englishman.' Clearly, many of these assertions of anticolonial victory were intended to be prefigurative: to performatively and sometimes exaggeratedly invoke a vision of 'colored' sovereignty in a world that persistently undermined such sovereignty.

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[106] Hill, *The Garvey Papers*, 1983, II:495; *NW*, December 1, 1923.
[107] *NW* May 16, 1925; June 20, 1925; July 4, 1925; November 14, 1925.

This aspect of Garveyism was what most worried US authorities. 'Garvey's office on 135th Str. is a sort of clearing house for all international radical agitators,' reported one informant in August 1919, 'including Mexicans, South Americans, Spaniards, in fact blacks and yellows from all parts of the world who radiate around Garvey, leave for their destinations, agitate for a time, and eventually return to Garvey's headquarters.'[108] The same year, a US military intelligence note found that:

> this agitation goes far beyond the redress of the alleged grievances of our negro population. It aims at Pan-Negroism and a combination of the other colored races of the world. As a colored movement it looks to Japan for leadership; as a radical movement it follows Bolshevism and has intimate relations with various socialistic groups throughout the United States. With this latter connection it naturally sympathizes with and has relations with the Irish, the Jews and Hindus. In fact all of the alleged oppressed nationalities. The program is Liberty, Justice and Equality …[109]

Another report emphasised that 'correspondence and exchange of views between American Negroes and prominent colored men in other countries such as Africa, India, China, Japan and the West Indies, will no doubt have its effect in due time in establishing a closer relationship between the colored races of the world.'[110]

While these intelligence reports doubtless contained exaggerations, they also sounded a note of truth. Garveyism's discursive manifestations at this time reveal it not as a hermetic racial nationalism, but as a movement that understood itself to be in conversation and solidarity with the global anticolonial movements that were together struggling against the white world order. As Henrietta Vinton Davis, a UNIA figure, put it on August 25, 1919:

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[108] Hill, *Garvey Papers II*, II: 27 August 1919 – 31 August 1920:495.
[109] From Captain John B. Trevor to Brigadier General Malborough Churchill. April 5, 1919. Hill, *The Garvey Papers I*, I:401–2.
[110] Ibid., I:493.

> After this great World War, in this period of reconstruction, the negro has come into the idea of his own solidity, the ideal of his own unity, no matter what country he may have been born in, no matter what flag may have floated over him, the negro, although patriotic and loyal and faithful to all the flags under which he has served, yet he feels the time has come when he must stand forth among the other races of the world, among the other darker skinned people of the world; he must stand forth and ask, in fact he must demand his rights in this reconstructive period.[111]

In this striking image, an expressed solidarity with racialised populations—'the darker skinned people of the world'—was seen to give diasporic Africans a 'solidity' that was explicitly contrasted with the unconvincing nationalisms to which those of the diaspora had previously been expected be loyal.

Developments in Asia, especially the rise of Japan, came to form a crucial element of Garvey's global vision during the First World War and early postwar years. In 1918, a spy at a UNIA meeting recorded Garvey as saying that 'Japan is catering to the sentiment of the darker peoples of the world.'[112] A year later, Garvey proclaimed that '[a]t last the darker peoples of the world have started out to make their united demands on Occidental civilization. The world war will not have been waged in vain if the principal peace aim of Japan, representing the interests of the races who are discriminated against in the world, is upheld.'[113] Reports on India and Gandhi were also common.

I have drawn attention to Garvey's global perspective because it is crucial in understanding the basis for the nationalism of the UNIA. That nationalism positioned itself within an anticolonial world, proclaimed an affinity to the global subjects of the racialising impulses of the imperial core, and elaborated a coloured cosmopolitanism in response to the white world order. This reconfiguration of the position of the racialised subject interpreted global events, but it also shaped them. A wealth of recent scholarship has shown

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[111] Hill, *Garvey Papers II*, II: 27 August 1919 – 31 August 1920:499.
[112] Ibid., II: 27 August 1919 – 31 August 1920:333.
[113] November 1919. Hill, *The Garvey Papers I*, I:304.

the extent to which those associated with the UNIA played a significant role in shaping political subjectivities globally.[114]

As Adam Ewing has written in his recent study of the movement, Garveyism was 'a fundamentally global project with much more of its focus directed at grassroots activism on the African continent than has been previously acknowledged'. It was not essentially an ideology but 'a method of organic mass politics' and 'a sustained project of diasporic identity building'.[115] By 1922, the UNIA had over a thousand divisions, with well over two hundred of these outside the United States: in southern and western Africa, South America, Canada, and especially in the Caribbean. The political vision in the *Negro World* articles I have discussed spread through many of those UNIA divisions, helping to channel political thinking in Africa into the vessel of global anticolonialism.

Discursive Nationalism in the *Negro World*

This chapter has been exploring the *Negro World's* early vision of racial affinity which, I have argued, was derived from a reading of the globality of white power and a repositioning of black people in the Americas as diasporic Africans who were part of a global anticolonial project, challenging the idea that they should be loyal only, or even primarily, to the imperial state of which they were putatively citizens. In this final section, I want to draw out how this reading of a global racial order fed into a discursive nationalism in the *Negro*

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[114] See especially Ewing, *The Age of Garvey*.; Hahn, *The Political Worlds of Slavery and Freedom*.; Vinson, '"Sea Kaffirs"'.; Rolinson, *Grassroots Garveyism*.; Putnam, '"Nothing Matters But Color": Transnational Circuits, the Interwar Caribbean, and the Black International'.; and the deeply impressive 12-volume *Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, edited by Robert A. Hill, which has transformed scholarly work in this field. For a recent journalistic treatment see Grant, *Negro with a Hat*. Many older studies have retained relevance, including Cronon, *Black Moses*.; the indispensable Geiss, *Pan-African Movement*.; the work of J. A. Langley, especially *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa, 1900-45*.; Martin, *Race First*.; and the classic study by Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925*.
[115] Ewing, *The Age of Garvey*, 5–7.

World that articulated black and African sovereignty, in the process aiming to constitute the African continent and diaspora as an international subject capable of autonomous action and not simply the subject of external design. This discursive nationalism adopted rhetorical features of nationalist discourse, but with little expectation of fulfilling nationalism's technical requirements.

In its earlier issues, circulated just as the First World War drew to a close, the *Negro World* was saturated with rhetoric associated with nationalism. Yet such language, I want to suggest, was couched within a broader discursive project. The discourse of the 'nation' was elaborated specifically within a context of temporal transformation—breaking with the past, preparing for the future—and was therefore significant not for its supposedly doctrinal content, but for the strategic possibilities it opened up in political terms. One of the earliest extant issues of the newspaper, from October 11, 1919, proclaimed: 'NEGROES SHOULD PREPARE' and 'BLACKMEN ALL OVER THE WORLD SHOULD PREPARE TO PROTECT THEMSELVES.'[116] The next month, the newspaper articulated a bracing fearlessness with regard to white racism in the US: 'We told those Southern crackers that one day the Negro would get even with them'; 'We are determined in this association to bring the white man to his senses.'[117] 'The strike is on against the self-appointed, white-man-picked leader,' readers were told.[118] Such language alarmed British colonial authorities, who thought the newspaper contained 'matter of a highly undesirable and inflammatory nature'.[119]

Just as the idea of racial collectivity and self-help was invoked in explicit opposition to a global racial order that had created a 'white' core and vast colonised world

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[116] The National Archives of the UK (henceforth: TNA) CO 23/285/1.
[117] "Hon. Marcus Garvey, Foremost Orator of the Race, Delivers Brilliant Speech in Philadelphia," *NW*, November 1, 1919.
[118] "Ten Thousand Negroes Try to Get Into Liberty Hall," *NW*, Oct 11, 1919.
[119] TNA CO 23/285/1.

of the 'darker races', so was nationalism summoned in explicit opposition to the same global order. Early issues of the *Negro World* saw Garvey declaring a vision of a future black nationalism that discursively associated blackness and Africa with the power and accoutrements of nationalism. In a speech printed in the *Negro World* in February 1923, for example, Garvey explained that he spoke 'in the language of building a government: of building political power and all that goes with it', including 'big guns and cannons':

> Systems of government come with political independence … We are talking about a system of government that will give to Africa and the Negro race the same kind of utilities that the other races and nations use in their government for the protection of their people. We are talking about battleships; we are talking about hundreds of dreadnoughts and hundreds of cruisers; we are talking in terms of thousands of aeroplanes … [We will be] coming up the Hudson Bay with a flotilla of battleships (applause), dreadnoughts and cruisers to land our first ambassador … [W]e will be entertained in the White House as the first ambassadors from the great African republic. (Renewed applause.) And let me tell you, they will hear us then … Why does the white man act today as he does towards you and me? It is not because there is a difference between us in religion or in color, but because there is a difference between us in power.[120]

Speeches like these were infused with the sense of the possibility of nationhood in transforming the existing racial disequilibrium. The naval images—'hundreds of dreadnoughts and hundreds of cruisers'—directly referred to the vast mobilisations of the recent war but inverted the agency behind them, gesturing to the possibility of the Black Atlantic as a site of militaristic power and not only as a tragic construction of the White Atlantic.

Specific trappings of statehood were repeatedly invoked for the same purpose and with similar effects. Much has been made of the grand and dramatic processions headed by Marcus Garvey in Harlem, often derided as displaying a meretricious pomposity. But these

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[120] "Editorial," *NW*, February 24, 1923.

parades formed only a part of a far broader aesthetic of nationhood. The UNIA, one meeting was told in 1919, 'has secret service men all over the world now', and had its own flag—Garvey's red, black and green tricolour—that would 'some day … be raised on the hilltops of Africa'.[121] When UNIA members were asked 'by a white man' about their red, black and green badges in 1919 they replied: 'Why, that is a secret order we are connected with'.[122] As Steven Hahn has written, the UNIA was not simply thought of as an organisation, 'it was also imagined as an embryonic form of the new African nation itself, a government in exile'.[123] Its officials acted, in the words of Manning Marable, as 'a nobility in exile'.[124]

In this sense, the performance of government expressed by the UNIA was a political act that fit closely with the discursive world created by the newspaper, emerging in the context of African American politicisation and the proliferation of black newspapers. The UNIA incorporated literary events, concerts, banners, titles and a black national anthem.[125] The aesthetic of nationhood was especially popular with UNIA members. When the *Negro World* ran a 'Why I am a Garveyite' competition in 1927, multiple winning entries referenced as a particular attraction the organisation's flag. Joseph Lloyd, who won the first prize, explained that 'when the flags of the various nations are being unfurled I shall see the banner of the Red, Black and Green, the flag that had been given to us by our leader, Marcus Garvey'. Another entrant explained that Garvey 'has given us a flag, the Red, Black and Green—the only flag representing the Negro peoples of the world'. Yet

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[121] Hill, *Garvey Papers II*, II: 27 August 1919 – 31 August 1920:91.
[122] "Hon. Marcus Garvey, Foremost Orator of the Race, Delivers Brilliant Speech in Philadelphia," *NW*, November 1, 1919.
[123] Hahn, *The Political Worlds of Slavery and Freedom*, 133.
[124] Marable, *Malcolm X*, 19.
[125] Ibid. Marable notes that Malcolm X's brother, Wilfred, recalled challenging the Pledge of Allegiance in school with the UNIA anthem, 'Ethiopia, Land of the Free.'

another saw 'the greatest of possibilities in [Garvey's] program, with four hundred million Negroes marching under the banner of the Red, Black and Green.'[126]

The lineage of the idea of an African American flag is significant. Hubert Harrison's Liberty League had in June 1917 adopted a black, brown and yellow tricolour, said to be symbolic of the various shades of African Americans and to connect black Americans with the other 'colored races' of the world.[127] Harrison claimed Garvey's flag was a direct derivation of his own.[128] In 1912, a news item in the *African Times and Orient Review* had reported the design of an African American flag by Bishop J. Lennox of the Zion African Episcopal Church after he had been shocked by hearing the popular song 'Every race has a flag but the coon' sung by whites.[129] Garvey would use the same abusive song to justify his own flag.[130] In all these contexts, the necessity of a national flag was explicitly linked to the derision of white power, and its adoption therefore—explicitly, in Harrison's case—far from sealing off African Americans, broke free of the false promises of imperial citizenship and connected them to a colonial world of 'darker races'. This was nationalism as a route to a type of internationalism, not a doctrine of exclusion.

Behind the adoption of a flag and other trappings of nationhood was the principle that nationalism was just as legitimate a goal for Africans and the African diaspora as it was for other nations. The ability to perform black state power was itself victory against the white man who, as Garvey argued in 1919, 'comes before you in his imperial and majestic pomp and tries to impress upon you the idea that he is your superior.'[131] As the

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[126] "Why I Am a Garveyite," *NW*, January 8, 1927.
[127] Harrison and Perry, *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, 92.
[128] Ibid., 90.
[129] His flag depicted eleven stars (representing the holy disciples except Judas) in a field of purple, surrounded by twelve bars of red, white, blue. "New Flag for Afro-Americans," *ATOR*, October 1912.
[130] Garvey, *More Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, 56.
[131] "Hon. Marcus Garvey, Foremost Orator of the Race, Delivers Brilliant Speech in Philadelphia," *NW*, November 1, 1919.

High Commissioner of the UNIA Jacob S. Slappy put it in the *Negro World*: 'If government is good for the Englishmen, if it is good for the Frenchmen, Germans and Italians, it is also good for the Negro.' 'If there is ever a time when conditions favor the Negro race to strike for "nationalism," the time is now,' ran another article in 1923. Nationalism is 'the symbol of race equality, race achievement and race supremacy', and only a 'race with its own government and its own country is assured recognition and respect'—'We cannot go very far without a country.'[132] A 'Negro government we had once, and a Negro government we must have again.' Violence was accepted as necessary. 'You have to spill blood in Africa before you get what is belonging to you'; 'the sword will decide to whom belongs the right.'[133] 'The war has taught us that education in these days must necessarily be extended farther than the use of the pen,' ran a letter the same year, 'it must also embody the use of the sword and the rifle.'[134]

The principle of self-worth as expressed through nationalist accoutrements was powerful. A report of William H. Ferris, the literary editor of the *Negro World*, speaking at Garvey's trial in June 1923, found him discussing his recent stint in hospital:

> There was one thing that cheered me in my illness, and that was when a member of the U. N. I. A. called on me. You remember that during the convention two years ago there was a black man who was dressed up in a military uniform who had a plumed helmet and the papers say he was a Haytian admiral. That was Prince Allen, the pastor of the Church of the Ever Living God in New Haven. He came into the hospital to see me dressed up in his military uniform, and he said: 'Is Dr. Ferris here?' And after he left they wanted to know who he was and what his uniform signified. And then for the first time they heard of the Universal Negro Improvement Association as a world-wide organization.[135]

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[132] 'Nationalism is the Symbol of Race Equality.' *NW*, September 1, 1923.
[133] 'Hon. Marcus Garvey, Foremost Orator of the Race, Delivers Brilliant Speech in Philadelphia.' *NW*, November 1, 1919.
[134] 'J. A. Martineau Sees Danger in the Annexation of the West Indies to the U. S. A.' *NW*, Oct 25, 1919.
[135] *NW*, June 16, 1923.

At a UNIA meeting in 1923 reported in the *Negro World*, attendees were told: 'Every man here should have on their uniform.'[136] Fiction, too, provides evidence for the emotive power of Garvey's nationalism. The African American novelist Richard Wright, in his novel *Lawd Today!,* written in the 1930s but unpublished until after Wright's death, included a scene in which a black man, furious at prejudicial treatment, is thrown into a UNIA-influenced reverie. He 'saw millions of black soldiers marching in black armies; he saw a black battleship flying a black flag; he himself was standing on the deck of that black battleship surrounded by black generals'.[137] In asserting black sovereignty, the UNIA uniform and flag did not only gesture towards a future project, but also imbued the lives of its members with a sense of their sovereignty and agency in the present, as well as a feeling of geopolitical realignment—with, for example, besieged sites of African and black sovereignty like Haiti (see Chapter 6).

UNIA members and readers of the *Negro World* were, in the early postwar years, encouraged to think of themselves not only as a sovereign entity, but also in terms of being prepared for an imminent war. The Black Star Line shipping company, the flagship and ill-fated project of the UNIA whose striking advertisements dominated the newspaper, was one clear symbol of this. In 1919, readers were warned that the 'white man … is going to make an attempt to cut off communication' when he witnessed the organising of Africa and its diaspora, at which point the Black Star Line would be a key means of maintaining independent communication—'because four hundred millions of us have declared that we are going to float it even if we have to float it in an ocean of human blood.'[138] Such

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[136] 'Mrs. Capers, Black Cross Nurse, Thrills Charleston Audiences.' *NW*, March 17, 1923
[137] *Lawd Today!* 143-144. See Dawahare, *Nationalism, Marxism, and African American Literature Between the Wars*, 126. I discuss this scene in Chapter 6.
[138] 'Hon. Marcus Garvey in First Public Appearance Stirred Large Crowds at Philadelphia Meeting.' *NW*, Oct 11, 1919.

militaristic and masculinist overtones were common. 'Men become noble through service,' and black men 'will have to do some service to the Negro race,' explains one address.[139]

The nationalism of the UNIA and *Negro World* emerged, then, in relation to dominant white power, against which it performed black sovereignty and aligned itself with a global anticolonial project. A central element of this project was economic sovereignty. For Garvey, this was a collectivist capitalism that was seen as essential in shifting the economic balance of power between whites and blacks. 'Prestige and standing in the commercial and economic worlds is a potent weapon with which to buck the color line,' said W.H. Ferris in an address in 1919 that was printed in the *Negro World*.[140] 'The thing that counts in this world is money, it is material wealth,' read another speech in the paper the same month. 'Today we are determined to get our portion of the material wealth in this world, and when we get it to the extent that we want it, we know there will be no more color line.' After all, the 'white man has his millions, but he protects it with his gun.' Similarly, 'we can only protect' our own wealth 'when we have behind us a strong government'.[141]

Such a project of collectivist capitalism entailed an important theoretical message: a view of the 'color line' as economically- and materially-constituted. This connected Garvey's project to a much broader body of Black Atlantic writing on race—including some of his prominent contemporaries—while rejecting the naturalising discourse on race that was dominant at the time. W. E. B. Du Bois, for example, advanced consistently towards a material view of race.[142] Hubert Harrison, in an article in the *New York Call* in

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[139] *NW*, November 1, 1919.
[140] 'Greatest Meeting in History of Universal Negro Improvement Ass'n Held in Liberty Hall.' *NW*, Oct 25, 1919.
[141] 'Hon. Marcus Garvey in First Public Appearance Stirred Large Crowds at Philadelphia Meeting.' *NW*, Oct 11, 1919.
[142] See Younis, '"United by Blood"', 494–499.

1911, had already enjoined his readers to 'confess the naked truth that there is nothing innate in race prejudice. But it is diligently fostered by those who have something to gain from it.'[143]

I have been describing in this section the ways in which a reading of a global racial order fuelled the discursive nationalism of the *Negro World*. I have argued that the newspaper performed black and African sovereignty in opposition to dominant modes of racialisation. In the process, Garvey's newspaper sought to constitute the African continent and diaspora as an international subject capable of autonomous action. This discursive nationalism adopted rhetorical features of nationalist discourse—the trappings of the state, militarism, patriarchy—in opposition to dominant white power, against which it aligned itself with the potential alternative of anticolonial sovereignty.

Conclusion

This chapter has been exploring the *Negro World's* vision of pan-African affinity and nationalism in the context of the interwar United States. We should see that vision, I have suggested, as contingent upon a material context: the expansion of US global power; the experience of the First World War; the structures of racial oppression internal to the US and their connections to race as a global phenomenon; the flourishing of African American literacy black print cultures. Combined, these elements illuminate the *Negro World*, and the UNIA more broadly, not as mere essentialist replicators of dominant racisms, but as attentive readers of the global pan-racial imperial affinity that had accompanied the construction of the core-periphery global order.

[143] Harrison and Perry, *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, 56.

As a result, the *Negro World,* especially in its early years, insisted upon repositioning black people in the Americas as diasporic Africans and part of a global anticolonial project. If the oppression of African Americans was globally constituted, it also connected them to what the newspaper called the world's 'darker peoples' and to a proposal for a new global order. Far more than is traditionally recognised, the *Negro World* inhabited race in order to subvert its global operation. The *Negro World* was not simply helping to create the idea of an African nation but a world of those racialised and peripheralised by white imperial power, connected across oceans. The *Negro World* also traverses the traditional boundary between orality and print, given the importance of UNIA meetings to reading practices and its tendency to print what had already been delivered in speech form. These discursive practices, I suggest, can be understood as constituting an oppositional language that subverted a dominant discourse, particularly in terms of its approach to race, sovereignty, and political loyalty.

Aiye d'aiye Oyinbo.
the world has become a white man's world

—YORUBA SAYING[1]

2

Whiteness and the Colour Bar in British West Africa

The end of the First World War was met with a spirited push for greater participation in global rule-making by those at the edges of the international society dominated by Western powers.[2] This was a time when 'the multifold and complex parts of the grand machinery that is to control the movements of the "world to be" are being fitted up', wrote the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* in 1919—a striking metaphor for the reconstruction of global order.[3] But what was to be the place of the African in this 'grand machinery'? The newspaper

[1] Crowder, *Colonial West Africa*, 18.
[2] Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 4.
[3] Marillia Van, "Random Jottings: The Pan-African Congress," *Sierra Leone Weekly News* [henceforth *SLWN*], June 21, 1919. See also Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*. For a definition of global order, see the Introduction.

reflected on the momentous changes brought about in West Africa by the First World War. 'The natives of West Africa have entered into the whirl of the wheels of the world's progress,' it remarked. 'They too are looking forward to the future'. By an 'increasing number amongst them it is believed that they also have a future and that there is no reason why they should not enjoy the world as other people.' And yet, it immediately added, 'the race barrier is being erected everywhere and it is becoming most evident that at no time has white prejudice against the African been more keen than at present.'[4]

This, in *précis*, came to represent the fundamental political problem for West Africans between the wars. A sense of increased contact with the outside world and of heightened possibility was experienced directly alongside an awareness of the severe limitations on West Africa's progression. Such limitations were embedded not only in the imperial political structures that continued to exert control over virtually the entire continent, but also, it came to be argued, in the role of *race* as a global distributor of sovereignty and power. The consequences of this analysis for West Africans under British colonial rule were momentous, reverberating through the decolonisation period to the Second World War and beyond.

In this chapter and the next, I examine a wide range of texts produced in British-controlled West Africa between the wars—mostly articles published in African-owned newspapers, as well as some books—with a view to understanding how West African analyses of the role played by race in global order came to shape understandings of the potential for freedom and advancement under imperial rule, with significant repercussions for the 'nationalisms' that emerged after the Second World War.

Historians have often observed the impact of imperial racism on West African politics of the interwar period. But their colony- or empire-specific foci, combined with

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[4] "Editorial," *SLWN*, March 8, 1919.

narratives that often reproduce empire-to-state teleologies,[5] have missed the exceptional globality of the ensuing political views. Too often, the precise content and argumentation of West African political thinking of this period has been brusquely passed over in an attempt to 'explain' political mobilisation in one area or the absence of it in another, all leading inexorably to post-war nationalism.[6] Instead of asking precisely how interwar politics fed into nationalism—or demarcating such politics into neatly bounded categories, like 'nationalist' versus 'self-interested'—I suggest that we take political expression across the interwar print cultures of West Africa seriously in its own right, as an important source of theory about international relations.

Such theory was produced by individuals and groups who, though largely elites within their colonies, were also subalternised by the imperial order. Questioning that global subalternity, they repeatedly came upon the idea of race as a globally ordering structure. That theory was often heuristic in nature, in the sense that it was largely unstructured, unsystematised, developed in situ for a political purpose, and relied upon forms of intuitive

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[5] These teleologies have been previously criticised, most prominently by Frederick Cooper. See Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*.

[6] A good example is the classic study by David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana* (1963). After arguing that '[t]he history of the Gold Coast can only be fully interpreted in the light of the rise of nationalism' (xv), Kimble admits that '[t]he basic difference of colour', though 'not initially regarded as of fundamental importance', did come to play a major role. But he puts this down to a misunderstanding ('false notions of superiority and inferiority—on both sides') and then adds it immediately to the tally of 'national feeling' (506), saying surprisingly little about the political content of Gold Coast writing about race. Later, he observes in relation to the influence of Garvey that: 'Gold Coast politicians were seeing themselves in some kind of global perspective' for the first time, pointing in particular to the spread of the *Negro World* across the Atlantic. (544) Yet the evident significance of this development is quickly waved away with the assertion that there was a 'relative lack of racial bitterness in the Gold Coast', perhaps because 'nationalist aspirations were so consistently expressed in the form of constitutional demands' (550). The central shift in global political thinking related to race in the interwar Gold Coast is therefore identified by Kimble, but evacuated of much of its significance and seen only in relation to 'national consciousness'.

reasoning;[7] it was, in this sense, what Meera Sabaratnam has called 'theory as a form of intellectual *strategy*'.[8]

The West African press, I suggest, adapted the technologies of imperial modernity into an oppositional 'practice of power'. Making use of creative methods of citation and interpretation in the context of flourishing literacies and print circuits, newspapers in British-controlled West Africa sought to develop theories about what was at the 'back of the white man's mind'. These theories were applied to the obstacles to West African progression, located within empires and states but also in the 'grand machinery' of the world that bound them together with other territories in an unequal arrangement.

Race's constitutive globality came to be understood by West African writers as connecting their experiences as subjects of the global racial order to those of others elsewhere—across the African diaspora and across the colonised world. Race made the West Africans it marked global subjects, just as a similar conception had delinked Garveyites from imperial citizenship and bound them to the 'colored world'. The racially-differential treatment meted out within empires and states, compounded by practices of bordering, discrimination, and segregation, increasingly revealed the promise of imperial colour-blindness to be vitiated by what Paul Gilroy has called 'the raciological ordering of the world'.[9] West African newspapers developed the concept of 'white prestige' to connect that racial order to the dual operation of a psychological and international material structure, the one dependent on the other, in a way that prefigured some of the canonical texts on race and colonialism that were published after the Second World War.

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[7] See Humphreys, "The Heuristic Application of Explanatory Theories in International Relations."
[8] Sabaratnam, 'IR in Dialogue … but Can We Change the Subjects?', 783.
[9] Gilroy, *After Empire*, 42. My idea of the global racial order differs, however, from Gilroy's. See the Introduction.

In their examinations of the colour bar, there was a near-unanimous understanding among West Africans of race not as a pre-social given, but as a materially-constituted social category which traced the global unevenness that had been generated by the historical expansion of Europe and imperial capitalism. 'White prestige', meanwhile, was understood as embedded in the colonial relations between Britain and its racialised subject peoples, an ethic of racial chauvinism that contradicted cosmopolitan and humanist imperial claims. 'Our white friends,' deplored the Ghanaian nationalist Kobina Sekyi, 'are whiter than they are human.'[10]

'A Restive People Needing a Firm Hand': Protest and Print in Interwar West Africa

How did the structures of colonial government in British West Africa come to be understood by many of those it ruled as the product of a global order centred on 'white prestige' and the global colour bar? Though West Africa is sometimes portrayed as a placid colonial region during this period, especially in comparison to India or parts of the Arab world, a closer examination shows a succession of significant ruptures during the 1920s and 1930s, out of which arose a new type of politics and new modes of expression. A history of international exchange and connection—for centuries closely tied to the history and vagaries of European imperialism and global capitalism, but also with strong connections to traditions of African resistance and rebellion in the West—made West Africa a key node of the Black Atlantic: a place not only of outward migration but also of return and rediscovery for those in the diaspora. The hopes of the Paris Peace Conference were successively let down over these decades: political shifts, most notably the implementation of forms of indirect rule, did not deliver freedom or self-determination,

[10] Kobina Sekyi, "Our White Friends," *Gold Coast Leader*, October 8, 1921.

instead highlighting the disparities in treatment between Africans and the subjects of the 'white empire'.

A multitude of ethnic, meta-ethnic and linguistic groups found themselves within the four colonies of British West Africa: the Yoruba (Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone); Igbo (Nigeria); Hausa (Nigeria, Ghana); Mandé (The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Ghana); Akan (Ghana); and Fulbe (the Gambia, Nigeria, Ghana) being the most prominent. At the same time, prominent black expatriate, migrant-descended, or 'returned' groups, such as the Krio (or Creole) in Sierra Leone and 'native foreigners' in Nigeria, played a major role in the life of each colony.[11]

From the colonial perspective, this period seemed to mark definitively 'the end of pacification and the beginning of the era of intensive administration' in the region: the quelling of First World War revolts (especially in the French-ruled parts of West Africa) gave way, over the 1920s and 1930s, to a period of imperial consolidation.[12] In British West Africa, these years saw the peak and decline of the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA), an elite-led movement that sought to champion West African interests to the colonial authorities, and the formation in Britain of the influential West African Students' Union (WASU) in 1925.[13] A series of 'youth movements' formed across the region's British colonies came to play leading roles in the post-war 'nationalist' mobilisations. In Nigeria, for example, the Lagos Youth Movement, which was founded in 1934, became the National Youth Movement and expanded into a nationwide political

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[11] Spitzer, *The Creoles of Sierra Leone*, 3–10. Okonkwo, 'A Jamaican Export to Nigeria! The Life of Amos Stanley Wynter Shackleford', 49. According to the census, a '"native foreigner" was "any person (not being a native of Nigeria) whose parents were members of a tribe or tribes indigenous to Nigeria and the descendants of such persons; and includes any person one of whose parents was a member of such tribe."' Ibid.

[12] Crowder, 'The 1918–1918 European War and West Africa', 484.

[13] The demands of the NCBWA, which was founded in March 1920 during a meeting in Accra, included a partly-elected Legislative Council in each colony, the establishment of a West African Court of Appeal and a West African University, and ending discrimination against Africans in the civil service. Wyse, *The Krio of Sierra Leone*, 68.

party.[14] At the same time, a constellation of English-language newspapers created by West Africa's anglophone elite entered a golden age in which both quality and influence expanded.

In the remainder of this section, I provide some background to the lives of those under British rule in West Africa in two key ways. First, I explore some of the legal aspects of British imperialism in West Africa, asking in particular why the spread of indirect rule did not lessen, but in some ways strengthened, the sense that colonial authority was premised upon the drawing of racial distinctions. Second, I examine, as a precursor to my study of the newspapers themselves, some of the sociological and political dimensions to the unparalleled flourishing of the English-language press of this period in West Africa.

Imperial Citizenship and Race

British and French imperialism had swept into the hinterlands during the 1880s and 1890s, formalising colonial authority. During that period, a number of developments made race more salient than it had previously been to many elites: the access of elite Africans to British society became more restricted; racial segregation in Lagos, Freetown, and Accra was instituted or became more entrenched; and British intellectuals and colonial officials expressed increasing disdain for 'educated Africans'.[15] Such developments had two significant effects. They generated 'a crisis of cultural self-confidence' among the Creole (or Krio) elites who had hitherto seen themselves as major players in the colonial mission;[16] and they stimulated a rise in forms of identity, dress, cultural expression and language that

[14] Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*. Concomitantly, Yoruba and Igbo influence displaced the prior dominance of 'native foreigners' in Lagos politics.
[15] See especially Ibid.; Bickford-Smith, 'The Betrayal of Creole Elites, 1880-1920'.
[16] Spitzer, *The Creoles of Sierra Leone*, 3.

sought to reconnect 'black Englishmen' with their African heritage.[17] By the First World War, significant attempts had already been made by this West African class to connect with other elites of the African diaspora in order to address their common problems.

There was no imperial citizenship for those under British rule: as a legal category, citizenship was only established with the British Nationality Act of 1948. But there was a distinction in the empire as a whole between 'non-natives' and 'natives'. The former group—predominantly British settlers—were accorded the benefits of British common law; the latter group were, by contrast, accountable to 'customary law'. This was 'a colonial form of *jus sanguinis* through racial descent,' as Christopher Lee has argued, which 'remained a crucial criterion for inclusion or exclusion from the category of "non-native," despite efforts to include a cultural component that ostensibly would deracinate this binary.'[18] For 'though British subjecthood was determined by *jus soli*, it is clear that the doctrine of *jus sanguinis* held a particular grip on access to certain benefits available to those with "non-native" status, advantages that were racially determined and ultimately constituted a more exclusive form of citizenship.'[19] This legal-racial distinction echoes James Belich's delineation of the starkly differential treatment received by Britain's 'black empire' and its 'white empire'.[20]

The interwar period in the British Empire entrenched this distinction by expanding indirect rule. As Mahmood Mamdani has argued, forms of indirect rule in colonial Africa can be understood as 'decentralized despotisms' for the ways in which, drawing upon colonial ethnography, they ossified dynamic cultural systems and subordinated them to

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[17] As Zachernuk writes: 'The vague, unformed sense of being "black Englishmen" was displaced by a sense of being black, of being part of the rising community of diasporan Africans.' Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*, 67.
[18] Lee, 'Jus Soli and Jus Sanguinis in the Colonies', 520.
[19] Ibid., 522.
[20] Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 115. Duncan Bell has also recently emphasised the importance of the settler imagination to British imperialism. Bell, *Reordering the World*.

imperial imperatives.[21] The expansion of 'customary' forms of rule built upon a binary categorisation between citizen and subject that was primarily based on race: the 'native' being subject to customary law not according to a history of adherence to such law, but as a result of ascribed membership to a racial category. Hence, 'alien (*racial*) domination was actually grounded in and mitigated through ethnically organized local power'.[22] In Northern Nigeria, indirect rule had created Native Authorities with sweeping powers, the expansion of which to Southern Nigeria provoked a major revolt in 1929. By the early interwar period, many 'chiefs' enjoyed more authority than in the precolonial period—though now as enforcers of British power.[23]

Most significantly, indirect rule did not seem to bring West Africans closer to full self-government.[24] In Nigeria, for example, just four Africans were elected as members of the Legislative Council in almost the entire interwar period (1923-46);[25] policy influence at the level of the central executive was not open to Africans before 1943; and Africans were also virtually excluded from the councils and boards which advised the colonial government on specific problems.[26] Such near-exclusion 'was an explicit policy of the British administration',[27] informed by a particular imperial conception of race and sovereignty. In the Gold Coast, a series of political reforms under Governors Gordon Guggisberg (1919–27), Sir Ransford Slater (1927–32) and Sir Shenton Thomas (1932–4) increasingly formalised the principle of indirect rule under the influence of rural

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[21] Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 37.
[22] Emphasis added. Ibid., 286.
[23] Crowder, *Colonial West Africa*, 199. David Harris explains that '[t]he important notion of reciprocity and the balancing of chiefly power through consultation remained, but were distorted by the presence of the new state and by the potential for chiefs to renege on some of their reciprocal responsibilities to their people if they had the backing of the central power'. Harris, *Sierra Leone*, 22.
[24] For a comparison of French and British systems of indirect rule, see Crowder, "Indirect rule—French and British Style."
[25] Coleman, *Nigeria*, 153.
[26] Ibid., 154.
[27] Ibid., 156.

anthropological fieldwork, introducing the 'Provincial Councils of Chiefs' and promising, as Slater put it, to 'make the native authority ... a living part of the machinery of government'.[28] Yet the major effect of this was, as Roger Gocking has written, to stimulate 'a competition for traditional office, which required new stratagems to obtain what in essence were the new spoils of office'[29] and, paradoxically, to destabilise traditional politics, leading to a major increase in, for example, destoolements of 'chiefs', as instantiated by the long-running Asamangkese dispute from 1922–37.[30]

Coastal elites across the region experienced these developments with consternation. Paradoxically, the putative devolution of imperial authority to the local level in West Africa often served to highlight the overarching structures of imperial and racial authority that contained and legitimated such authority. Indirect rule evidently relied upon the mobilisation of a particular view of 'native' temporality under a racialising impulse, as Mamdani has suggested. This was closely connected to discourses of 'real' versus 'performed' sovereignty: coastal elites came to be referred to as mockeries of Westerners whose derisory attempts to perform government only emphasised the importance of shifting to 'traditional' forms of rule. As Sir Hesketh Bell told a London audience in 1911, 'We want no violent changes, no transmogrification of the dignified and courteous Moslem into a trousered burlesque with a veneer of European civilisation. We do not want to replace a patriarchal and venerable system of government by a discontented and irresponsible democracy of semi-educated politicians.'[31] And Lugard, the architect of indirect rule, 'was influenced in his views by the exploitative and oligarchical character of Negro self-

[28] Gocking, *The History of Ghana*, 64. See also Frimpong, 'The Joint Provincial Council of Paramount Chiefs and the Politics of Independence, 1946-58'.
[29] Gocking, *The History of Ghana*, 70.
[30] Ibid., 62.
[31] Isichei, *History of Nigeria*, 393.

government in Haiti and Liberia'.[32] The language of burlesque, parody, ersatz and performance runs through imperial writing about black sovereignty throughout this period (and beyond), constituting a major discursive formation and battleground of the period—as we shall see in more detail in Chapter 6.

The 'Revolutionary Power' of West African Newspapers

Amid the political and economic shifts of the interwar period, a flourishing constellation of English-language newspapers was created by West Africa's anglophone elite.[33] This anglophone West African press was comparatively far more developed than that which existed in other parts of the continent south of the Sahara, particularly East Africa or the French-speaking territories (as I discuss in Chapters 4 and 5); at the same time, unlike in South Africa or various parts of East Africa, it was an African-owned press that was not tied to settler interests.[34] Constitutively international, it was rooted in the social composition of West Africa and its histories of migration, return, and colonialism, with multiple ties to the Black Atlantic and the African diaspora.

Key figures in the early West African press tended to have strong links to the diaspora, themselves émigrés in Africa or the immediate descendants of those who had

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[32] Coleman, *Nigeria*, 156.

[33] These bore close associations with political activity and with the construction of political parties. Herbert Macaulay, for example, founded Nigeria's first political party, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) in 1923, before launching Nigeria's first daily newspaper, the *Lagos Daily News*, two years later. See Peterson and Hunter, 'Print Culture in Colonial Africa', 17.

[34] In most of Africa, newspapers had emerged in the context of Christian missionary work. While the earliest West African newspaper was indeed a European enterprise (*The Royal Gazette and Sierra Leone Advertiser*, founded in Freetown in 1800), it was followed twenty-six years later by *The Liberia Herald*, a black-run newspaper that was taken up by E. W. Blyden, the seminal pan-African figure of his age. Liberian newspapers swept along the West African coast during the late nineteenth century. See, *inter alia*, Ainslie, *The Press in Africa: Communications Past and Present*; Edmonds, 'The Newspaper Press in BWA, 1918-1939'; Peterson, Hunter, and Newell, *African Print Cultures*.

arrived from the Americas.[35] The British Governor of Sierra Leone's complaint in 1857 about the editor of the newspaper *New Era*, William Drape—that he was 'an adventurer from the West Indies without position or substance'—was indicative of this trend.[36] But while connections to the diaspora remained strong and, in some cases, grew significantly, the interwar period saw the important emergence of editor-politicians who had gone the other way: of West African birth and heritage, but with experience of travel and study in the United States, Caribbean, or Europe. Foremost among these was Nnamdi Azikiwe, who revolutionised the West African popular press after living in the US. He would become the first President of independent Nigeria.[37]

Studies of the West African press have recognised the interwar period as a golden age, 'an exceptionally fertile period'[38] situated between the fledgling attempts of the late nineteenth century and the arrival of multinational corporate newspaper publishing in the 1950s.[39] The growth of formal literacy and primary school education precipitated the expansion of the West African reading public beyond the coastal intelligentsia, leading to 'an explosion of writing and print, produced and circulated not only by the highly educated and publicly visible figures that dominate political histories of Africa but also by non-elites or obscure aspirants to elite status,' as Karin Barber has written. 'Waged laborers, clerks, village headmasters, traders, and artisans read, wrote, and hoarded texts of many kinds.

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[35] To take just a handful of examples: Robert Campbell, founder of the *Anglo-African* (Jamaican-born, emigrated to Lagos); John Jackson, who set up *The Lagos Weekly Record* (born in Cape Palmas, Liberia, to an African American father); Herbert Macaulay of the *Lagos Daily News* (born in Lagos to 'recaptive' parents who had been freed from an illegal slaving ship); Charles Force, founder of the *Liberia Herald* (a formerly-enslaved African American); and William Drape, who founded Sierra Leone's *New Era* newspaper (Caribbean-born). See Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria, 1880-1937*; Ainslie, *The Press in Africa: Communications Past and Present*, 22–30; Okonkwo, 'A Jamaican Export to Nigeria! The Life of Amos Stanley Wynter Shackleford'.
[36] Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria, 1880-1937*, 14.
[37] See Azikiwe's *My Odyssey: An Autobiography*.
[38] Ainslie, *The Press in Africa: Communications Past and Present*, 30. See also Jones-Quartey, *A Summary History of the Ghana Press, 1822-1960*.
[39] Ironically, political independence 'diminished the number of African-controlled newspapers.' Ainslie, *The Press in Africa: Communications Past and Present*, 73.

Local, small-scale print production became a part of social life' and reading circles flourished, especially across coastal West Africa.[40] Such newspapers were also confrontational and political. Sidney de la Rue, an American official travelling to Liberia, compared Freetown unfavourably to Dakar in a book he published in 1930:

> I was told by ships' officers that not until Freetown is reached do they have difficulties with Africans. Here begins the native anti-white newspapers freely disseminating anti-British propaganda; and the assertion of superiority of the half-educated native with a cultivated appetite and a little earning capacity. Here is possibly a restive people needing a firm hand. No long do you find the type of African who looks you in the face and says, "Je suis Français." Never do these people claim to be British.[41]

My focus here is on English-language newspapers, but the period also saw a rise in production in indigenous languages: five Yoruba-language papers, for example, were established in Lagos in the 1920s.[42]

This does not mean newspaper production took place within a permissive environment. Nnamdi Azikiwe's report of what he had been told upon his decision in the early 1930s to become a newspaper editor—'to remember that in West Africa an editor had only one foot in his office; his other foot was always in prison'—was scarcely an exaggeration, given the familiarity of West African editors with prison cells.[43] Yet journalists and editors managed to maintain a robustly critical press despite such constraints. Notwithstanding the repressive legislation in Nigeria, for example, Fred Omu has noted that Governor 'Lugard complained about the liberty of the Nigerian press in a

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[40] Barber, *Africa's Hidden Histories*. See also: Ainslie, *The Press in Africa: Communications Past and Present*, 350; Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria, 1880-1937*; Barton, *The Press of Africa*.
[41] De La Rue, *The Land of the Pepper Bird*, 34.
[42] Jones, 'The Sociability of Print: 1920s and 1930s Lagos Newspaper Travel Writing', 105. See also Karin Barber's chapter on Yoruba newspapers in the same volume.
[43] Azikiwe, *My Odyssey: An Autobiography*, 177. On press repression Nigeria, see Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria, 1880-1937*. On elsewhere in West Africa, see Peterson and Hunter, "Print Culture in Colonial Africa," nn. 88–90; and Barton, *The Press of Africa*.

way which suggested that he was totally powerless to deal with it.'[44] West African editors became expert at pushing the limits of the law, framing grievances within explicit declarations of loyalty to the British Empire.

African newspapers had unique effects. As Derek Peterson and Emma Hunter have recently explained in their landmark collection on African print cultures: 'In no other part of the world was population history more fluid; and in no other part of the world were newspapers more essential in the constitution of political communities.' The technology of print 'offered African political organizers and culture brokers a powerful tool for self-constitution, opening up channels of communication that had not previously existed'. And the 'convergence of language standardization and print technology allowed for the fast expansion of print vernaculars and the cultivation of readerships that recognized a particular language as their own cultural property. That is why newspapers were so exciting to their readers. They had the revolutionary power to create solidarities and convene communities.'[45] Such newspapers 'helped to constitute the Black Atlantic as an arena of discourse and as a platform of action.'[46]

* * *

I have discussed here the political, economic, legal and textual environment of interwar West Africa because it forms the necessary backdrop for the political views that emerged in the writing of the region. In the remainder of this chapter, I examine newspapers and books across interwar British West Africa for the political arguments and the theories they developed in relation to global order and the situating of West African politics in relation

[44] Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria, 1880-1937*, 188.
[45] Peterson and Hunter, 'Print Culture in Colonial Africa', 6.
[46] Ibid., 25.

to that order.[47] We find in West African writing of this period (as elsewhere in the Black Atlantic) the interpenetration of nominally contradictory conceptions of political community—regional, national, imperial, global, proto-Third Worldist—which are best understood, I suggest, not as internally-coherent ideologies but within a broader and fundamentally oppositional reading of the global racial order. I explore the textual mechanisms by which such theories were developed, before examining in some detail two important concepts— 'white prestige' and the global colour bar—that came to connect the experiences of West Africans to those of others and to global order as a whole.

'The Back of the White Man's Mind'

As the First World War drew to a close, some West African journalists expressed a sense of foreboding about the world order being constructed. 'While West Africa is asleep dreaming of sweet after-war Imperial possibilities,' an editorial *Gold Coast Leader* explained, 'the architects of her fortunes in far-away Europe are busy, planning to end all her hopes in a cataclysm of international whirlpool.'[48] Three months later, 'A Native of Aneho' wrote in the same newspaper that while the 'children of Africa' were 'looking askance to democratic Europe and inquiring what would be their lot in the reconstruction that is to take place in the world', they had received 'no promise … as to the future of the

[47] The newspapers I examine in this chapter are the *Gold Coast Leader*, the *Gold Coast Spectator*, the *Gold Coast Nation*, the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, the *African Morning Post*, the *West African Pilot* and the *Comet*. The choice aims to reflect the regional breadth of the press in British West Africa; it is concentrated, therefore, on the main coastal cities of Freetown, Accra, Cape Coast and Lagos, which continued to dominate newspaper production throughout this period. Most of these newspapers were weeklies. The political tenor of these newspapers is also largely representative of the whole; I did not include the *Nigerian Pioneer*, for example, which was a conservative outlier. (See Edmonds, 'The Newspaper Press in BWA, 1918-1939', 11.) I have also consulted a range of other newspapers—including the *Gold Coast Independent*, *Gold Coast Times* and *Vox Populi*—which are not included for reasons of space.

[48] "Editorial Notes," *Gold Coast Leader* [henceforth: *GCL*], February 9–23, 1918.

African states brought under European rule.'[49] Such warnings were prescient: West African hopes would be repeatedly dashed over the supervening decades.

In this section, I explore how—through acts of textual discovery, citation, recontextualisation and repurposing—the West African press systematically related this interwar 'cataclysm' to the operation of a global order shaped and defined by race. As I have argued in relation to other Black Atlantic writing of this period, the abilities of West African newspapers to access, report, and make use of metropolitan texts constituted an important 'practice of power',[50] conceptualising the existing global order and proposing alternatives to it. That practice was embedded within the print cultures that emerged in the political and economic ferment of interwar West Africa and across the Black Atlantic. The following sections discuss some of the notable elements of this theory. I also make some comments about the importance of the discursive temporality contained in the drawing of connections between racialising practices in multiple locations. By linking together what the *Gold Coast Leader* called 'the conditions of all the coloured races within Empire', West African writers emphasised the presentness of the global racial order, thereby refuting the multiple temporalities of European 'scientific' racism and the colonial project as a whole.

Text and Theory

In the early post-war years, West African newspapers printed persistent criticisms of racism in the British Empire. While African troops had played a significant role in both European and African theatres during the war, hopes that such support might transform metropolitan attitudes received an early blow with the outbreak of 'race riots' in Britain in 1919, during which workers (particularly seamen) of colour and their families were violently attacked.

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[49] "The Future Reconstruction of the World, by A Native of Aneho," *GCL*, May 4-25, 1918.
[50] Hurrell, *On Global Order*, 21.

There were five fatalities.[51] Still wary of wartime censorship, the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* reported on these paraliptically: 'We refuse to publish communications we have received of the doings that are going forward against the black race in some parts of England because we do not wish to stir West Africa into acts of disloyalty,' they wrote, reminding Britain of the suffering Africans had endured for it during the war.[52]

The shrewd framing of this report points to the significant ways in which many post-war critiques of British racism in the West African press derived from textual, as well as political, sources, and were therefore enabled and facilitated through the technologies of textual transmission. As an article in the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* put it the same year, the African's view of the world was derived from 'what we have read from the pen of European writers, what we heard from their lips, and what we have seen them do amongst us.'[53] Lineages of citation in West African newspapers are revealing, pointing to an intertextual print world in which events in Freetown, Accra or Lagos could be understood in relation to discourses promulgated in London, Manchester or New York. An article from the London *Daily Telegraph* was cited, for example, in *The Gold Coast Leader* in 1923. It demonstrated, the *Leader* argued, that 'the problem of the relations between black and white' was 'now engaging the attention of leading publicists in the Empire.' This was appropriate, they added, 'for the British Empire holds the largest proportion of the coloured races and unless sane thinking on the subject is indulged in by the white element in it the continual friction between black and white will grow in intensity and will certainly not make for the stability of the Empire.'[54]

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[51] See Jenkinson, *Black 1919*. A similar series of attacks against African Americans took place the same year, as discussed in Chapter 2.
[52] "The Peace Treaty and the King's Message," *SLWN*, June 21, 1919.
[53] "The African and the League Mandate," *SLWN*, October 18, 1919.
[54] "Crown Colony Government Must Go," *GCL*, August 5, 1919.

One instructive example of this textual transmission is an article in the British *Sunday Chronicle*, on the subject of the 'race riots' in Liverpool and Cardiff in 1919.[55] Titled 'The Black Menace: Why the Colour Line Must be Clearly Drawn', the article was a vitriolic and deeply racist diatribe. The 'race riots', it argued, were due to sexual relationships and marriages between 'blacks' and white women in these British port cities. Such relationships had rightly provoked the fury of white men returning from the war. The emancipationist movement led by William Wilberforce had given the misleading impression that black and white men could be brothers. But this ignored the 'vast gulf between the black and the white races', as evidenced by 'the negro's inborn and indescribable savagery' and 'his unspeakable bestiality where women are concerned.' Such was the reason for the strict segregation one observed in South Africa and elsewhere. It was '*one of Nature's most necessary and rigid laws that the black must be subservient to the white, if the lives of white men and the honour of white women are the be secure'*.[56] The writer continued:

> No power on earth can really civilise the negro. The race, by a freak of Nature, may produce a Booker Washington once in a century, but it cannot produce a really civilised negro community. The black republic of Liberia is conclusive proof of that impossibility ... The negro is a savage, and no amount of education will ever make him anything else, and if he is not allowed to become a danger to the White peoples of the world, he must be treated as a savage, and kept in a state of subjection.

The article did not go unnoticed in West Africa. Extracts from it were printed, disapprovingly, in the *Gold Coast Leader* on August 16. Two months later, they found their way from that newspaper into an editorial in the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, which

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[55] A. E. G., "The Black Menace: Why the Colour Line Must be Clearly Drawn," June 15, 1919. The *Sunday Chronicle* was founded in Manchester by Edward Hulton in 1885. Hulton built the country's largest newspaper empire outside Fleet Street, which was later acquired by Lords Beaverbrook and Rothermere of the *Express* and *Mail*. See Bourne, *Lords of Fleet Street*, 97.
[56] Emphasis in original.

commented: '[f]rom British West Africa, from America, from Nigeria and from The Western Africa echoes of the cry of oppression and injustice, of race and colour prejudice, are dinning the ear.'[57] For both West African newspapers, then, quotations from the *Sunday Chronicle* provided evidence of harshly racist attitudes in the metropole that helped to illuminate colonial policy in Africa.

What is especially significant about these chains of intertextual transmission is not simply that ideas were carried wholesale from one place to another, but that they 'travelled' from metropole to colony in an act of deliberate discovery, citation, and interpretation, which allowed anti-African sentiment in London to be understood as a microcosm of an interlocking global order, rather than simply as an instance of individual prejudice. A particularly pertinent example of such transmission and its incorporation into a heuristic international theory is an article titled 'The Back of the White Man's Mind', published in the *Gold Coast Leader* on March 19, 1921, which merits lengthy citation:

> The question then of what is at the back of the white man's mind, as regards the future of the black man's status in the British Empire, can be studied in the light of the white man's views on certain problems which affect our race as also by his very actions towards us.
>
> We were reading the other day an interesting article in the London "Illustrated Sunday Herald", written by one of those stalwart Britons, the counterpart of whose mentality and whole moral outlook is generally represented by most of the men who at present hold sway for Great Britain in West Africa. The text of the article, which is very characteristic, is "If the white races of the earth are to retain their white supremacy the colour-bar must be rigidly observed".
>
> We have often observed in these columns that the Englishman is on the Coast primarily to promote British trade and thereby to add to the wealth of Britain, and that although there has been a change in name the present Government is the lineal descendant of the administration under the "Committee of Merchants" whose principles still dictate its policy. When the British Government in Africa talks of "development", though it must be conceded that the "development" in its incidence benefits the aboriginal Natives, such "developments" aim chiefly at augmenting British trade. That

[57] "Can England With Her Present Policy in Ruling the Nations Be Destined to be the Last of the Ruling Nations?" *SLWN*, October 11, 1919.

> is the reason why we hear so much of railways and roads and so less of such purely social reforms …
>
> Now the maintenance of the supremacy of one race connotes the keeping down simultaneously of a servant race in a position to minister to the wants of the supreme race, and here we have in true perspective the key to British policy in Africa on the authority of a representative Englishman. We wish our readers to mark this observation carefully and to study it in connection with the conditions of all the coloured races within Empire …
>
> If you study British Colonial constitutions you will observe that whereas all the Dependencies peopled by white races have local autonomy, and are for all practical purposes independent states, the Dependencies inhabited by coloured races, including even India with her ancient civilisation, are placed under a system of autocratic rule having all the inherent qualities of despotism. This disparity is based on the policy of the maintenance of the supremacy of the white races. In Canada or Australia, for instance … there is no danger of the supremacy of the white man being disturbed. Hence they are allowed to govern themselves in their own way. But in West Africa, where black and white alike hold offices under the Crown, it is recognised by the English that unless a system of Government is enforced under which even a Blyden or a Booker Washington must have to hold a subordinate position under a white man, the supremacy of the white race would be seriously disturbed. Hence the repressive Crown Colony system.[58]

This extract demonstrates the ways in which a citation from the metropole could be repurposed into an expansive theory of the role played by race in imperialism. The result of the African newspaper's extrapolation of the short *Illustrated Sunday Herald* quotation was a remarkably uncompromising view of British colonialism, moving from the notion of an essentially economic basis to colonialism to the developmentalist ideology designed to dissemble such exploitation, and from these observations in a specifically West African context to a an empire-wide view that looked at all its 'coloured races' vis-à-vis its subjects designated as white. The theory was developed, then, through a reading of metropolitan texts alongside an interpretation of the racially-discriminative treatment evident across the British empire: the one informed the other.

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[58] "The Back of the White Man's Mind," *GCL*, March 19, 1921.

An empire-wide view was essential in assembling criticisms of British imperialism in West Africa into a theory of imperial differentiation. It was, as the *Gold Coast Leader* argued in 1919, the 'bedrock of the whole matter', because 'the white races within the British Empire are regarded as the "children" who must have all that they ask for, while the coloured races are merely regarded as—well, I had almost said—the under-dogs who must be satisfied with the crumbs and such other trifles that fall from the table. These are not palatable truths, but they will out.'[59] Differentiation, ordering, and exclusion predicated on race were increasingly understood as constitutive of the British empire, given the ways in which British imperial transnationalism so insistently differentiated between the empire's 'Anglo' and non-white subjects.

This was a strikingly different view of the empire to those that had typically been evinced by coastal elites decades earlier. What Christopher Lee has called 'a colonial form of *jus sanguinis* through racial descent' was identified by West Africans and, lifted out of its specific imperial context, applied to a global reading of race, illuminating both British and global iniquities being visited upon continental and diasporic Africans. We might consider this view a precursor of the body of international theory and law that has, over recent decades, provided ample evidence for the bifurcation of world order in terms of 'civilised' and 'uncivilised'—categories that became embedded in international law, draining sovereignty from the extra-European world and mobilising race as their discursive legitimation to produce what Anthony Anghie has called the 'racialization of law', notwithstanding the putative conjoining of territories across this divide within empires.[60]

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[59] "Scrutineer," *GCL*, July 26, 1919.
[60] Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law*, 113. See Keene, *Beyond the Anarchical Society*; Gruffydd Jones, 'Race in the Ontology of International Order'; Koskenniemi, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations the Rise and Fall of International Law, 1870-1960*.

Knowing what was at 'the back of the white man's mind' would remain a key concern for the West African press throughout the interwar period. In *The Comet*, for example—based in Lagos and edited by the same Dusé Mohamed Ali who had trained Marcus Garvey—'That Aryan Bogey' was derided;[61] the 'average anthropologist' was ridiculed as 'a highly amusing personage' who 'possesses such extraordinary ideas about the origin and grouping of the species that are mainly speculative and bear no relation whatever to fact';[62] 'the senseless vapourings of anthropologists' were dismissed;[63] and the 'racial superiority mongers' were attacked.[64] Quoting a racist section of Gustave Ducoudray's *Histoire Sommaire de la Civilisation*, the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* remarked that '[w]hen our people read statements of this kind they should remember that they are down at the very sources where the relationship between white and black is being regulated by the white man.' The next war, they predicted, would be 'for the emancipation of the Negro race: from European philosophizings about the Negro, and from the determination to poison Negro consciousness at the source.'[65]

Elsewhere, the newspaper lamented 'the epithets with which we, coloured people, are lashed', pointing to an increase of 'Negrophobia', which meant that some British people were absolutely determined to see Africans an inferior. 'They still have it that we are obscure amongst the nations of the earth, savage in our manners, debased in our morals and degraded in our understandings,' wrote J. C. Zizer in the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*.[66] For

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[61] "That Aryan Bogey," *The Comet*, August 11, 1934.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Dusé Mohamed Ali, "About it and About—That Eternal Colour Question," *The Comet*, September 28, 1935.
[64] Dusé Mohamed Ali, "About it and About— That Eternal Race Puzzle," *The Comet*, October 31, 1936.
[65] "The Pan-African Congress in Paris," *SLWN*, June 14, 1919.
[66] J. C. Zizer, "The Colour Bar," *SLWN*, April 5, 1919. Zizer is an important figure who wrote a number of the articles I cite in this chapter from the *SLWN*, though he has been surprisingly understudied given his prominence at the time. Wyse calls him 'an agitator of international repute in the 1920s' and 'one of the most extreme of the Colony activists'. He was a member of the NCBWA and later became a leading figure in the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP)

J. E. Casely Hayford, the Ghanaian lawyer, editor and founder of the National Congress of British West Africa, speaking in 1929, this meant that 'while propagandists of another race are spreading abroad doctrines which may submerge our continent and make the black man perpetually a hewer of wood and drawer of water, it will be criminal for us to remain silent, and to present that these matters do not concern us.'[67]

These acts of deliberate citation, transmission, and interpretation were, I am arguing, important elements of a oppositional 'practice of power', which positioned the situation of West Africans under British rule during the interwar period within a global order defined by a racialised core and periphery. As well as its particular citational qualities, this discursive practice involved an important temporal element. The synchronic drawing of connections between multiple locations, collating racialising practices into a heuristic theory of global white power, challenged what Kimberley Hutchings has called colonialism's pedagogic temporality—in which Europe was bequeathed a privileged spatio-temporal position while the extra-European world was seen as ossified, impossibly backward, corrupted or diseased.[68] By linking together 'the conditions of all the coloured races within Empire' with the exercise of imperial racialisation, the *Gold Coast Leader* rejected the West/non-West temporal division, arguing that both were intrinsically connected through the domination of one over the other. Scientific racism was therefore understood not only as affecting West Africa, but as providing legitimation for a global colour bar that stretched from Takoradi to Tallahassee.

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and editor of *West African Nationhood* (Lagos). See Wyse, *H. C. Bankole-Bright and Politics in Colonial Sierra Leone, 1919-1958*, 147; Coleman, *Nigeria*, 211.

[67] Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 550.

[68] Hutchings, *Time and World Politics*, 7.

The Fetters of the Colour-Bar

West African newspapers—like their counterparts elsewhere across the Black Atlantic—came to discuss the question of the global 'colour bar' in the context of the lack of African advancement under imperial rule and the denial of African sovereignty. In this discussion, the peculiar globality of the operation of race could be understood by West African writers as drawing a connection between their own experiences and those of others, across the African diaspora and across the 'coloured world' more broadly. This is a process we have already seen at work in the *Negro World* in Chapter 1; as with that newspaper, it provides a largely-overlooked instance of 'coloured cosmopolitanism' in Black Atlantic print cultures.

In the West African press, connections were drawn between the treatment of African Americans and Africans living under white rule. The 'amelioration of Africans from the fetters of the "Colour-Bar"' was surely 'an item of sufficient importance to engage the attention of the Peace Conference', argued J. C. Zizer in the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*. '[T]he deplorable condition of Africans should attract the attention of their Rulers,' not least since 'the "Jim-Crow" system in America has unfortunately found an outlet in British Africa' through the 'existing policy on the Coast', where the peoples 'live at the mercy of Governors' whose '[c]ouncils can be a formidable machinery in perverting English Justice into instruments of terror and torment'. Race barriers in the civil service meanwhile made a mockery of the ideas of British justice and fairplay. It was essential, Zizer argued, that the post-war repartition of Africa avoided 'the flagrant injustices to the native races which characterized the scramble and the treaties of 1885-98'.[69]

[69] J. C. Zizer, "Colonial Reconstruction," *SLWN*, April 12, 1919. Emphasis in original.

As Zizer's article indicates, racism was increasingly connected in the West African press to the spread of a global 'colour bar', which was rooted in global inequality and its attendant pan-national and racial affinities. In 1921, the *Gold Coast Leader* published a searing attack on 'colour prejudice' in the British Empire, a problem it saw as specific to the 'Anglo-Saxon'. Warning that 'Negrophobia engenders Anglophobia', the newspaper argued that the 'attitude of the white element in the British Empire towards the coloured races' was 'fast creating a feeling of resentment in the breasts of the latter'. It attacked, in particular, a section of the British press for encouraging racist attitudes. If this did not change, cautioned the newspaper, 'we shall in the very near future experience a war of mutual animosity'.[70] Seventeen years later, the situation was yet more 'strained', reported the *West African Pilot*. For if 'in the distant past Colonial Powers did not have any reason to be afraid of black men', one now found 'harsh laws being passed against them to cripple them both economically and politically'; 'censorship to suppress reliable news'; 'immigration laws, passports and visas specially designed to keep out the so-called radical elements'; and 'studied failure on the part of European Government Officials to appoint competent Natives'—not to mention Italy's 'most cowardly and disgraceful role in Ethiopia', which 'should put justice, Christianity and the white man to irreparable shame.'[71]

Often given its American label 'Jim Crow', the global colour bar was alarmingly immune to reason, the West African press observed, because it was rooted in the material facts of global production, distribution, and power. Though the 'explosion of this theory' of scientific racism had 'been so positively evinced, yet there spring up other and more dastardly defamations,' exclaimed the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, 'calculated and engineered to hamper the progress of Africans whilst exploiting the natural wealth of

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[70] "Editorial Notes," *GCL*, March 19, 1921.
[71] Everett F. S. Davies, "The Emotion Called Fear," *West African Pilot*, July 18, 1938.

Africa.'[72] Jim Crow was transnational: West African newspapers after the First World War increasingly connected its operation in the US South with its emergence elsewhere. These newspapers had reported ongoing attacks on African Americans, such as the lynching of Jesse Washington in 1916, even under wartime censorship.[73] A year after the end of the war, the *Gold Coast Leader* reported that 'lynching, Jim Crowism and all the other diabolical practices of the pre-war days continue with great ferocity'. It was 'quite plain that the American colour question may become the vital problem of Imperial Britain' because 'it affects by reaction millions of blacks in the British Empire.'[74] The '"Jim-Crow" system in America has unfortunately found an outlet in British Africa,' reported the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* in 1919.[75] Commenting on racism in London, the Lagos-based *Comet* wrote in 1934 that 'it looks as though that Mason-Dixon line goes right across the Atlantic and puts London in the Jim Crow law territory.'[76]

These observations found systematic exposition in J. W. de Graft-Johnson's book *Towards Nationhood in West Africa: Thoughts of Young Africa Addressed to Young Britain,* which was published by Frank Cass in London in 1928.[77] This book has been described, alongside Lapido Solanke's *United West Africa at the Bar of the Family of Nations*, published in 1927 (which I discuss in the following chapter), as West Africa's 'first major literary works of a nationalist character to appear since Blyden's writing in the late nineteenth century.'[78] De Graft-Johnson's book was premised upon the intertextual

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[72] J. C. Zizer, "The Destiny of Africans in the Hands of Africans," *SLWN*, May 10, 1919.
[73] "'The Waco Horror," *Gold Coast Nation*, October 5, 1916; "Lynching Negroes in America," *Gold Coast Nation*, June 29, 1916.
[74] "Signs of the Times," *GCL*, Jan 3–10, 1920.
[75] J. C. Zizer, "Colonial Reconstruction," *SLWN*, April 12, 1919.
[76] "London Colour Bar," *The Comet*, March 3, 1934.
[77] Graft-Johnson had been born in 1893 to a privileged Fante family in Cape Cost, modern-day Ghana. He studied law in Britain after graduating from mission schools and was part of the group that organised the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) in 1947. See Simms, 'Western Christianity'.
[78] Coleman, *Nigeria*, 250.

theorisation that I have been describing here. He observed the rise in British racism, particularly that which was directed towards 'educated Africans'—a term he criticised—that had been expressed in 'scathing diatribes' published 'to discredit the educated African in the eyes of the world'.[79] De Graft-Johnson positioned such attacks within a broader constellation of writing about race and imperialism in Europe and the US. He evinced a fundamentally material basis for colonialism, citing approvingly General von Putt Kamer's statement that '[t]he entire colonial policy is based upon the principle of Europeans depriving the inferior natives in foreign lands' by 'force of their land and maintaining our position there by force'.[80]

But perhaps the most telling element of De Graft-Johnson's intertextuality was his use of Lothrop Stoddard. Stoddard's book about the preservation of global white supremacy *The Rising Tide of Color*, had been influential among black nationalists in the US, as we have seen in Chapter 1. For De Graft-Johnson, Stoddard was a figure whose encouragement of 'a crusade against coloured ascendency'[81] reflected a resilient element of current imperial policy:

> The clash of colour appears to a number of the Caucasian element as a menace to the peace of the world. Rightly or wrongly they are apprehensive that with the awakening of coloured peoples from the position of subject races to national consciousness, white domination is everywhere to be assailed in the future. Some have started preaching that civilisation is threatened, that the permanent stability of white institutions is undermined, and that white peoples should undertake a crusade … To the seers among them this era in world history is the twilight of their race and they have sounded a warning to their people … It is in order to preserve this disequilibrium in human destinies that the white race is faced with the tremendous problem and difficulty of the rising racial awareness of coloured peoples … they opine that the way to stem the tide of Coloured ingress is to plead for inter-racial harmony and peace. But how can peace result in a world dizzied in the whirlpool of selfishness,

[79] De Graft-Johnson, *Towards Nationhood in West Africa*, 45.
[80] Ibid., 49.
[81] Ibid., 48.

> hypocrisy and cant …? Can this tilted balance be held in place by force of arms and oppression?[82]

A reading of De Graft-Johnson's work shows a complex interpenetration of the local with the regional and global, notwithstanding the book's label as a classically 'nationalist' text. Events in the Gold Coast and across West Africa—constitutional reform in the Gold Coast, legislative elections, and so on—were understood by De Graft-Johnson as tied to those elsewhere through the structuring force of global core-periphery inequality and the ideational adhesive of 'white domination' that bound together the core of the resulting order. That ideology meant that Britain had shown little 'gratitude,' he wrote, in an evocative image, 'for those who have toiled through long darkness in the lowly "caverns" of the earth to minister to' its desires 'under the compelling sting of the lash'.[83] Just as the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, *Gold Coast Leader*, and other newspapers had creatively cited white supremacist texts to develop their own lines of argument about the essentially racialising nature of colonialism, so did De Graft-Johnson draw upon Stoddard, alongside other elegists to whiteness like Maurice Muret, to expose the workings of the grand machinery of the world. His use of *The Rising Tide of Color* demonstrates how the oppositional appropriation of Stoddard was not only a strategy of some African Americans, but had also spread across the Atlantic to West Africa.[84] (We shall see in Chapter 5 that a reading of Stoddard's work also spread to black activists in France.)

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[82] Ibid. For De Graft-Johnson the answer was in the negative: what he elegantly called the 'disequilibrium in human destinies' could not, in his opinion, be sustained by 'force of arms' indefinitely.

[83] De Graft-Johnson, *Towards Nationhood in West Africa*, 73.

[84] Even where Stoddard was not directly invoked, the rhetoric could sound strikingly similar. The *Sierra Leone Weekly News* remarked, for example, the same year that *The Rising Tide of Color* was published, that 'there are signs all over the globe that the coloured races are asking themselves why a small fraction of the Earth's population should be allowed to lord it over them.' "Great Negro Offshoot from the European War," *SLWN*, March 18, 1922.

In this section, I have outlined the ways in which West African writing came to understand and theorise the question of a global 'colour bar' in the context of the lack of West African advancement under imperial rule. Race's constitutive globality was understood by West African writers as connecting their own experience within the British Empire, as the subjects of both metropolitan derision and a colour bar, to the experiences of African Americans under Jim Crow and to 'the racial awareness of coloured peoples' more broadly. The colour bar itself, however, could not be understood without a deeper excavation of its ideational binding agent in the global core. West African writers therefore turned to an analysis of whiteness.

White Prestige

I have been describing in this chapter the mechanisms by which West Africans under British rule during the interwar period understood their collective situation as related to the operation of a global racial order that reflected global political and economic inequality. The final element I wish to discuss is the theorisation of whiteness and the idea of 'white prestige' that spread across West Africa during this period. The latter concept predated the 1920s. Advocating the creation of 'Coloured armies' to assist with the war effort, the *Gold Coast Nation* exclaimed in 1916 that '[t]he real difficulty is White prestige—the most damnable doctrine in the Empire.'[85] Six years later, the same newspaper would compare 'white prestige' to 'a fetish, blind idol with clay feet' in an article that condemned the most recent intensification of British racism in the region.[86]

I want to consider here a set of discussions of white prestige in the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, before moving on to assess writing on the same topic by those elsewhere in

[85] "A Coloured Army," *Gold Coast Nation*, October 19, 1916.
[86] "Editorial Notes," *GCL*, November 18, 1922.

West Africa. Writing at the close of the First World War, in 1919, the Freetown-based newspaper had argued that:

> the great majority of the blacks no longer admire some of the ways of and actions of the white man. Governors though they are; dominant as a race; and priding themselves as being depositories of great ideas … these lords of the lower world might, if they chose to see, [realise] that they are no longer trusted, no longer believed in, no longer loved as before, and that loyalty in Africans tend more and more to be merely abstract, and not real, genuine, felt, as the case undoubtedly was in years gone.'[87]

In 1929, the victory of General Hertzog in the South African general election led the newspaper to expand upon the meaning of 'white prestige'. In an editorial on July 20, it argued that 'the greatest hindrance to the solution of the problem' in South Africa was 'the nightmare of the apprehension of the end of the existence of what has become known as white prestige. It is the fear that if the Africans are granted equal political rights and privileges, they will far outnumber the Europeans, and will in time, rule them.' This 'fallacious' argument was a dangerous one, because 'the adoption of any system of political segregation will have a reacting effect in the whole of the Continent. It would certainly awaken race-consciousness in the African, but it might be carried to an unreasonable extent and might in time out-distance Garveyism.' The only solution was an Africa for both races, in which the European 'must recognise the natural necessity for the presence of the African-owners of the country.'[88]

For the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, 'white prestige' therefore referred to the determination to retain privileges for the global minority racialised as white in political structures that brought that minority together with others, racialised as non-white, in an unequal political arrangement. The newspaper argued that psychological subjugation was

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[87] "The African and the League Mandate," *SLWN*, Oct 18, 1919.
[88] "The Racial Question in Africa," *SLWN*, July 20, 1929.

at work in white prestige, replacing 'physical slavery' with 'mental slavery', denying 'the principle of "equal rights for all civilised man"' and imposing 'a colour bar or race disability'—all 'cause for just complaint against a most flagrant injustice.'[89] Racially-discriminative policies throughout Africa was connected across imperial borders. 'The Europeans as a race, are doing all they can in South East and West Africa to keep the black man down'.[90] They were creating 'artificial barriers' for the African for their own convenience'.[91] So too were connections made between instances of colonial brutality. 'White folk are inclined to imagine they are the only folk who really count in this world. They have grown accustomed to treat the rest of mankind with contempt and arrogance and, on occasion with heartless cruelty, of, say, the Amritsar affair.'[92]

Britain was, the newspaper explained in an article in April 1931, '[o]bsessed with the idea of white prestige':

> England has, since the past—Victorian era, taken her inspiration from the United States of America and based her principle of government on the no less unwise than un-christian dogma of "keeping" the "nigger" down. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, with his imperialistic notion of colonising the "vast open spaces" of Africa and exploiting their great resources for the sole benefit of the white man, became the chief apostle of this dangerous school of thought. The white peoples of the Empire were, in effect, to show a united front in an endeavour to make a hewer of wood and a drawer of water of the black man and keep him in his place.

The word "Prestige"' had, the newspaper explained in 1933, 'been responsible for many strokes of mis-rule and flagitious conduct in such spheres':

> The deeds of wrong and injustice perpetrated in such centres where treasures lie buried of the earth … [and where] Europeans or, to use a more comprehensive word, the white man, [are brought] in contact with

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[89] "A Suicidal Policy," *SLWN*, August 25, 1928.
[90] "Keeping the Black Man Down," *SLWN*, January 17, 1931.
[91] "The Racial Question in Africa," *SLWN*, July 20, 1929.
[92] "Great Negro Offshoot from the European War," March 18, 1922.

> the black, particularly that section required in the performance of unskilled labour, may never be fully known; but there is no doubt that very often such ghastly deeds are perpetrated which would shame the very name Civilisation, under whose banner such monsters claim the right to the exercise of control they have so infamously been misused. On the other hand, the slave spirit is easily copied by the very slaves themselves.[93]

Commenting on South Africa two weeks later, the newspaper argued it was a 'foregone conclusion to every African student of world events' that the 'trend' of such events was 'to make the world safe, not "for democracy," as they used to say during the War, but for white prestige.'[94]

These examinations of white prestige were multifaceted. They drew together the material and psychological elements of race and racialisation in ways that prefigured the later work of those like Frantz Fanon, Ashis Nandy, and Albert Memmi; at the same time, with their insistence on the word 'prestige', they also rooted themselves in a constitutively *international* frame of reference, focused on ideas of power and hegemony (I discuss this element in more detail at the end of this section.) These elements were combined into a complex interpretation of the global racial order. On the one hand, white prestige referred to a fragile construction depending fundamentally on a kind of mysticism that was, argued the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, quickly fading among Africans. The language in which such diminishment was characterised—the ebbing of loyalty to the 'lords of the lower world'—drew upon the phraseology of the New Testament to connote the demystification of white superiority as a quasi-religious experience.[95] Yet this retreat did not necessarily

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[93] "The William Wilberforce Centenary," *SLWN*, September 16,1933.
[94] "Rambling Talks," *SLWN*, September 30, 1933.
[95] The phrase evokes a gloss to Colossians 2:3 in a New Testament translation of 1812, which refers to 'the worship paid by the ancient heretics, disciplines of Simon and Menander, to the angels: whom they believed to be the makers and lords of the lower world.' (Geddes and Robertson, *The New Testament: Translated Out of the Latin Vulgate, Newly Revised, with Annotations, Etc.*, 310.) The application of this verse to the psychology of whiteness indicates,

signal victory. A firm reaction, along the lines of the revanchism advocated by Stoddard, could be expected.

On the other hand, white prestige continued to lubricate the world's economic machinery. Born of the shameful and unjust social relations forged in places 'where treasures lie buried', it operated as an essential justificatory principle for the endurance of a European aristocracy defined as 'white', whose continued wealth required Africans and others to be kept in an underprivileged position in order to secure both their labour and land (Chapter 4 expands on this view of the global economic system.) Furthermore, white prestige was still able to command the obedience of some of those it subjugated through the propagation of a 'slave spirit', even if, as had been argued previously, the mystical veil over white power had been lifted during the First World War.

White prestige underwrote the inequality of global order as a whole, but it also supported inequalities within empires, such as the British Empire, and within states, such as the US, fastening bodies to the roles they were expected to perform in the global division of labour and circumscribing freedoms through a sclerotising colour bar.[96] Historical events and processes were repeatedly contextualised and made legible in West African writing through the lens of white prestige. White prestige allowed for decisions made in the construction of the global 'cultural economy' to be connected to the raising of the colour bar and the proliferation of imperial racial thinking. As a theoretical construct, it helped to explain disparate global events and patterns and to illuminate, as a result, the range of political options available to West Africans.[97]

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once again, how West African conceptions of global order were able to make creative use of citational practices.

[96] See Chapter 4 for a more extensive discussion of race and the global division of labour.

[97] In the Lagos-based *Comet*, for example, white prestige was said to have emerged with the end of Queen Victoria's reign, the appointment of Joseph Chamberlain as Secretary of State for Colonies, and Britain's rapprochement with the Boers after the Anglo-Boer War. "That Eternal Colour Question," *The Comet*, September 28, 1935.

Let us consider, finally, the exploration of white prestige outside Sierra Leone. One of the most systematic attempts to assess its causes and consequences was made by Kobina Sekyi, a singular figure of the period—writer, lawyer and politician born in 1892 in Cape Coast, in what is now Ghana, to an aristocratic Fante family. Sekyi is best remembered for his 'cultural nationalism', which involved an emphasis on returning to African institutions, names, and dress (he famously vowed never to wear European clothing again); his play *The Blinkards*, which in English and Fante satirised the mimicry of European culture among Africans, remains a seminal work.[98] Sekyi enjoyed celebrity status across the region and his writing was among the most prominent in the anglophone West African newspapers of the period. His lengthy articles, usually running over many issues and marked by their intricate prose, were read attentively by coastal elites. One series of articles in particular, published under the collective title 'Our White Friends' from 1921–23, is especially revealing on the question of white prestige and its elaboration of the concept into a systematic view of the history and condition of British-African relations.

Importantly, Sekyi introduced his series with an extended citation from the metropole: an article in the colonial journal *African World* by J. Withers-Gill, which had criticised the NCBWA and defended British imperial policy, particularly in relation to indirect rule.[99] Sekyi subjected the article to a methodical and withering critique. 'I am writing about our white friends who are whiter than they are human, the men whose humanity is not even "sicklied o'er with the pale cast" of colour prejudice, but deeply

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[98]Sekyi wrote extensively about his views on colonialism, society and forms of political organisation, from a broadly conservative and organicist viewpoint. See Irele and Biodun, *Oxford Encyclopedia of African Thought*, 323; Baku, *An Intellectual in Nationalist Politics*; Derrick, *Africa's Agitators*, 275; Langley, *Ideologies of Liberation in Black Africa*, 240–54. For Sekyi's pan-African contacts, see Asante, 'The Neglected Aspects of the Activities of the Gold Coast Aborigines Rights Protection Society', 36–37. I have also consulted the Kobina Sekyi Papers at the Ghana National Archives in Cape Coast.

[99] J. Withers-Gill, "Editorial Comments, Aspirations, and Potentialities: A Bath of the Obvious," *African World*, June 25, 1921.

ravaged by the latter to such an extent that their humanity is very much in danger of being, if it has not already become, exclusively *white*.'[100] A white humanity and 'white manhood' had come into existence. It was obvious that cause of the hostility of the average white official to the National Congress of British West Africa was 'his *amour propre*, graced by him with the name of *prestige*'; and yet, Sekyi immediately added, 'it is *not* obvious to us' that any extraordinary abilities really existed among whites in the colonial service.

Sekyi used his article series to attack the expansion of indirect rule, the supercilious attitudes of the British authorities toward Africans-—'our white, patronising friends'—and the pompous language used to justify colonial decisions that were, in truth, based simply on profit. Why, after 80 years of the 'systematic demoralisation of indigenous institutions', did the British now take these institutions in their 'emaciated and moribund condition' and give them 'a spurious sort of life' through the Native Jurisdiction Amendment Ordinance of 1910? And why, if the British had been interested in strengthening African institutions, had they historically deported so many West African leaders who had stood in their way?[101]

After a lengthy excursion into climactic influences on white and black social institutions, personalities, and views of the world, which included drawing upon experiences of his own time studying in London, Sekyi warmed to his theme.[102] European rule had, he argued, relied principally and ultimately on repression, setting aside reams of florid rhetoric. African institutions had been permitted to exist only to the extent that they could service European needs. The arrival of 'half-educated and bigoted' missionaries had led to the disintegration of African institutions and social forces, the suppression of African

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[100] Kobina Sekyi, "Our White Friends," *Gold Coast Leader*, October 8, 1921.
[101] Kobina Sekyi, "Our White Friends," *Gold Coast Leader*, October 18, 1921.
[102] The instalment from November 26, which describes Sekyi's view of England drawn from his personal experience as a student at University College, London, contains exceptional writing on the nature of the individualistic pursuit of pleasure in the atomised West: 'to a more communistic person,' he wrote, 'the white Britisher … seems both amusing and pitiable'.

religions, and the creation of 'half-breeds'. And colonialism had led to the fetishisation of European culture and the ludicrous spectacle of African imitation of whites. All this could be understood in terms of the restriction by whites of the natural course of African development, a process whose outcomes could only be disastrous in the long term.[103]

Ending his series after over a year of regular articles delineating the iniquities of British colonial authority, Sekyi suggested that it would nevertheless be possible to 'destroy' the 'credit, that white men have acquired in the minds of most of our own people, for the material development of the Western World, without coming within the range of any law that can be passed'; that is, without necessarily breaking the law. The key was to develop economic self-reliance, which would make 'the white man here among us less capable of asserting himself by means of his prestige', after which 'we shall see that it is a much less difficult thing than we used to think it to remonstrate effectively with the white man and oppose his badly thought out or malicious schemes, ostensibly for our advancement, but really for our easier exploitation'.[104] The title of Sekyi's series, 'Our White Friends', would spread across West Africa as a term of ironic veneration of the coloniser in the context of attempts to explain white power.[105]

As Sekyi made clear, white prestige was founded upon economic exploitation, resistance against which necessitated collectivist economic endeavour among Africans. Such was the key to stemming and reversing the tide of cultural and institutional destruction that had accompanied British rule in West Africa, creating an elite that fetishised Europe

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[103] For Sekyi's series *Our White Friends,* see the *Gold Coast Leader* from October 8, 1921 until the end of 1921, and thereafter in the following 1922 issues: Feb 4-11 1922, March 4, June 3, June 17-20, August 1, October 28, November 18, and December 12.
[104] "Our White Friends," *GCL*, December 12, 1922.
[105] 'Our white friends are very adroit in evading issues,' remarked the *African Morning Post* archly in a discussion of the cocoa pool. The ridicule of educated Africans had 'been followed up as a policy by our White friends on every conceivable opportunity,' lamented J. W. de Graft Johnson, for which the 'only possible aim could be to discredit the educated African in the eyes of the world.' De Graft-Johnson, *Towards Nationhood in West Africa*, 45.

while being unable to preserve its own sovereignty. Though Sekyi painted economic power here as a panacea, his broader approach—in this article series, but also elsewhere in his writing—suggested a far closer link between such power and forms of cultural and institutional expression and organisation. Much of Sekyi's project of 'cultural nationalism' was posited in terms of an ampler counter-attack on white prestige that would have material as well as cultural consequences. (This line of thinking connected the rhetorical assault on whiteness by Garveyites to that of West Africans: Garvey's call for 'mental emancipation' was seconded by Nnamdi Azikiwe in his *Renascent Africa.*)[106]

I have mentioned that, with their use of the word 'prestige', West African writers employed an insistently international frame of reference. The idea of prestige bears close associations with hegemony, both emerging from ways of thinking about domestic but especially international power and the complex combination of consent and coercion involved in both.[107] From Gramsci to Gilpin, the idea of prestige has denoted the ability of the powerful to shape perceptions of the power they wield. For the latter, writing in the Realist tradition of international relations, one can observe a 'hierarchy of prestige in the international system' that 'rests on economic and military power'. Prestige is, therefore, 'the reputation for power'.[108] Like Gilpin, these West African writers employed a materialist approach to prestige, consistently arguing that the aura surrounding white power derived from the severe disequilibrium in power between Europe and the extra-European world. Unlike Gilpin, however, they did not see the world in terms of functionally-undifferentiated competing units. For them, the world was defined by its bifurcation, which depended upon the subjection the non-European world to Europe and mobilised the

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[106] Coleman, *Nigeria*, 147.
[107] On hegemony, see Anderson's recent study, *The H-Word*.
[108] Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 31. Mary Kingsley, writing about Sierra Leone, adapted the German *Oberhoheit* to explain British hegemony. See Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*, 104; Porter, *Critics of Empire*, 247.

legitimating power of race to achieve and prolong such subjection. In this view, white prestige was the ideational product of imperial self-legitimation, a powerful sedative for the subordinated—though one whose potency was already diminishing.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have been examining the discussions of race, whiteness and white prestige that proliferated across the interwar West African press. I began with an outline of the historical events of the 1920s and 1930s as they unfolded in the region, out of which emerged a press with strong links to the African diaspora, its gaze trained outwards on a world order that it sought to interpret for its expanding readership. Through techniques of citation and interpretation the West African press adapted the technologies of imperial modernity into an oppositional practice of power, which involved intertextual and creative methods of citation, transmission and interpretation—all employed in order to grasp what was at the 'back of the white man's mind'. Snippets and sources were not simply copied but interpreted, through acts of heuristic theorisation, and applied to the endurance of obstacles in the way of West African progression.

The resulting heuristic theory charted and critiqued the erection of the 'global colour bar'. The constitutive globality of race was understood by West African writers as drawing a connection between their own experiences and those of others, both across the African diaspora and across the 'coloured world'. To be marked by race was also to become a global subject, bearing connections to other subjects and to the structures that ordered them—within empires, where racialisation meted out different treatment to whites and others, and within states, where processes of racial ordering could also be observed. This meant, as J. E. Casely Hayford argued in 1923, that it was essential for Africans to think about their 'brethren in distress' across the world, giving rise to 'an international feeling

among all black folk'.[109] Meanwhile, the suggestion of a significant psychological dimension to racialisation under colonialism prefigured the phenomenological approach to race of figures like Fanon, Memmi and Nandy. The heuristic theorisation of 'white prestige' emphasised race's internationality, its employment as a legitimating discourse for global material unevenness, and its embeddedness in a global core-periphery order that bound Europe and the extra-European world in an indissoluble but deeply unequal relationship.

This way of understanding race spread across the interconnected textual world of the Black Atlantic. The interwar period was, as the South African journal *Imvo Za Ba Ntsundu*' argued towards its end, 'certainly an age of white supremacy over all black communities of the world, not by virtue of any quality of higher moral standard and civilization which the white man, in every part of the globe, arrogates to himself, but because it is the age of the mighty gunpowder—the demon of white supremacy.' This made 'modern democracy … a democracy only of the white skin peoples of the world, and its philosophy is that of brazen spoliation, and the violation of human rights of all whose colour is black.'[110] This article, which reflected very closely much of the writing in Freetown, Accra, and Lagos, was quoted by George Padmore, perhaps the most influential advocate of African anticolonialism during the twentieth century, in his book *How Britain Rules Africa* (1936).

By the time S. D. Cudjoe published his seminal *Aids to African Autonomy* in 1949, such themes had become central to African political writing. Cudjoe, a Lomé-born doctor who had studied medicine in Edinburgh, wrote about the 'nauseating discrimination' giving preference to Europeans in West African medical appointments; warned of 'the serious

[109] Davidson, *Modern Africa*, 36.
[110] Padmore, *How Britain Rules Africa*, 391.

implications of the South-African colour-bar legislation'; attributed 'the widespread prevalence of prejudice against the coloured races' to deliberate colonial policy; and argued that, despite the establishment of a Labour government in Britain, 'the love of gold' was 'still the dominant factor in Colonial policy', which meant that '[t]he colour-bar, whether it is implicit or legal, is an inevitable concomitant of European rule in Africa'.[111] Cudjoe, in turn, quoted the work of George Padmore—another instantiation of the travel of pan-African theory on race and colonialism across the networks of the Black Atlantic.

I do not mean to suggest that, once formed, this view simply remained static. After the Second World War the capaciousness of West African understandings of political community certainly narrowed, alongside a diminution in the global preoccupations of many of the region's actors. As Zachernuk has written in relation to Nigeria, the 'simplicity' of the interwar era 'was complicated' after the war; and 'Pan-African ambitions, not untroubled before the war, moved from the diaspora to the continent but no longer framed the vision of Nigerians abroad as they once had. Instead, segments grouped by various criteria—as insiders, ethnic minorities, or radicals—now vied for a place on the national stage.'[112] And in 1943, J. B. Danquah, the prominent Ghanaian politician, could say: 'When I say "we" I mean the Gold Cost. I do not mean black men. I do not mean Negroes. This is not a question of race at all'.[113] Yet too strong a focus on institutional and party politics of the post-war period can, I think, also obscure the importance of global order thinking of an earlier moment, with significant repercussions for what came later.

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[111] Cudjoe, *Aids to African Autonomy: A Review of Education and Politics in the Gold Coast*, 8–15.
[112] Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*, 145.
[113] Webster, 'Political Activity in British West Africa, 1900–1940'.

The division of labour among nations is that
some specialise in winning and others in losing.

——*EDUARDO GALEANO*

The settler makes history; his life is an epoch, an Odyssey.

——*FRANTZ FANON*

3

Capitalism and Settlement in British West Africa

This chapter is the second of two which examine writing from interwar West Africa under British imperial rule. In the previous chapter, I explored the conceptions of race, whiteness and white prestige that proliferated across the interwar West African press in the context of the political history of the region during this period. Here, I develop that argument further by investigating ideas about the economy, settlement, and political community which animated much of the writing produced across interwar West Africa under British rule.

After outlining the key features of West Africa's economic experiences between and during the world wars—what one newspaper called 'the saddest of all sad economic

conditions'[1]—I ask how such developments were understood in the newspapers, books and pamphlets produced in the region in the 1920s and 1930s. Alongside the largely political elements discussed in the previous chapter, I find here that an economic and spatial analysis was a central component of West African theorisation of the global power and ordering capacity of race. West African writers came to conceptualise racialisation as a process that was rooted in Africa's unequal economic encounter with Europe, historically fastening specific bodies to specific roles in the global division of labour, elevating some to pre-eminence and others to peripheralisation. Such economic unevenness was seen to be mirrored in the spatial unevenness of interwar imperialism in West Africa, particularly with regard to its racially segregating impulses, and in the temporal ossification of Africans under imperialism, which aimed, as the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* put it, 'to fasten down the race upon its own past'.[2]

The resulting bifurcated global order, which traced the contours of collectively racialised peoples, was understood in terms of a proto-*dependencia*: the Western core had derived its dominance, and continued to profit from, the exploitation of the peripheralised territories of the world, Africa in particular, even creating an African diaspora to fulfil its own labour requirements. Multifarious economic events were therefore understood as connected through a global ordering structure, rooted in colonial relations of production, that worked to enforce the peripheralisation of darker-skinned peoples and secure their subordination in a global division of labour.[3] The economic marginalisation of West Africa recalled the menace of enslavement, creating a fixed system in which the African trader could not hope to succeed—and linking the fate of West Africans to those in the diaspora.

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[1] "The Government and the People of Sierra Leone," *Sierra Leone Weekly News* [henceforth *SLWN*], May 7, 1921.
[2] "The African and the League Mandate," *SLWN*, October 18, 1919.
[3] Cf. Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History*, 29: 'race recruits biology to install the international division of labour at the level of individuals' own sensory experience'.

Such an analysis would cast a long shadow over the twentieth century. As Christopher Dietrich's book *Oil Revolution* has shown, the fomenting of an 'economic culture of decolonisation' through ideas of unequal exchange, sovereign rights and the project for sovereign control over economic resources was central to the Third World politics of UNCTAD and OPEC.[4]

Spatially, the conventional wisdom that West African land tenure was secure because the region's climate was held to be disastrous for Europeans came to be questioned during the interwar period due to a confluence of factors, which together contributed to a sense of existential threat across West African interwar writing. The spectre of white settlement, I suggest, pointed to the radically unstable settler/colonial difference that was created and sustained under the mechanism of race, potentiating the latent political and economic threats of colonial power. The comparative questions that came to be asked about the 'settler' dimension to colonialism undermined the putative uniqueness of British colonialism in West Africa, connecting Britain's anti-African economic collusion in West Africa to its support of the Boers in South Africa and to the European drive for colonial *Lebensraum*. As we have seen in previous chapters, the generation of this theory depended upon an ability to cite, repurpose and recontextualise texts from the metropole.

Finally, I assess the implications of this economic and spatial analysis of British imperialism on political thinking in interwar West Africa. The ability to experience new kinds of collectivity was directly connected in the West African press to the material changes brought about by imperialism. Pan-African racial consciousness was understood, I suggest, as opening the door to a potential form of African cosmopolitanism that embraced particularity in the service of universalism, without dissolving one into the other. The globality of race, while oppressive in nature, also inadvertently allowed for new forms

[4] Dietrich, *Oil Revolution*.

of transnational kinship and solidarity. Forms of African nationalism and racial patriotism were posited as a direct rejection of 'narrow patriotism' and as oppositional counter-projects to the global racial order.

West Africa and Global Capitalism, 1919–39

The commodity export-oriented economies of West Africa that are still characteristic of the region had been established by 1920, precipitating population movement into the cash crop areas of the forest belt and into urban areas.[5] Africans engaged in in business practices had already been hit by a major shift in colonial policy during the 1880s and 1890s, when European powers had pushed rapidly into the hinterlands of West Africa from their coastal footholds, supplanting commercial imperialism with formal colonialism and bypassing West African coastal communities: the 'betrayal of the Creole elites'[6] which led to the 'The Growth of Disillusionment'.[7] Those who survived this period were again struck by an economic slump in 1920–1 and then faced the Depression from 1929, which 'virtually wiped them out of the export/import business.'[8] Meanwhile, some recently-arrived diasporic communities in West Africa—Greek, Indian, and especially Levantine (mostly Lebanese, but labelled as 'Syrian' at the time)—came to exert a significant presence in other forms of economic activity, especially retail and medial trade. The economic crashes bracketed a period of economic expansion of which the chief beneficiaries were European firms.

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[5] Ajayi and Crowder, *History of West Africa*, II:583; Holmes IV, "Economic and Political Organizations in the Gold Coast 1920-1945". For a discussion of the effects of this shift on women in colonial Ghana, see Grier, "Pawns, Porters, and Petty Traders". On cocoa in western Nigeria, see Berry, "Supply Response Reconsidered." Mining peaked later: in Sierra Leone, for example, iron and diamond mining began in the 1930s. See Greenhalgh, *West African Diamonds, 1919-1983*.
[6] Bickford-Smith, 'The Betrayal of Creole Elites, 1880-1920'.
[7] Spitzer, *The Creoles of Sierra Leone*, 219.
[8] Crowder, *Colonial West Africa*, 245.

While in theory the British colonial governments operated laissez-faire economic policies, in practice a range of regulatory activities—especially those relating to the management of the currency, banking, and customs—privileged large expatriate companies. Through price collusion and other forms of anti-trust activity, including fixing wages and charging differential rates on freight, these large companies collaborated to divide the market between themselves and squeeze out smaller African businessmen.[9] Such collusion occurred at the same time as the Depression inaugurated a precipitous decline in the terms of trade across West Africa; these declined yet further during World War II, reaching their lowest point in over four decades due to the shortage of consumer imports and the closure of many European export markets.[10] 'By the end of the war,' A. G. Hopkins has pointed out, 'West Africa's total importing capacity was lower than at any time since 1900 (with the possible exception of 1921), though population and public debts both increased greatly since the beginning of the century.'[11]

Across the region, in British, French and Portuguese colonies, the entrenchment of a cash crop economy involved methods of compulsion, such as quota systems, and led to periodic shortages of food crops.[12] From 1929, popular discontent grew. The depression years saw a number of riots, strikes and demonstrations, as prices for West African crops plummeted 60 to 70 percent, wages dropped, services were cut, and new taxes were instituted. Strike action spread across the region, especially after 1936, mirroring a series

[9] This summary is adapted from Crowder, *Colonial West Africa*, 244–45. See also Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*, 170–85.
[10] Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*, 185.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 162; Ajayi and Crowder, *History of West Africa*, II: 522.

of strikes in the Caribbean.[13] The death of 41 miners in one accident at a Gold Coast mine in Prestea in 1934 brought attention to the poor conditions of mineworkers.[14]

Meanwhile, farmers' organisations including the Gold Coast Farmers' Association, which had been established in the early 1920s, orchestrated cocoa hold-ups in 1930–1 and 1937–8, attempting through combination to arrest price declines.[15] The hold-ups and associated boycotts were organised in response to cartelisation by European cocoa-buying firms—Cadbury's, the United Africa Company (UAC), and Holts in particular—that sought, with the collaboration of the Colonial Office, to depress the price of cocoa through price-fixing agreements.[16] The 1937–8 crisis ultimately involved thirteen firms and comprised 94 percent of cocoa purchases in the Gold Coast.[17] Throughout this time, a series of parallel developments saw the permanent exclusion of African international shippers of cocoa in favour of large expatriate firms.[18]

With no European planter class, land alienation did not take place in West Africa on anything like the same scale as in East or Southern Africa. Yet many West Africans, aware of the processes of land alienation in other parts of the continent, invested the question with vital significance. Much critical discussion had been provoked by the Forest Bill of 1911, which had attempted to assign the management of uncultivated land to the British government—the latest in a series of such bills dating back to 1894.[19] J. E. Casely

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[13] Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance*, 105.
[14] The Communist-trained Sierra Leonean militant I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson took up the cause of the miners. Derrick, *Africa's Agitators*, 309. See also Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance*, 112.
[15] Rohdie, "The Gold Coast Aborigines Abroad," 390; Alence, "The 1937-1938 Gold Coast Cocoa Crisis".
[16] Meredith, 'The Colonial Office, British Business Interests and the Reform of Cocoa Marketing in West Africa, 1937-1945', 287, 297.
[17] See Howard, 'Differential Class Participation in an African Protest Movement'; Frankel, *Cocoa in Ghana*; Alence, 'The 1937-1938 Gold Coast Cocoa Crisis'.
[18] Meredith, 'The Colonial Office, British Business Interests and the Reform of Cocoa Marketing in West Africa, 1937-1945', 300.
[19] Berry, 'Hegemony on a Shoestring', 341–43; Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, chap. 9; Agbosu, 'The Origins of Forest Law and Policy in Ghana during the Colonial Period'.

Hayford wrote an influential pamphlet in which he had argued that the 1911 bill risked reducing West Africans to 'mere squatters, depending, in effect, upon the foreign capitalist for a daily wage as hewers of wood and drawers of water.'[20] The strictures of indirect rule bound land ownership to community membership. But far from resolving the land question, this opened the door to a wide range of disputes on jurisdictional grounds, including over the definition of 'strangers' who were liable to pay tribute, and whether the rent from cash crops like cocoa was the personal income of a 'chief' or public revenue, as Sara Berry has pointed out.[21]

Colonial Extraction and Global Racial Ordering

How were the economic developments described above understood by West Africans under British rule? Though surprisingly understudied, the answer to this question—at least in so far as it can be gleaned from newspapers, books and pamphlets produced in the region by West Africans in the 1920s and 1930s—shows that these economic experiences were connected through a theory of the racial ordering of the world under European imperialism. A number of elements intersected to form this view of colonialism in Africa. Here, I explore the articulation of these elements in turn and suggest that they cohered into a view of race as having emerged from the historically unequal encounter between Europe and Africa and from the uneven economic space that had been produced through that encounter.

First was the idea that colonialism was fundamentally extractive, seeking not to improve Africa but to acquire its resources at the lowest possible cost to Europe. In 1919, the *Gold Coast Leader* argued that '[t]he material interest of the exotic rulers is first and last the supreme objective' of colonialism, 'and any benefit which might have accrued to

[20] Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 364.
[21] Berry, 'Hegemony on a Shoestring', 343.

us by the connection is only secondary and incidental.'[22] Later that year, with the failures of the Paris Peace Conference becoming apparent, the newspaper imaginatively ventriloquised the leaders of the US and Britain: 'The blackman may become a rival power some day, but let us postpone that day till we get all the palm oil, palm kernels, rubber, gold, diamond, ivory, timber and other raw materials denied to Europe by nature, from Africa.'[23] As the *African Morning Post* memorably put it in 1935, 'the white man came for our goods and not for our good.'[24] 'No colonial acquisition has ever been attempted solely in the interest of the people,' wrote Dusé Mohamed Ali in *The Comet* the same year, 'such acquisition has always been undertaken in the economic interests of the Colonizers. There have been no moral considerations whatever.'[25]

The idea that Britain depended upon such extraction for its own wealth also came to be articulated during these years. In one of his most memorably acerbic outbursts, the 'Rambler', who wrote a regular column in the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, railed against the idea that Sierra Leoneans should be 'grateful' to the British for founding the colony:

> It was the sweat of the black man's brow which laid the foundation for the present day opulence of Britain and White America. What has England done for Sierra Leone in 150 years in comparison with what the Sierra Leone slaves did for England during their 400 years of forced labour in British plantation? Talk of gratitude? It is the other way about … You cheated me of 400 years' income, traded with it, made a million percent profit and then flung a paltry 150 years' income back to me and expected me to put my hands behind my back and say "many, many thanks!" Can anything be more ridiculous? Who is to be grateful to the other? The cheat—or his victim? Not until the former makes full and complete reparation will there be any reasonable expectation of gratitude from the latter.[26]

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[22] Africanus, "Sir Frederick Lugard," *Gold Coast Leader* [henceforth *GCL*], February 5, 1919.
[23] "The Future of Togoland," *GCL*, December 6–13, 1919.
[24] Gump, "Grumbler's Row—What is Civilization?" *African Morning Post* [henceforth *AMP*], June 4, 1935.
[25] Dusé Mohamed Ali, "That Question of Colonies," *Comet*, November 2, 1935.
[26] "Rambling Talks," *SLWN*, July 2, 1938. For a discussion of this article, see Spitzer, *The Creoles of Sierra Leone*, 191–93.

What lay beneath this unequal relationship? Many West Africans pointed to the anti-competitive chauvinism of imperialism—what Kobina Sekyi called 'the spirit of group morality' that was 'now rampant in Englishmen'[27]—which created a type of cultural economy skewed by race.[28] The European merchants were not 'commercially moral', explained the *West African Pilot*, selling goods to Africans at artificially inflated prices. Even as 'they depend on our produce in order to fatten their pockets', they nevertheless 'insist on skinning us to the bone in order to declare dividends for their heartless shareholders.' Africans, 'the owners of our land, their hosts' were ruthlessly exploited, a process in which '[e]ven the banks' seemed to participate through unfair lending practices. 'Our souls cry to high heavens for the ending of this form of exploitation,' they exclaimed;[29] 'it is the deliberate practice of the European firms to kill the Sierra Leone middleman'.[30] It was also this context that the panic over 'Syrians'—recent mercantile migrants, mainly from Lebanon—spread across the region after the war.[31]

The formation of the 'cocoa pool' by large European firms confirmed for many the notion of a colonial plunder of West Africa. As the *African Morning Post* explained in 1937, the pool had been 'formed by the European merchants' who 'had banded themselves together with the avowed aim of fleecing the cocoa farmer of this country of what should be his. And now it appeared 'that these mercantile firms are impelled by profit motive in forming the cocoa POOL as they are by a desire to exploit the African to such an extent as

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[27] Kobina Sekyi, "Our White Friends," *GCL*, June 3, 1922.
[28] On 'cultural economy, see Magee, *Empire and Globalisation*.
[29] "Commercial Morality," *West African Pilot* [henceforth *WAP*], December 17, 1938.
[30] "Our Economic Situation and Outlook," *SLWN*, June 30, 1928.
[31] See e.g. "The Ugly Syrian Domination in West Africa," *SLWN*, June 12, 1920; see also Ibid. There are countless examples of such sentiment across the interwar West African press. Yet it is perhaps surprising that the operation of European colonialism in the Levant and Middle East was simply never connected—as far as I have seen—to the colonisation of West Africa; nor were Arabs ever recognised as a racialised population in their own right in relation to Europeans.

to cripple him economically once and for all'.[32] The next year, the *Post* wrote that one could '[c]all the scheme a POOL Buying Arrangement or whatever you may choose. It has only one result and that is to enslave the African, economically.'[33] 'Our white friends are very adroit in evading issues,' went another article in the same issue. But '[t]he pool firms are our enemies—they are out for our utter ruin and enslavement.'[34]

Kofi Pekiyi, lamenting what he saw as the insufficiency of the Gold Coast response to the crisis, which had involved burning cocoa beans rather than selling them at the fixed price, imagined that 'most of the whites' would say at 'their lunch and dinner tables': 'Yes, what can the niggers who are solely contingent, weak minded of invention and manufacturing do? Though they are determined they will after all yield to us.'[35] Later, O. A. Alakija, writing in the same newspaper, complained that the British government was willing to 'hand over everything to the combines, concessions, areas for plantations, etc. without any opposition. In fact,' he added, 'I have often pondered whether the combine is not the Government in West Africa.'[36] Other Black Atlantic writers saw the situation in West Africa in a similar way. W. E. B. Du Bois, the grand theorist and sociologist of race, wrote specifically of the Cocoa Pool in his essay 'Human Rights for All Minorities', published in 1947. Having outlined in detail the story of the hold-ups and expatriate collusion, he explained: '[t]he African colonial governments are virtually ruled by investors in England … [And] the cocoa situation in West Africa is only one example of what colonial imperialism means to the people involved.'[37]

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[32] "Exploitation Exposed," *AMP,* October 29, 1937.
[33] A. Abraham, "An Attempt to Enslave," *AMP*, February 5, 1938.
[34] "The Pool and the Lobster," *AMP*, February 5, 1938.
[35] Kofi Pekiyi, "Africans Utilise Cocoa Beans," *AMP*, March 18, 1938.
[36] O. A. Alakija, "As I See It– Economic Armageddon," *WAP*, January 5, 1939.
[37] Du Bois, *The World and Africa and Color and Democracy (The Oxford W. E. B. Du Bois)*, 156, 158.

I want to suggest here that the deliberate use of racial language, especially the characterisation of expatriate capital as 'white' and 'European', was not, as some scholars have implied, simply a rhetorical flourish.[38] It formed part of a wider view of the West African economic crisis as being located within a global economy that had made Africans, as Pekiyi put it, 'solely contingent', vis-à-vis the combined and organised power of European capital. Such language brings us to the second element of the theoretical linkage between the interwar West African economy and global racial ordering: the notion that colonial extraction required a broader politico-economic structure that assigned fixity to certain actors in the service of others. Racist ideologies were posited as having emerged epiphenomenally as legitimating discourses for such extraction. 'At every turn the black man is reminded of his supposed role,' wrote the *Gold Coast Leader* in 1923, 'and every attempt to rise about a certain stage is marked with sneers and jeers'. This was because 'the dominant powers of this world are interested in keeping the African in his place.' But '[w]hy should some be perpetual rulers and others perpetual burden bearers?'.[39]

Economic subjugation had, like enslavement, alienated Africans from their own humanity, argued the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, through the 'pagan and unrighteous idea that Africans exist for the purpose of wealth production'—an idea which had emerged around 1900 and which was now being reinforced by another idea derived from European racial thinkers like Haeckel and Treitschke: 'to fasten down the race upon its own past', thereby refusing to countenance the material progression of Africans. '[T]hese exploiters consider that they have in the Negro a creature born to ignorance and squalor, born to be the instrument of wealth-production for the white man and that only,' deplored the

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[38] See, for example, Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 506. I have discussed in the previous chapter Kimble's unwillingness to take seriously the racial components of writing in colonial Ghana.
[39] Ahinnana, "Our Youth," *GCL*, October 27, 1923. See also "The Firestone Lease," *GCL*, November 14, 1925.

newspaper.[40] The peculiar fixity of racialisation was thereby understood as undergirding global hierarchies of production.

This view of the relationship between race and the global economic order was developed particularly through citational techniques. Imperial discussions of Africa and the 'labour problem' formed an important source for theorisation in West Africa about the role of race in the colonial project. In 1918, the *Gold Coast Leader* republished the following quotation from an article by H. B. Philpott in *Reynold's Newspaper*, London:

> Hitherto Europeans have been chiefly interested in the black races in regard to their potentialities as wealth producers for the benefit of the European peoples. They have tried slavery, they have tried indentured labour, which is often more cruel and degrading than actual slavery, and now they are trying the wage system, as we know it in Europe and America. None of these methods has been quite a success. The Negro nearly always proves refractory. The perversity of the Negro is a sore puzzle and a great annoyance to many who have dealings with him.

The article went on to advocate for a different view that would provide some 'economic freedom' for Africans.[41]

Such citational techniques and their application to the economic situation of West Africa were developed to their fullest extent by Lapido Solanke, a key figure of the period.[42] In an 'Open Letter to the Negroes of the World' published in the *Gold Coast Leader* in 1925, Solanke questioned whether West African land ownership rights could be guaranteed into the future, citing the sweeping and destructive land alienation that had taken place in the Congo and through the 'Native Reserves' systems of East and Southern Africa. Could the expressed admiration of the 'fine material of manhood' in the West

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[40] "The African and the League Mandate," *SLWN*, October 18, 1919.
[41] "The Negro's Place in the Sun–by H. B. Philpott, in Reynold's Newspaper," *GCL*, July 27, 1918.
[42] Of Yoruba background, Solanke had been educated in Nigeria, at Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone and at the University of London, where he had co-founded the West African Students' Union. See Adi, 'West African Students in Britain, 1900-1960: The Politics of Exile'.

African by Lord Leverhulme indicate that he was sizing up the region's people as labourers for whites? Providing further evidence for this disconcerting suggestion, Solanke quoted London's *Evening Standard* on the promising possibilities for growing cotton in Nigeria if Europeans might finally be permitted to buy significant amounts of land, before citing a 'Mr. Wilson' who had written in the *Daily News*, another London newspaper, that '[i]t is of course a nuisance that there are Negroes in Africa at all, though they have their uses as labourers for the whites.'[43]

With this tissue of citations, Solanke provided an incisive destabilisation of the idea that British colonialism provided a secure future for West Africans. Drawing on sources from the metropole, he aimed to show that there was no firm dividing line between the rapacious brutality of the Congo and the apparently less interventionist system in West Africa, where Britons were eyeing land holdings covetously and declaiming the very existence of the 'Negro' except as a mere mechanistic labourer for whites. The importance of these conclusions for all black peoples meant that Solanke did not only direct his letter to West Africans, or even to all Africans, but to all 'the Negroes of the World': another instance of diasporic connection constructed through a reading of the racialised nature of global economic production.

Lapido Solanke criticised Britain's approach to West African lands still further in his book *United West Africa (or Africa) at the Bar of the Family of Nations*, published in 1927, a work which combined a qualified attack on European colonialism in Africa with Garveyist ideas and adapted self-help philosophy. The book contained, in the context of a discussion of land alienation and historical inequity, an important elaboration of the conception that there was a connection between the construction of a global core-periphery imperial order and the proliferation of an epiphenomenal racist ideology. After making an

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[43] Lapido Solanke, "Open Letter to the Negroes of the World," *GCL*, August 8, 1925.

argument for Africa's historical contribution to world civilisation, Solanke assessed the continent's current decline. The transatlantic slave trade meant that:

> for about 500 years [Africa] was slowly, systematically and completely ruined [and] … retrogressed almost to the primitive stage of any human civilization. One of the inevitable consequences of this has hitherto been the great difference existing between the economic life of an African and that of his European brother, which constantly renders commercial and industrial dealings on equal footing between each other extremely difficult. This is the cause of the race problem and colour prejudice.

Given that Africans had already developed manufacturing industries in the fifteenth century, Solanke argued, 'it would seem to be unfair to start now to device [*sic*] means whereby the Africans should be mere raw materials producers.'[44] Again, land was the central issue. The European colonial officer 'should guard himself against the error and temptation of allowing himself to be used as a tool by the foreign or European capitalists in the scheme to defeat African land rights, as had already occurred in East Africa.'[45]

Finally, a body of writing went further in arguing that the historical and racial inequality between Africa and Europe, which had produced such disastrous outcomes for West Africans, was a feature of the global imperial order itself and the differences that it produced. That order, which represented an existential threat to Africans, was described as having emerged through a history of unequal interaction between Africa and Europe, whose racially-mediated social relations had produced spaces in which processes of imperial power were experienced corporeally in terms of crowding, confinement, and constraint.

'We have,' explained the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* in 1921, 'no inherent differences with our fellow European subjects … But we all have a radical objection to the Octopus system which with tentacles round our vitals is sucking our very life blood out of

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[44] Solanke, *United West Africa, or Africa at the Bar of the Family of Nations*, 40.
[45] Ibid., 50.

us. Please God we mean to live, and that is about the sum total of race consciousness, of African nationalism.'[46] This was an 'African nationalism' that explicitly involved the diaspora, whose economic immiseration was often described alongside events on the continent. Reporting on sugar manufacturing in Jamaica, the *African Morning Post* commented that 'huge profits have been extracted from the very life blood of hunger bitten negro workmen', adding: 'all over the world the fate of the negro race is identical.'[47] The Jamaica case showed that the African was 'helpless … before hydra-headed, inexorable and self-centred capitalism'.[48] Diasporic comparisons showed to many that the immiseration of African and black peoples was tied to their racialisation and the ways in which that racialisation assigned to them a fixed position within global hierarchies of production.

The economic situation of a particular territory of British West Africa—Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, Nigeria, the Gambia—was consistently theorised in the West African press as tied to the rest of the region and continent, but also to a global system that organised economic relationships in hierarchical terms. This unequal relationship was the cause of immiseration in Africa and, it was sometimes argued, of war, fascism, and civilisational decline in Europe. 'Europe is on the verge of suicide' remarked the *West African Pilot* in 1938. 'White men all over the word have armed themselves on a colossal scale in order, they say, that other powers may not prevent them from governing the non-white races from whose country they get all that they require to satisfy their domestic want.'[49] Responding to and correcting this unequal global order—what J. W. de Graft-Johnson had called the 'disequilibrium in human destinies'[50]—was therefore seen as

[46] "1921," *SLWN*, Jan 7, 1922.
[47] "Gold Coast and Jamaica," *AMP*, June 18, 1938.
[48] "Gold Coast and Jamaica," *AMP*, June 20, 1938.
[49] "Are We Civilized?" *WAP*, September 18, 1938.
[50] De Graft-Johnson, *Towards Nationhood in West Africa*, 48.

necessary not only for the sake of Africans, but also to solve intractable intra-European conflicts over the exploitation of the 'non-white races.'

'West Africans claim a fair deal in return for their products and demand a place in the economic relationships of the peoples of the world,' explained the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* in 1934. 'Instead of the fair deal, the monopoly buying of raw materials and equally monopoly price for imported goods created by local combines has caused terrific poverty among the millions in West Africa.'[51] Four years later, J. A. Wachuku, writing in the *West African Pilot*, argued that 'the unequal distribution of material resources, the industrialisation of the "civilised" nations, the presence of backward countries in various parts of the world,' and 'the attempt of the civilised nations to secure new materials necessary for their home industries from the backward countries for their own good' were all 'forces underlying the present world rearmament' and global political crisis. All of this was undergirded by the 'the claim of superiority of the white nations over other nations, and their unscientific and misleading support by their scientists'—claims which, for these nations, had 'fired their pride, and their love of power and conquest' in order 'to maintain their "superior" position.'[52]

The variegated imperial economic order was often discussed terms of space and crowding, giving rise to a corporeal understanding of space as having been produced by a particular set of social relations in which race played a central role. For the *West African Pilot* in 1938, for example, these were 'troubulous times' in which 'the indication of the horizon of world politics in inter-racial and inter-national relations do not say well'. After Trinidad and East Africa, 'now, West Africa is in the hands of the capitalists. It is the same story everywhere. The black man, the black woman and their children are being crowded

[51] Nat, "Black and White in West Africa," *SLWN*, April 27, 1934.
[52] J. A. Wachuku, "Universal Disarmament," *WAP*, October 14, 1938.

out.'[53] The 'white man' was 'free to roam wherever he pleases', observed the *Gold Coast Leader* in 1919, 'and is expected to be received with open arms wherever he roams. But he denies the same right to the yellow, the brown, and the black man.'[54] It was unjust, the same newspaper wrote a month later, for the 'white man' to 'come and go to the black man's country as he pleases' while the black man was 'barred from free entry and intercourse, as though he were a pariah and an outcast.'[55]

In 1926, the *Leader* insisted that 'the European Empire-stock cannot have it both ways. They cannot monopolise the Dominions and also overrun the Dependencies. They cannot monopolise the economical and industrial position in the Dominions and also in the Dependencies.'[56] The newspaper later defined 'white exploitation' as that which was 'exhibited in an undying desire and determination to keep the black man in his place.'[57] There is a palpable sense in this writing of the enforced rootedness of Africans, particularly vis-à-vis the cosmopolitan, kinetic, liberated movement of the coloniser; one is frequently reminded of Fanon's later argument that '[t]he native is a being hemmed in', taught always to 'stay in his place'.[58]

The competition of 'white commercial firms', whose links with the metropole gave them preponderance, was seen as a key instrument of economic domination, as the *African Morning Post* argued from 1937–8. The African was now, the newspaper argued the next year, 'perpetually dependent upon help from outside sources', dependent 'upon the foreign supplier for almost every article of food and drink' and thus deprived of 'the most effective barrier against foreign intrigues—INDEPENDENCE and SELF-RELIANCE.'[59] And the

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[53] "General Black Restiveness," *WAP*, March 15, 1938.
[54] [Untitled article], *GCL*, July 26, 1919.
[55] "A Coloured Empire," *GCL*, August 2–9, 1919.
[56] "Peace," *GCL*, July 26, 1919.
[57] "Editorial Notes," *GCL*, August 21, 1926.
[58] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 51.
[59] "The Dependent African," *AMP*, November 8, 1937.

1937-8 Gold Coast Cocoa Crisis had 'shattered to pieces the hopes and ambitions of every individual African, literate or illiterate.'[60] Several months later, another article explained that before the coming of the whites the African 'was the supplier of his own salt, cloths, fishing nets, cutlasses, soap and many other things necessary to fit him in life'. Yet now he had 'become parasite on the white man's commodities.'[61]

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I have tried to show how the global imperial economic order was persistently understood as connected to West Africa's interwar economic vagaries through the category and language of race. By invoking the history of unequal interaction between Africa and Europe which had doomed African traders, this writing reflected upon the broader structures of a cultural economy that undergirded imperial relations and meted out differential treatment to white and black imperial subjects. The racially-mediated social relations produced by this global imperial economic order were reflected spatially in terms of crowding and confinement—a 'determination to keep the black man in his place'—and temporally, a result of Africa's unequal economic encounter with Europe and the global division of labour that had emerged in that encounter, which aimed 'to fasten down the [African] race upon its own past' and prevent its economic advancement in order to retain a racialised labour force for the global core.[62] This was an understanding of global order as essentially bifurcated and effectively zero-sum: a proto-*dependencia*, in which a Western-dominated

[60] Kwesi Toi, "Eight Years Ago," *AMP*, December 29, 1937.
[61] Moses Armah, "Our Quiet Half Hour," *AMP*, May 7, 1938.
[62] "The African and the League Mandate," *Sierra Leone Weekly News* [henceforth *SLWN*], October 18, 1919.

international society continued to profit from the exploitation of Africa and continued to depend upon race as a means of buttressing its rapacity.

'Awaiting the Coming of the White Man': The Spectre of Settlement in West Africa

In this section, I expand upon another line of thinking in West African discussions of the global racial order: the role of settlement in European colonial expansion. Such thinking grappled with metropolitan discussions about the status of African land. These discussions invoked the possibility of West Africa as a newly-designated *terra nullius*, which an enterprising European state might seek to replenish with its own people.[63] West African writers explored the possibility of white settlement in West Africa and compared settlement processes across time and space, citing histories of European imperialism and asking if the fate of other 'subject races' held lessons for West Africans. Techniques of citation and interpretation enabled, I argue, radical acts of comparison, which bound together contrasting examples: Nazi Germany and South Africa, or Indigenous Australians and Ethiopians. By suggesting that colonial subjection always carried an implicit threat of extirpation, this comparativism drew attention to the unifying globality of race, which connected the 'subject peoples' of European imperialism through a shared positionality in the racialised global periphery and which created for them an uncertain and fractured relationship with space, time, and land, threatening to overwrite their spatio-temporal existence with a settler sovereignty.[64]

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[63] See Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*.

[64] A definition of 'settler sovereignty' is provided by Lorenzo Veracini: 'if sovereignty can be seen as the relationship between people, power, and space over time … a settler sovereignty is characterised by an exclusive interpretation of a settler peoplehood, a specific understanding of sovereign capacities and their location, and by the conviction that the settler colonial setting is charged with a special regenerative nature.' Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 2010, 54.

'The Vigorous Rush of the White Races to Africa': Possibilities of Settlement

Conventional wisdom in Europe had implied a certain security to West African land tenure, even in a region dominated by European colonial interests, because the region's climate was held to be disastrous for Europeans, unlike vast swathes of the continent where—as Solomon Plaatje had described in his ground-breaking *Native Life in South Africa* (1916)—ongoing land alienation was having grave and deleterious consequences for Africans.

Yet the effects of the emergence of indirect rule, the racial narrowing of the colonial service, the numerical expansion of British personnel, and developments in tropical medicine all combined to cast doubt over any certainties on the issue of settlement and the future of West African life.[65] We have already seen in Chapter 1 how Marcus Garvey's evocation of the possible extermination of black peoples had added a profound sense of urgency to the UNIA's push for the necessity for black sovereignty. A similar sense of existential threat is evident across West African interwar writing. Combined with economic and political dislocation, the spectre of settlement was understood as inhering to the ambivalences of colonial rule over Africa, spurring questions of a comparative nature that contradicted the self-justificatory rhetoric of British colonialism in West Africa. As we have seen elsewhere, such theorisation about settlement drew upon, cited, repurposed and recontextualised texts from the metropole.

At first, the immediate aftermath of the First World War seemed to suggest a continuation of previous policy. In July 1919, for example, the *Gold Coast Leader* reprinted a quotation from the British colonial journal *West Africa*, which cautioned the British to 'beware of the error of supposing that a policy towards the African races of tropical Africa can safely be based upon what has, so far been found possible in South Africa and

[65] See notes 14-16 in the previous chapter.

Rhodesia, where the European can live and rear his young.'[66] Given that it was doubtful that the European would ever be able to settle in West Africa, the article argued, a higher level of cooperation would be required with the region's indigenous peoples.

But such certainties were not to endure. In January 1920, the *Gold Coast Leader* already observed with alarm 'the great influx of Europeans into our country'.[67] While '[t]he climate of West Africa was a few years ago so deadly that the country was described as the white man's grave,' today, '[b]y dint of perseverance and scientific skill on the part of the Europeans the climate is now spoken of in favourable terms and for that reason our country is being flooded by white men of all grades on commercial pursuits and acquisitions.' Reminding its readers that 'very good climates' in Africa had been associated with territories where 'the Europeans have gone and made themselves masters of the land and thereby put the original inhabitants of the country into the back-ground', the *Gold Coast Leader* asked: 'WHAT WILL BECOME OF WEST AFRICA IN TIME TO COME? AND AGAIN WHAT WILL BE THE POSITION OF THE INDIGENOUS NATIVE?'[68] Two years later, the *Leader* asked again what 'the vigorous rush of the white races to Africa'[69] meant for the future of African peoples.

It found suggestions in the British press. In 1923 it reprinted, 'for our readers to mark and digest', long sections from an article from the London *Outlook* which, the African newspaper argued, represented the 'naked truth about Kenya'. The *Outlook* article discussed what it called the 'struggle of ten thousand white men in East Africa to maintain the supremacy of their race'. Presenting an idealised, bucolic vision of the Kenyan plateau,

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[66] "Editorial Notes," *Gold Coast Leader*, July 5, 1919.
[67] Bwin Hwe Kan, "Think and Look Ahead, by a Negro," *GCL*, January 17–24, 1920.
[68] Ibid.
[69] "What of the Future?" *GCL*, May 27, 1922.

which was 'very like an English park, and is populated by myriads of animals', the *Outlook* stated that:

> Except for the nomadic savage, it lies empty of mankind, as did the Western prairies of America fifty years ago. It is a virgin land, awaiting the coming of the white man, ready to nurture and breed a great race, to rival in wealth and population the Mississippi Valley. This is our heritage, the refuge of our teeming millions whom it is doubtful whether our industrial system at home can much longer support. It is the 'last white-man's country' yet undeveloped and suitable for Englishmen to conquer.

The key question, added the *Outlook*, was whether Kenya was 'to be white or brown.' For the 'rule of a few men of one race over many thousands of another must always, whether we like it or not, depend in the last resort on force. We govern India by force, and we govern the natives of East Africa by force.'[70]

Genocidal metropolitan language in relation to Africa was of particular concern given the concrete shifts in colonial policy that I have discussed above—a ceiling on African participation in government and racial hierarchies in pay and conditions. These facts could be understood as heralding a potential convergence between Africa of the settlement and non-settlement zones. In 1925, the *Gold Coast Leader* warned that '[t]he only thing that will save Imperial interests in Africa will be the West-Africanisation of Africa East and South rather than a halting policy which leans toward the East-Africanisation of West Africa.'[71] Yet the 'East-Africanisation' remained an ever-present threat, embodied in what the *Comet* called 'the visiting White alien to tropic shores'.[72]

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[70] "Editorial Notes," *GCL*, June 2, 1923. Hitler too invoked the Misssissippi in Generalplan Ost: the river and its valley represented an intruiging reference point for interwar visions of settlement. See Bernhard, 'Hitler's Africa in the East', 3.
[71] "The Parting of Ways," *GCL*, July 25, 1925.
[72] Odeziaku, "Needless Noise," *Comet*, July 23, 1938.

In 1923, the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* reprinted substantial sections of an article titled 'The Regeneration of Africa' by Alfred Wiggleworth, which had been published in the colonial journal *United Empire*. Striking a similar tone to the *Outlook* article, Wiggleworth observed that Africa was soon 'likely to become the storehouse of the temperate regions badly ravaged by war'. He pointed out that Britain now owed huge postwar debts, as a result of which it needed to increase production and introduce austerity. Previous settlement had been limited to temperate zones, but:

> We can no longer afford to neglect those tropical areas which nature has endowed with lavish hand. Tropical medicine has made vast strides during the last decade, so that jungle fever no longer possesses the same terrors, and the tropics may yet come to be regarded as a health resort during certain months of the year when they will be within a day or two's aeroplane journey from Europe. Europeans may then possess and manage vast estates in tropical areas, returning at the end of the season to temperate climes to recoup.

Europe would, he continued, be able to develop 'vast areas of Africa' where '[l]and is available without limit.' In so doing, '[u]nlimited demands will be put upon labour and the *dolce far niente* of the African native is doomed to disappear. Africa must awaken from its torpor and by wise policy and sound counsel.' He concluded: 'Africa is in a transition state, and in its present amorphous condition no one can foretell what development it will undergo.'[73]

The reprinting of Wiggleworth's plea for white settlement in the tropical zones in the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* displayed to West African readers an important vein of metropolitan debates on settlement in Africa. The *Gold Coast Leader* remarked the same year that West Africans may have been forced to endure a similar range of iniquities to the black people of South Africa if it had not been for malaria: yet '[e]ven as things are we

[73] "The Regeneration of Africa, by Alfred Wiggleworth," *SLWN*, October 6, 1923.

have to be circumspect, since we do not know what coming years may bring.'[74] In 1929, the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* quoted 'a progressive European' as saying of Africa in a British journal: 'We shall exterminate its ravenous beasts, abolish malaria, build houses cooled by electricity and freed from the million insect pests; but we cannot exterminate the African—he is a vigorous being and on the increase. Railways, roadways, airways are being made, and even the Sahara will be conquered. But what are we to do with the Africans?'[75] A year later, the *News* argued in a 'sardonic vein … that an emblem of a mosquito should be erected in a prominent position in the Coast towns by the Africans.' For '[t]here is no need concealing the fact that as long as the mosquito was capable of doing its worst and to make the climate unhealthy for the European, the more opportunity the African had of receiving his due position.'[76] 'We do not think,' wrote the newspaper later that year, that 'West Africa should be the dumping-ground of the unemployed of Great Britain.'[77]

Prospects of white minority rule continued to shape views in West Africa. In April 1929, the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* quoted Frederick Lugard, the British colonial administrator, on the likely future 'problem of the relation of comparatively small white communities in the Tropics to greatly preponderant Black populations rapidly acquiring self-consciousness'. Commenting on Lugard's view, the *News* observed that '[t]he question of controlling the Africans in Africa so that they will not get out of hand must predominate in the minds of those who foresee forever a condition of things in which white supremacy

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[74] "The South African Situation," *GCL*, September 1, 1923.
[75] "The Racial Question in Africa," *SLWN*, August 3, 1929.
[76] "The White Man's Grave or the Black Man's Resurrection or Which Other?" *SLWN*, July 12, 1930.
[77] "Return of Governor Byrne," *SLWN*, September 27, 1930. George Padmore used exactly the same terminology in a book published six years later: 'Why is Africa always the dumping-ground for the surplus of Europe, while at the same time Australia closes its door to coloured peoples of Asia and Africa?' Padmore, *How Britain Rules Africa*, 9.

and black servitude must exist.' Yet while 'experts in Europe must realise that white and black must continue to live together in Africa; and the solution of the problem of the best relationship between them is that which is directed towards bringing them together in the same institutions and assemblies when possible rather than segregating them', the 'whole object of the policy of indirect rule is to keep the black man by himself, keep him in excluded areas, in order that the white man may thrive in reserved areas with all modern improvements in sanitation.'[78]

In 1931, the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* reprinted an article by the British politician, diplomat and editor Lord Lothian in *The Listener*, a weekly magazine based in London that had been established by the BBC in 1929. Beginning with the observation that many believed 'the white race cannot settle in the tropics' and 'maintain is vitality', Lothian offered a dissenting view. He was certain that science would discover 'how to temper the rigours of the tropics to the European mind and body' and was therefore 'convinced that it is only a question of time for both Europe and Asia to overflow into Africa.' Africa, 'the largest of all the continents except Asia', was, after all, 'extraordinarily thinly populated':

> Nothing, in my opinion, can prevent the ever-increasing settlement of Europeans and Asiatics in Africa. It may come slowly or it may come fast. But it will come. North and South America, Australia and New Zealand have been filled by the overflow of Europe—transported not by political but by economic forces. Exactly the same process will happen in Africa also, as its resources are opened up.

Lothian remarked that the colour bar which had accompanied European settlement in Africa was bitterly resented by Africans, given which the 'core of the problem which is rising now, not only in Africa but 'all over the world', was: 'where is political power to reside? So far as Africa is concerned, is it to be vested indefinitely in a paramount European

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[78] "Some of Our Problems," *SLWN*, April 27, 1929.

Power? Or is it to be vested in a small white electorate who number only a fraction of the population and must therefore be an oligarchy? Or is it to be vested in every man or woman who can be said to be civilised, which must mean that sooner or later white and brown will be swamped by black?'[79]

These debates in the British press, recontextualised for a West African audience, betrayed a profound uncertainty at the heart of the colonial project about the delineation between zones of settlement and non-settlement in Africa, the existential endurance of African peoples, and the forms of sovereignty that should be negotiated between Europeans and Africans as a result. A sense of existential threat consequently pervaded West African interwar writing. Far from assured development, a colonial future carried a radical instability: 'we do not know what coming years may bring.'[80] Such instability was connected to the operation of indirect rule, which was seen, as the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* explained, in terms of a racialising fixity, 'keep[ing] the black man by himself.'[81] Since the process and threat of settlement was undergirded by medical and scientific developments, West African writing also came to express some scepticism about the notion of a unidirectional and unambivalent colonial developmentalism—suggesting, for example, that the mosquito may not be an unmitigated disaster for tropical Africa. Combined with a comparativst angle on the 'settler' element to colonialism, as I explain below, such thinking contributed to a view of British colonial rule in West Africa that departed radically from the qualified criticisms that had come before.

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[79] Lord Lothian, "The Question Mark of Africa," *SLWN*, January 24, 1931.
[80] "The South African Situation," *GCL*, September 1, 1923.
[81] "Some of Our Problems," *SLWN*, April 27, 1929.

Comparative Settlement Studies in the West African Press

I have been describing how citational techniques contributed to an exploration in the West African press of the role of settlement in colonialism, with specific reference to the renewed interwar interest in such settlement—closely tied to the pan-national and racial ideologies of the imperial core discussed in the prologue—and its relevance to West Africa. If such writing was primarily spatial in orientation, examining contemporaneous processes of settlement, a series of works also examined settlement in spatio-temporal terms, excavating both history and the present for case studies of colonial settlement and asking what lessons the fate of other 'subject races' might hold for Africans. The same citational methods I have been describing above were employed throughout this writing to assist the development of unsystematised but powerful theories on the role of settlement in colonialism: an early form, *avant la lettre*, of comparative settlement studies.

Some articles in the West African press condemned what had happened in Australasia or the United States but argued that the climate of West Africa would prevent a similar evisceration of African life. In 1939, for example, Donald Friend wrote in the *West African Pilot* about the 'Australian native' that 'a more or less open policy of extermination has been carried out against these unhappy people ever since the first settlement of 1790'. Having only been 'armed with spears and boomerangs it was fairly easy for the settlers to decimate these "murderous savages" with rifle fire', while in Tasmania 'the race became totally extinct round about 1890.' A quotation was provided from the *Australian Year Book for 1928*, in which an official had stated that while the 'aborigines' could be preserved by 'isolat[ing] them on Native reserve lands', 'it is extremely dubious whether their continued existence can serve any useful purpose.'

Nigeria had escaped this fate, wrote Friend, 'perhaps because the climate will not allow a majority of foreign settlers, perhaps because of the high standard of African

civilisation prior to the advent of Europe.' And so '[t]he African attitude toward the sacredness of land has preserved for him his domains intact', unlike the Australians, who had been 'doomed' to 'obliteration'.[82] Writing after the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in the Lagos-based *Comet*, Theodore Heline meanwhile accepted that '[n]o backward people can hold its territory indefinitely' and that the 'aboriginal Americans' had not been 'able to use this continent to the high ends for which it was prepared'. But, he added, 'this gave the white man no warrant for the three hundred years war of expulsion and extermination of the red man.'[83] The Italian quest for a colony in Ethiopia was viewed along these lines, though Heline predicted that it would fail.

But not all assessments were so sanguine. In 1925, the *Gold Coast Leader* discussed an article published in the *English Review* which had lamented the domination of whites over the 'noble' Native American race. The *Leader* commented that 'wherever the European gets into contact with weaker peoples in parts of the world where the European can live and thrive, the tendency has been to oust the aboriginal people from their legitimate rights and bring them into servitude.' What was more, 'the European would seem to have no conscience in the matter. He thinks of his security and his prosperity without the consideration of the rights of those whom he had met on the land.' This had taken place 'in America with respect to the Red Indians and in South and East Africa as far as our African brethren in those parts are concerned, and that forms one of the nasty problems of the age.'[84]

The zones of white settlement on the African continent provided a central point of comparison and analysis. Processes of indigenous immiseration and land alienation in those areas, alongside the proto-apartheid ideology that buttressed and sustained them, were

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[82] Donald Friend, "Contrast in Domination," *WAP*, April 13, 1939.
[83] Theodore Heline, "Ethiopia: A Pivotal Point in a Changing World," November 7, 1936.
[84] "Editorial Notes," *GCL*, June 27, 1925

widely reported in the West African press. In 1930, the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* reported that the prominent South African statesman General Jan Smuts had said, at a public meeting in New York, that the 'Negro' was 'next to the ass, the most patient of animals'. He had also warned his audience 'against attempts to Europeanise the Negroes of South Africa'—'a policy which Bolshevizes the Negro', he had explained, 'because Africans were a "child people."'[85] In 1935, the same newspaper condemned the 'process of unification and even of absorption that is going on condoned and sanctioned by the Colonial Office with respect to East and South Africa', arguing that 'the aggressive nature of a dominant foreign race the more necessitates protection of native lands'.[86]

In the *Gold Coast Leader*, an article found that 'relations between black and white in Africa, south of the equator' were 'anything but a credit to the local Government'. It was 'a grievous error,' they added, 'to assume that Africans elsewhere view with indifference the wretched conditions under which members of their race live there.'[87] Another *Leader* article five years later quoted from a South African newspaper: 'What is done now may decide for good or ill the future destiny of Africa as a white man's home.'[88] Dusé Mohamed Ali, writing in *The Comet*, warned that the 'South African Boers may learn to their cost that all of the African Natives may be repressed some of the time; some of them may be repressed all of the time; but all African Natives cannot be repressed all of the time.' The next month he published quotations from Sir Abe Bailey, a South African mining magnate, who had argued that '[w]hite supremacy and white civilisation are doomed if they depend solely on the protection of the colour of the white man's skin.' Ali commented dryly that the Boers relied not on intellect but on the 'cowhide whip' and 'guns'.[89]

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[85] "Round and About Notes," *SLWN*, February 22, 1930.
[86] "Rambling Talks," *SLWN*, February 16, 1935.
[87] "Scrutineer," *GCL*, July 24–31, 1920.
[88] "Black and White," *GCL,* May 30, 1925.
[89] Dusé Mohamed Ali, "About it And About …" *Comet*, February 22, 1936.

Some West African representations of European settlement in Southern Africa went further, arguing that South African policies constituted genocidal policies similar to those of European fascists. In a *West African Pilot* article titled 'Extirpation Policy', published in 1935, the Union of South Africa was seen as enacting 'a gradual extermination process worse than the Fascist-Nazi abhorrence':

> The entire Bantu people are living a life of chronic dejection and economic wretchedness, so acute, that their very manhood and racial moral virility are sapped, leaving them just mines and unskilled labour automatons … The domestic life of the Natives is a sheer mire in which they wallow in abject unremitted misery … because it has pleased the white parvenu, in search of wealth and power, to suck the life blood out of a race which has no means to rid herself of white vermins.[90]

Three months later, Nnamdi Azikiwe recounted in the same newspaper a visit to South Africa during which he had observed that the 'whites look upon the Africans like a dog under their table', giving them 'no social or political equality'—a 'savage policy' resulting in segregation and discrimination.[91] George Padmore, writing in the *African Morning Post* in 1935, excoriated the South African government for trying to 'ruin the economic basis of the Natives' and asked: 'Would the Jews of England vote to live under Hitler? Why then should the Africans vote to live under Hertzog?' It would be a 'crime', he wrote, if they came under the control of South Africa's rulers, whose brutality was equalled only by the Nazis.[92]

A work like S. D. Cudjoe's *Aids to African Autonomy* (1949) encapsulated these themes. Cudjoe centred settlement territories in his political analysis, warning of the 'unabating desire of the Boers of South Africa' to absorb African territories, which would

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[90] "Extirpation Policy," *WAP*, September 12, 1938.
[91] Zik, "Inside Stuff: Around the World," *WAP*, December 21, 1938.
[92] George Padmore, "Anglo-Boer Conflict in South Africa," *AMP,* June 4, 1935.

'seal the doom of the African Colonial peoples'.[93] He argued that it was 'not so much the backwardness of the Africans which threatens European civilisation in Africa, as the advantage which Europeans take of that backwardness. Racial segregation in Africa does not remove the dreaded contagion, for European civilisation is its own contagion'.[94] He also drew a clear comparative link between the Boers, the British, and European fascism: 'It is not possible for impartial minds to condemn Mussolini or Badoglio in Africa and applaud Cecil Rhodes or Lugard at the same time. German and Italian Fascism drew its notions of the British people not from their political democracy at home, but from the horrible pages of their Imperial history.'[95]

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In this section, I have offered a reading of the body of West African writing which assessed the possibility of white settlement in the region and compared settlement processes across time and space. Debates in the British press indicated to some West Africans a deep-rooted uncertainty about the demarcation of settlement and non-settlement zones in Africa and the existential endurance of African peoples. With this context, the future implied a possible radical instability to colonial subjecthood. The bifurcation of the continent loomed: between (privileged) white and (restricted) black, a process fuelled by medical and scientific developments that could be weaponised in the service of European 'replenishment' of the continent. While conventional wisdom had implied that the era of large-scale European settlement was over, the interwar period reintroduced a profound

[93] Cudjoe, *Aids to African Autonomy: A Review of Education and Politics in the Gold Coast*, 40.
[94] Ibid., 33.
[95] Ibid., 36.

uncertainty on this front, which only intensified as visions of settlement came to occupy prominence in European fascism.

By examining processes of settlement in spatio-temporal and comparative terms—excavating history, assessing the present, asking what lessons the fate of other 'subject races' might hold for West Africans—this body of work constituted a vital element of West African interwar theory on race and global order. To raise the possibility of a European deluge in West Africa was to fatally undermine the narrative of stabilisation and security that British colonialism sought to draw around itself. Techniques of citation and interpretation enabled radical acts of comparison—between Nazis and whites in South Africa, Native Americans and Africans, Indigenous Australians and Ethiopians—which functioned entirely outside the framework of the dominant imperial discourse. Fundamentally, such acts of comparison suggested that the very act of colonial subjection carried an implicit threat of extirpation, however much that threat may have been forestalled or prorogued. The globality of race was also, in this sense, unifying, connecting the 'subject peoples' of European imperialism through a shared subjecthood in the racialised global periphery, which created an uncertain and fractured relationship with space and time, between enforced rootedness and sudden evisceration.

A 'Contracted World': African Unity and Racial Cosmopolitanism

I close these two chapters by asking how these West African analyses of the global racial order—as understood through assessments of indirect rule, colonial politics, citizenship, the global colour bar, economic dependency and European settlement—impacted upon understandings of political community. This is a substantial topic which I can only treat briefly here. Nevertheless, I believe even a tentative account can show that the peculiar qualities of global racial ordering shaped the ways in which political community were

understood in West African writing, resulting in a certain ambivalence in approach, in which a number of frames of political community interpenetrated.

These multiple frames of political belonging may appear as contradictory and competing ideologies. But, as I have suggested with reference to pan-nationalisms in the Introduction, such apparent contradictions become far less salient when they are positioned in relation to the global racial order that they sought to transform. That order was understood as a polyvalent structure that could be combatted at multiple sites, necessitating a range of strategies in different political formations—a productively and strategically ambivalent attitude, then, rather than an incoherent one.[96] In this sense, I suggest, West African writing on political community in the period before 'decolonisation' presents an important body of work that can help us to think about the interrelationship between forms of political belonging.

West Africans Between Race, Nation and the World

The idea of the nation is both present and, often, surprisingly absent or undefined in West African interwar writing. Take, for example, this article, which was published in 1938 in the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, and which sought to conceptualise the place of Sierra Leoneans in the world:

> [A]s a Community and a Colony of people … we of Sierra Leone and its Protectorate are citizens of the world … As the papers come into our hands from day to day and week to week we are enabled to follow the doings of the restless human family in Germany, in Japan, in China, in America, Egypt—everywhere; and in our armchair we seem to be partakers of the Joys and Sorrows of people we shall never know and of places we shall never see … [Yet with regard to Italy's invasion of Ethiopia] Christians, Mohammedans and others, being members of the

[96] On the idea of strategic ambivalence and its adoption by feminist standpoint theory, see John, 'Strategic Ambivalence'. For a discussion of such ambivalence in the context of international normative theory, see Rao, *Third World Protest*.

> same Race with the Ethiopians [could have done more.] We *sang* Abyssinia, and left our kinsmen to their Fate. *But the end is not yet* … [C]itizens of the world as we have been made by the march of world events, and by the progress of thought in Science; and members of the great family of Nations into which we have been knit by Christianity … *we are an organic part of the British Empire*.[97]

In this short extract, racial, cosmopolitan, religious and imperial loyalties are all expressed, without any attempt to rank them; spaces for political mobilisation range from the 'community', 'colony' and 'protectorate' to race, religion and empire; and visions of political community are explicitly linked to the material advancements that have allowed Sierra Leoneans to follow world events as they unfold, and to feel themselves 'citizens of the world'. Yet the idea of specifically 'national' belonging does not appear— just twenty-three years before Sierra Leone became an independent country.

In West Africa, sustained discussions on nationalism and the 'nation' had initially emerged in the 1890s, as Pieter van Hensbrock has found in his study of the Gold Coast.[98] Yet as we have seen in the preliminary discussions of West African interwar economics (above) and politics (Chapter 3), articulations of West African political positionality located multiple spheres of action: imperial, local, pan-West African, pan-African, pan-coloured, and universal. The writings of Lapido Solanke and J. W. de Graft Johnson invoked the idea of the 'nation' but did so regionally, leaving the precise delimitation of regional and national boundaries unclear. Other works, such as Samuel Johnson's *History of the Yorubas*, provided 'nationalist' histories of sub-regional groups whose identities traversed official colonial boundaries.[99] Evocations of 'nationhood' in British West Africa during this period therefore tended to be ambivalent. The *Gold Coast Leader* might

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[97] "1937: A Retrospect," *SLWN*, January 1, 1938.
[98] Van Hensbrock, "Conceptualizing 'Land' and 'Nation' in Early Gold Coast Nationalism."
[99] See Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*, 60.

celebrate the notion that 'nationhood has dawned in the West African horizon,'[100] for example, or deplore the fact that 'it looks as if it is a matter of time when African nationality on the African continent will be hopelessly destroyed'.[101] But in neither case did it explain the boundaries of that nation.

Across West African interwar writing, a conceptualisation of the global racial order can be seen as existing in a productive relationship with the a deeply-felt consciousness of race, as manifested in terms of (re-)connections to the African diaspora, assertions of African and black futures, and ideas of racial awakening—often expressed, as in this example from the *Gold Coast Leader* in 1920, in terms of a marked (and masculine) corporeality:

> The black man the world over is getting tired of being kicked and tossed about as if he were the sport of the nations, and he is saying plainly that he has had enough of it and will stand the nonsense no longer. How long—indeed how long! Centuries ago his people were led in chains and shackled across trackless forests to the African coast, and thence exiled to American plantations to help build a "civilisation" for white America. The bones of his dead are strewn in many an African forest. In America, in the cotton fields, he was oppressed with an oppression which appeals to Heaven for mercy … Now he is fully awake; he stands on his feet, a full grown man, robust in every limb, stout of heart and active in brain; and he is demanding the reason why. He is demanding in the name of Heaven why he should continue to suffer himself to be kicked and tossed about, the sport of the American white.[102]

The idea of racial awakening was repeatedly expressed alongside the sense of a racialised peripheralisation that was confining, excluding, and subordinating Africans. There was, the *Gold Coast Leader* explained in 1918, a 'restless feeling' in West Africa.[103] With the New Negro movement in the US, 'at last the worm has turned'.[104] 'Under the

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[100] "The Pan-African Conference," *GCL*, July 2, 1919.
[101] "World Affairs," *GCL*, July 17, 1926.
[102] "Editorial Notes," *GCL*, May 15, 1920.
[103] "The Signs of the Times," *GCL*, September 21, 1918.
[104] "The Signs of the Times," *GCL*, January 3–10, 1920.

power and guidance of some mysterious force the soul of West Africa is getting awake,' wrote the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* in 1919. 'Indeed it is everywhere in the Negro World that this awakening is taking place, and matters have got to be re-arranged in consequence.'[105] '[W]e have been roused from our lethargic slumber,' pronounced *The Comet*. 'All over the Continent enthusiasm for new thinking and new living is in the air' as Africa moved from 'racial disintegration' to 'racial progress.'[106] '[B]lack folk the world over are now in the grip of a tremendous impulse to come together' wrote the *Gold Coast Leader*.[107] 'Racial consciousness' was 'a trend of the times,' explained the *Comet*; for if Fascism, Bolshevism and Nazism were at bottom 'the expressions of national consciousness' and each 'the result of an awakened race consciousness', then 'the wave of race consciousness' had also 'swept over the African Continent and over peoples of African descent all the world over': a 'fulfilment of the prophecy'. Africa would 'always be grateful to Europe, if for nothing else, for "imposing" upon her the civilization of the people of the West and thus hastening the evolution of her race consciousness.'[108]

Reporting on lynchings in Omaha, the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* asked: 'Is it not due to our kinsfolk in Omaha that we of Sierra Leone, should Telegraph our Sympathy? And is it not time we created a real Brother-hood of Negroes in all parts of the world?'[109] Writing about the African American poet Langston Hughes in the *African Morning Post*, H. A. B. Jones-Quartey reported that Hughes' trip to West Africa had 'brought home to him the fact that the life of the blackman was the same every where—handicapped, and that salvation for him lay largely in his power and readiness to unite with his Negro brothers

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[105] "Upset of Sierra Leone by Syrians and its Consequences," *SLWN*, July 26, 1919.
[106] S.O.N., "Is "The New Africa" a Utopia?" *Comet*, January 26, 1935.
[107] Ahinnana, "An Appeal to Liberia," *GCL,* April 12, 1924.
[108] S.O.N., "The Gist of It: Race Consciousness," *Comet*, October 26, 1935.
[109] "Black and White in America (Editorial)," *SLWN* October 25, 1919.

everywhere for their common good.'[110] Elsewhere, the newspaper explained that African Americans had resisted extermination in the US because 'the African race is a militant one.'[111] Images of the Black Atlantic proliferated, often invoking a sense of reaching, of physical proximity, the shortening of distances: 'The Hand Across the Waters';[112] 'our brethren on the other side of the Atlantic.'[113] At the same time, West Africans often bristled at the notion that they were regarded by their counterparts in the Americas as 'unlettered, untutored,' and 'very much requiring articulation through our brethren on the other side of the Atlantic'—'They know no better,' sighed the *Gold Coast Leader* in 1919, '[i]t is for us to enlighten them'.[114]

I want to suggest here that the discourse of racial awakening in West African interwar writing and its associated metaphors can help us to understand how a consciousness of race could constitute a practice of power by West Africans, a strategic adoption of race in explicit opposition to global racial ordering. We have seen that racial ordering and discrimination expanded in a range of areas during the interwar period but that, paradoxically, this was accompanied by the partial submerging of explicitly race-based language—in international law; across international organisations like the League of Nations; and within British and French colonialism, both of which adopted indirect rule policies that were premised upon race while occluding its operation. In this context, the act of *naming* race—identifying its enduring power, and advocating a kind of 'race consciousness'—can be understood as a practice of power, which allowed those who wielded it to conceptualise global order and to recognise themselves as constitutively

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[110] H. A. B. Jones-Quartey, "Langston Hughes," *AMP*, August 4, 1938.
[111] Zik, "Inside Stuff," *AMP,* June 4, 1935.
[112] "The Hand Across the Waters," *GCL*, May 18, 1929.
[113] "The Pan-African Conference," *GCL*, July 2, 1919.
[114] Ibid. Kobina Sekyi was one prominent figure who argued the diaspora could play only a secondary role in the regeneration of the continent.

international subjects: 'not external to the international but always already of it', as Vivienne Jabri has written of the postcolonial subject.[115]

In particular, 'race consciousness' and continental-diasporic relationships were often represented in the West African press as products of a shared material condition arising out of the unequal encounter of Europe and Africa and the global racial order that had emerged as a result. Race was, then, a process and not an ontology,[116] conceptualised especially in terms of the shared economic subjugation that had accompanied racial ordering. Referring to '[t]he peoples of Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and Gambia', the *West African Pilot* observed that they were 'faced with the same problems' and 'they have one destiny to fulfil' because 'there is an identical agent influencing their economic condition.' Accordingly, '[w]hat is more rational than that … the Africans should regard themselves as one conglutinated whole'? It would be a 'calamity', added the newspaper, if 'a feeling of antagonism was created between the peoples of West Africa … We long for the day when pride of colour will even obsess [*sic*] the African mind; we hope for the time when racial patriotism will so become the motive power of the African that the barriers which have been set between different tribes may tumble to the dust.'[117]

Race solidarity was explicitly advocated in the West African press as a response to collective economic peripheralisation of Africans by the white world: a class consciousness for the racialised subjects of imperial capitalism. For the *African Morning Post*, the African could only 'emancipate himself from the shackles of the capitalist' if he learned that 'he has no true sympathiser among the other races of mankind and that he has no redeemer other than himself.'[118] In 1927, the *Gold Coast Leader* advocated 'the organisation of black

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[115] Jabri, 'Disarming Norms', 386.
[116] See Mavroudi, 'Diaspora as Process'; Wolfe, *Traces of History*.
[117] "Racial Union," *WAP*, December 23, 1938.
[118] "Gold Coast and Jamaica," *AMP*, June 20, 1938.

labour throughout the world in the international sense' which meant that 'European and American exploiters will be brought to a standstill, for even capital cannot do without labour, and when fair conditions come to be imposed to make the utilisation of capital possible, one of the problems of the age will be nigh solution.'[119] Without 'a common African patriotism,' the *Leader* asserted in 1925, 'we shall continue, as a people, to remain the economic slaves of European capitalism.'[120]

George Padmore's book *How Britain Rules Africa*, published in 1938, was the most systematic elaboration of these themes during this period, just as Padmore's political trajectory and especially his withdrawal from the Comintern—where he had been tasked with organising black workers globally—also reflected an increasingly racial view of the operation of global capitalism and imperialism.[121] The aim of Padmore's book was to provide a *tour d'horizon* of British rule in Africa and to catalogue and explain its many iniquities with reference to a structural idea of racialised capitalist imperialism. He began by positioning Africa in relation to the West in terms of the economic functions that the former performed for the latter: as an 'agrarian hinterland', a 'source of supply for raw materials, a market for manufactured commodities, an outlet for the investment of surplus finance-capital in exploiting mineral resources', 'an outlet for European settlers',[122] a proto-world-systems approach that evidently drew upon Lenin and the Comintern, but gave far more salience to the operation of race.

'[A] black bourgeoisie in Africa hardly exists,' asserted Padmore; the 'Blacks are the toilers, the victims of exploitation by all';[123] 'the African race in its totality' was 'all

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[119] "Editorial Notes," *GCL*, May 28, 1927.
[120] "The Firestone Lease," *GCL*, November 14, 1925.
[121] On Padmore's trajectory, see especially James, *George Padmore and Decolonization from Below*.
[122] Padmore, *How Britain Rules Africa*, 1.
[123] Ibid., 5.

treated socially alike' vis-à-vis their self-appointed masters, the whites; 'the Blacks have no rights which a white man is bound to respect'; in Southern Rhodesia, and 'the entire African population has been reduced to a condition of actual serfs'. Padmore's analysis of economic conditions in West Africa closely paralleled those being published in the West African press (in which he also published extensively): West Africans were subjected to a 'world-wide monopoly organisation' which allowed European 'traders' to 'fix prices at their own pleasure, but always to the disadvantage of the Native.'[124] The cocoa pool was an 'unholy alliance which strangles the Africans'.[125] Jim Crow-style segregation was 'as widespread in the Gold Coast and other West African colonies as in the East Coast and South Africa'.[126]

A deeply involved participant in the Black Atlantic print networks I have been discussing in this thesis, the book—like all of Padmore's work—attests to the power of the techniques of citation, recontextualisation and bricolage that we have seen in operation across the West African newspapers. Discussing South Africa, for example, Padmore cited the South African Minister of Defence, who had been quoted in a (white) South African newspaper, the *Rand Daily Mail*, as saying: 'Whenever white men come together the rising tide of colour is a matter giving cause for uneasiness, and nowhere more so than among these home-builders in tropical Africa … the time may come when white men, women and children will have to be protected against black invaders.'[127] The evident influence of Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color* points to the importance of 'travelling theory' across networks of the White Atlantic as well as the Black Atlantic. It was in this racial-economic context that, Padmore explained towards the end of his book, '[t]here is a

[124] Ibid., 216.
[125] Ibid., 246.
[126] Ibid., 256.
[127] Ibid., 193.

tremendous feeling of racial solidarity among Blacks. Irrespective of the flag under which they happen to live, the peoples of colour have a feeling of kinship that is difficult to describe.' This was:

> the deep-rooted feeling among Blacks, that while they are scattered throughout the world under different imperialist nations, they realize that they are no more regarded as an organic part of these white nations than the Jews are regarded as a part of the German nation. Despised, denied the most elementary rights of citizenship and men; is it any wonder that bitter resentment burns in their hearts and souls, and that in various parts of Africa, this resentment has begun to take on organized forms of expression?[128]

From Race-Consciousness to African Cosmopolitanism

As I have previously examined in relation to pan-nationalism in the late nineteenth century, the sense of an African racial consciousness by no means precluded other affinities that were expressed in terms of solidarism, kinship and attachment with other branches of humanity. Growing 'racial consciousness' was expressed alongside notions of the unity of humanity, a recurrent theme in the West African texts of the period. In this final section, I suggest that such race consciousness was understood in West African writing not only as a liberatory project in the context of a global racial order, but also as potentially opening the door to a form of African cosmopolitanism that embraced particularity in the service of universalism without dissolving the one into the other. Forms of African nationalism were posited, then, as rejections of a 'narrow patriotism'.

The ability to experience new kinds of collectivity, including those that encompassed all of humanity, was directly connected in the West African press to the material changes brought about by imperialism. '[T]he world is *now* an open world—

[128] Ibid., 364.

absolutely open,' exclaimed the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* in 1919.[129] 'The narrow patriotism of past days is fast vanishing. The last sacrificial barriers which keep nations apart are doomed to early destruction.'[130] 'After all,' wrote the *Gold Coast Leader* in 1927, 'humanity is one, and the world has contracted tremendously. The weak are coming together more and more, if not physically, in sentiment and common understanding, and the latter is more powerful in the affairs of men than armies and fleets. The cry of a contracted world is for liberty and justice.'[131] A year later, the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* explained that '[t]he present world situation is such, that distance is being annihilated and contact between men of different nationalities is on the increase. But,' they warned, 'increased contact will result in increased hostility if the good feeling of brotherhood is not established.'[132]

It was therefore in the context of a 'contracted world' that the unity of Africa—'one and indivisible'[133]—came to be proposed and celebrated in the West African press. 'Africa is the only continent the interests of whose peoples are identical in that they are geographically united, while from the ethnological point of view they are of one race,' explained the *Gold Coast Leader* in 1920; 'her inward greatness and consequently her outward recognition is locked up in one word: UNITY.'[134] Later that year, the newspaper explored these questions in more detail. 'Never before were the signs of the times clearer than the present as to the coming together of Africans throughout the world,' it argued in an article titled 'Racial Unity'. 'Instinctively it is being felt that in race solidarity is the coming strength of a people who have once again in the cycle of the ages to contribute

[129] "A New Venture in London for the Welfare of Africa," *SLWN*, April 5, 1919.
[130] "Ring out the Old: Ring in the New," *SLWN*, January 4, 1919.
[131] "International Relations," *GCL*, April 2, 1927.
[132] "A Suicidal Policy," *SLWN*, August 25, 1928.
[133] "Men and Matters," *Comet*, November 13, 1936.
[134] "An Epoch," *GCL*, Janauary 31, 1920.

substantially to the new civilisation that is about dawning … to-day all peoples of one ethnic origin are feeling their way toward one another, and it is satisfactory that the African is doing the same.'

Having been scattered like the Jewish people, Africans had developed a similar racial consciousness, argued the newspaper. And given the major contributions that Africa could make to civilization, an 'Africa intelligently combined and co-operative' would be a benefit to the whole world and not only to Africans. While the imperialists had imagined that 'Africa would always be willing to be bled for the benefit of Europe', the development of affinities among Africans was helping them to demand an end to such inequality. 'Economically Africa can starve Europe in no time … We desire now to found for ourselves a place in the history of mankind more abiding than any that has gone before. And it is also easy to see that by promoting the unity of the Ethiopian race we shall be indirectly promoting the unity of the entire human race.'[135] A regular column by 'Scrutineer' in the same issue suggested that 'the great Negro race is coming together in bond of sympathy under the influence of an invisible agency, one touch of a section making the whole race kin.'[136]

We have seen in all the previous chapters that evocations of African and black 'race consciousness'—in Marcus Garvey's newspaper, for example—emerged alongside a sense of the common cause shared by the colonised world in overturning the global racial order. As the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* put it, the division of mankind into 'advanced' and 'backward' races had led to vociferous protests from those deemed to fall into the latter category: 'whether in Africa, Asia or America'. Given the similarities in the subjugation of India and West Africa, the newspaper argued it was 'necessary … for our salvation and

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[135] "Racial Unity," *GCL,* July 24–31, 1920.
[136] "Scrutineer," *GCL,* July 24–31, 1920.

redemption, that we worship the unity in multiplicity and the multiplicity in unity.'[137] As another article in the same newspaper had it some years later, the 'strategy that the white man is constantly using to suppress us' was that of division: 'they are constantly sundering us'.[138] It was in this context that the West African press exhibited a nascent Third Worldism, looking forward to 'the unity of sentiment that must gradually encircle the whole coloured world';[139] reporting on anti-colonial struggles elsewhere, with a particular focus on India;[140] imagining the 'uniting [of] Africa and Asia against the white man's civilization';[141] and hinting at a shared 'destiny of the dark skinned peoples.'[142] It was also in this sense that Kwame Nkrumah's early political philosophy came to revolve so tightly around a notion of layered unity, as S. K. B. Asante has aptly put it: 'unity among the Gold Coast people, unity in West Africa, and unity of the coloured races.'[143]

Such invocations of unity, strategic as they were, often displayed little interest in precise institutional configurations. This was to become a prominent criticism of pan-Africanism in the postcolonial era.[144] But the West African writing of the interwar period reveals an ambivalence derived from an unwillingness to posit too firmly a set of political boundaries that might themselves simply become constraints given the unstable, protean and highly mobile nature of the threat of racialisation. For if, as the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* had it, 'whether race or nation Negroes are defenceless everywhere',[145] what difference would evolution to a 'nation' mean when the absence of sovereignty was an observable feature pertaining to peoples racialised as black whether they were under

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[137] Akibo-Betts, "Unity," *SLWN*, May 15, 1920.
[138] "Help Yourselves and Others Will Help You," *SLWN*, August 2, 1924.
[139] "Editorial Notes," *GCL*, February 9, 1923.
[140] "Great Negro to Great Indian," *WAP,* 14 August, 1938.
[141] "Ethiopia: A Pivotal Point," *Comet*, November 7, 1936.
[142] Thomas Dosumu-Johnson, "The Negro Race: Its Place in Civilization," *SLWN,* March 3, 1934.
[143] Asante, 'The Neglected Aspects of the Activities of the Gold Coast Aborigines Rights Protection Society', 40.
[144] See, for example, Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 282–87.
[145] "Whither in the Youth League Bound?" *SLWN*, August 6, 1938.

imperial rule or not? If, as the same newspaper asserted, the League of Nations was nothing but 'an instrument to perpetuate white supremacy',[146] what hope did formal participation in the institutions of global order offer to Africans? And if, as Kobina Sekyi argued, 'Europe really knows no such thing as Nationality; she knows only Empire',[147] what hope did nationality as a principle really hold? These questions would animate much of the critical discussion of African nationalism in the postcolonial era.

Conclusion

I have assessed in this chapter the questions of economics, land and settlement that animated much interwar writing in West Africa. The vagaries of the interwar economy of British West Africa were understood throughout the West African press as connected to the operation of a global racial order. The economic marginalisation of West Africa created a tragic and sclerotic system, a fundamentally skewed global economy in which the African could not hope to succeed. The understudied spectre of white settlement in West Africa also adds, I have suggested, important detail to this conception of a global racial order. Finally, I have examined the implications of this economic and spatial analysis of British imperialism on forms of political thinking in West Africa. West African writing of the interwar period, I have suggested, displays an unwillingness to demarcate too firmly a set of political boundaries that might themselves become constraints given the unstable, protean and highly mobile nature of the threat of racialisation. This was a productive and strategic ambivalence to the question of political boundaries that can help us to think about the interrelationship between forms of political belonging and global order as a whole.

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[146] Thomas Dosumu-Johnson, 'The Negro Race: Its Place in Civilization," *SLWN*, March 3, 1934.
[147] Langley, *Ideologies of Liberation in Black Africa*, 244.

Écoutez le monde blanc

——AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

4

Locating Whiteness in French Imperialism

In this chapter and the next, I examine texts that were written by African and Antillean political activists, writers, poets and intellectuals in interwar Paris.[1] My aim is to describe, and try to explain, the flourishing of a set of racially-inflected perspectives on the constitution, structure and effects of French imperialism. These views, which became central to later critical writing on imperialism in French by figures like Frantz Fanon and

[1] Why do I examine francophone newspapers published in Paris and not in West Africa? In French-controlled interwar West Africa, there was simply no equivalent to the flourishing and combative press in Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast and Nigeria that I have explored in the previous two chapters. The closest parallel is the constellation of newspapers that emerged in Southern Dahomey, in modern-day Benin. But while I have studied the Dahomeyan newspapers in the Archives Nationales of Benin in Porto Novo, my feeling is that they deserve their own contextualised study. In this chapter, I focus on African and Antillean writings in metropolitan France, part of the SLOTFOM collection that is currently housed in the Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer in Aix-en-Provence.

Aimé Césaire, were virtually non-existent in the written record of the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries. It was during 1920s and 1930s that they came to be developed in newspapers published by African and Antillean organisations in Paris. They represent a significant 'racial turn' that, I argue, contributed to the articulation of a series of connections between French imperialism and the global racial order.

Building on recent scholarship, I seek to show some of the ways in which France and its empire between the two world wars became sites for the formulation and implementation of policies based on ideas of racial difference and hierarchy. From immigration control to citizenship policy, France's putative colour-blindness was belied by decisions that reflected the imaginative ordering of the world in terms of race. Those policies, and attempts to understand them, traversed the boundaries of the French empire. I am interested, in particular, in the ways in which that traversal came to influence writing and thinking on colonialism, nationalism, and political community at the Parisian vector of the interwar Black Atlantic. Traversal, comparison, and citation are the major themes of this chapter and the next.

Whiteness, we have seen in the previous chapter, came to prominence during the interwar period as a conceptual glue binding together the 'West' in the paradoxical context of an enduring core-periphery order and the profusion of global claims, including in the colonised world, to juridical equality. France was by no means immune to its power. I want to suggest that an international relations view that is attuned to global order—which I have defined as the overarching pattern of activity that constitutes the 'international' as such and allows for the exercise of power within it—can bring into view what the Martinican poet Aimé Césaire called 'the white world', and allow us to see how that world impacted Africans and Antilleans who were ruled by France.

By employing the lexicon of race to describe aspects of French imperialism and to identify its underlying imperatives, I argue that these black writers in Paris challenged the discourse of legitimation for that imperialism through the adoption of a comparativist and transnational perspective. They also developed, or implied, a counter-narrative about that imperialism, which located the French empire-state within a global racial order that applied spatial and temporal fixity to subjugated populations in the perpetuation of a hierarchically-ordered world. Folding into a conception of a global racial order the myriad problems and uncertainties generated by France's particular colonial structure, they developed a critique of French colonialism that bore strong resemblance to the critique of the global imperial order being articulated across the Black Atlantic, by African Americans and West Africans under British rule, at the same time. The articulation of this view occurred within the specific French imperial context. But it depended, crucially, upon acts of imaginative travel and comparison outside that context. This allowed for the positioning of the French empire-state within a wider imperial order defined by the production of racial difference and the enforcement of racial fixity.

As elsewhere across the Atlantic, the materiality of this political thought—in particular, its embeddedness in transnationally-oriented print cultures—was central to its concerns. Print, travel and migration were essential in creating the conditions in which black writers in France could expand their understandings of French imperialism and global order, and reflect upon the consequences of that analysis for the possibilities of political freedom under colonialism. Intertextual methods of citation were manoeuvred into an oppositional practice of power, in which the language of race and whiteness—carrying citational traces from both the Black and White Atlantics—destabilised the conceptual barriers between France and the global system as a whole, revealing a powerful logic of world power.

This chapter aims to provide a series of elaborations, at the Parisian vector of the Black Atlantic, of the animating themes of the thesis: racial affinity, nationalism, and the connection of each to the 'grand machinery' of the world. Within both French nationalism and forms of black nationalism in France, transnational imaginaries framed in terms of race underwrote the idea of the 'nation'. Those imaginaries arose from an assessment of how forms of collectivity framed in terms of race existed in a relationship with global order and its attendant hierarchies, shaping assessments about what was politically possible both within France and outside it. This was the context for the profusion of the idea of solidarities framed in terms of race.

* * *

I begin this chapter with an analysis of the modes of government with which France ruled African and African-descended populations during the interwar period in both West Africa and the French metropole, with the aim of providing a backdrop to the analytical discussion that follows. I then examine a central element of the racial turn in black writing in interwar Paris: the adoption of the language of whiteness in relation to both global order and the French empire-state. I explore how thinking in terms of whiteness and a global racial struggle came to influence discourse in interwar Paris, both in terms of official policy and in relation to the strongly oppositional view taken by the black newspaper *La Race Nègre*. This reading of whiteness, I suggest, had significant implications for the relationship between black nationalists and the Communist movement. I discuss how, and with what effects, even those newspapers and organisations that hoped to expand French citizenship to Africans and Antilleans could, at times, adopt the language of whiteness when reading global order.

Finally, I look at the question of the interrelationship between this global ontology and a global ethics, as elaborated in the black newspapers of interwar Paris. A range of reflections upon the nature of political affinity in the modern world converged on an idea of the significance of racial consciousness and cohesiveness—an emphasis which was common to many of the newspapers I examine, notwithstanding their varying positions on political strategy. Just as I have suggested in a broader sense throughout this study, I argue here that these francophone perspectives on race and nation cannot be understood as ideological positions apart from the assessments of global order that underwrote them, and apart from an account of the material changes that facilitated their emergence.

The French Empire-State: Modes of Government

I want to begin by sketching the shape of interwar France and its empire, focusing on the modalities by which it ruled Africans and Antilleans. Having reached what would be its greatest ever physical extent, France controlled nine percent of the earth's landmass by July 1920. It had retained its grand colonial federations: French West Africa (Afrique occidentale française, or AOF), French Equatorial Africa (Afrique équatoriale française, or AEF) and French Indochina (Indochine française); meanwhile, under the League of Nations mandates system, it now also administered large areas of the former territories of the Ottoman and German Empires: Syria, Lebanon, Togo and Cameroon. It continued to exercise control over Morocco and Tunisia as protectorates and over Algeria as an integral part of France. Its sovereignty continued to extend to Martinique and Guadeloupe in the Caribbean, to French Guiana in South America, and to Réunion in the Indian Ocean. With its occupation of the Rhineland throughout the 1920s, it was overextended even in Europe.[2]

[2] Thomas, *The French Empire Between the Wars*, 1–5.

Yet the term 'empire' was absent. Since the Napoleonic Wars the label had been largely discarded, and in official discourse it was briefly revived only twice: first by Napoléon III, and later in the draft Vichy constitution (which was never adopted).[3] The appellation 'la plus grande France', which was usually preferred, is a curious one—not least because, as has been pointed out, it is a comparative form without any evident point of comparison.[4] The term Frederick Cooper and others have used, 'empire-state', better captures the ways in which France's myriad territories were brought together under a particular brand of transnational nationalism. There are two particular contexts I want to summarise here: French West Africa and metropolitan France.[5]

In French West Africa, the 1920s and 1930s reverberated with the political impact of the First World War. Governed throughout the period by an intermediate generation of colonial administrators—after the era of conquest and 'pacification', but before the post-World War II age of 'technocratic' colonial administration—interwar French West Africa was in a state of flux. Its politics were in obvious need of reform, but the direction of that reform was less clear.[6] One thing seemed certain: 'the page of exploitation and conquest is finished', as the governor-general of French West Africa, Jules Brévié, declared at the close of the 1920s.[7]

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[3] Quinn, *The French Overseas Empire*, 5. On the Second French Empire (1852–70), see Hazareesingh, *From Subject to Citizen*. By contrast, while Britain's imperial expansion had also been accompanied, at an earlier stage, by just such appellative coyness, that had decisively changed by the late nineteenth century. See Todd, "A French Imperial Meridian, 1814–1870" and Porter, *The Lion's Share*.

[4] Little, '"La Plus Grande France"'.

[5] I have evidently missed the French-speaking Caribbean, the Antilles, from this list, due to considerations of space and time. I do discuss texts by Antillean writers here, as elsewhere, but do not have space for a separate and detailed consideration of the Caribbean political and sociological context.

[6] Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914*, 5–6.

[7] Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 68. Brévié made this statement in 1930. Georges Hardy made a similar declaration in 1931, as Wilder points out.

As a federation of colonies, French West Africa was highly centralised and governed according to a strict chain of command that resembled a military hierarchy. It was eight times the size of France and, by the late 1930s, had an estimated population of about fifteen million.[8] Juridically, the system was most powerfully represented to its subjects through the infamous *indigénat*: a 'regime of exception' in which administrative power asserted itself through a system of rule by decree, which permitted punishments to be arbitrarily imposed without any procedural oversight for a range of vaguely-defined crimes.[9] Only a small minority of West Africans under French rule could escape the strictures of the *indigénat*. Africans born in the Four Communes of Senegal—Dakar, Rufisque, St. Louis and Gorée—were known as *originaires*, and they technically possessed French citizenship (referred to as *citoyenneté dans le statut*) as a consequence of the municipal status that these cities had been granted between the end of the eighteenth and the middle of the nineteenth centuries.[10]

It was clear, as the 1920s progressed, that a system of dual justice was operating in French West Africa, with separate legal codes for citizens and subjects. As has been observed, far from a modern republic this actually resembled the *ancien régime* in the way that 'legal status became a function of one's social category rather than of national membership or territorial residence'.[11] (We have seen in previous chapters that such

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[8] Delavignette, *Freedom and Authority in French West Africa*, 31.
[9] On the indigénat see: Mann, "What was the Indigénat?" (who invokes the 'regime of exception); Merle, "Retour Sur Le Régime de L'indigénat" and "De la « légalisation » de la violence en contexte colonial. Le régime de l'indigénat en question."; Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom*, 14; Asiwaju, "Control through Coercion, a Study of the Indigénat Regime in French West African Administration 1887-1946"; Spiegler, "Aspects of Nationalist Thought Among French-Speaking West Africans, 1921-1939," 7–10.
[10] There is a large literature on the politics and sociology of the Four Communes in the context of French West Africa. See especially Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*, 1–20; Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal*; Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*; Diouf, 'The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the Originaires of the Four Communes (Senegal)'; Coquery-Vidrovitch, 'Nationalité et Citoyenneté En Afrique Occidentale Français'; Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*; Crowder, *Senegal*.
[11] Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 108.

'bipolar' legal systems, as Mahmood Mamdani has termed them, proliferated throughout colonial Africa in response to the 'native question'.)[12] Such systems formed the complex legal context in which West Africans found themselves. For West African expatriates in the metropole, questions over their own juridical status, as well as that of their families and communities at home, would influence their thinking on colonialism.

French West Africa was tied to metropolitan France during the interwar period more tightly than ever before, primarily due to the participation of millions of West Africans in World War I. Between 1914 and 1918, about 140,000 West Africans served in the French Army as combatants on the western front, over 96 percent of whom were *tirailleurs sénégalais* and who, up to 1917, had mostly been conscripted under conditions of severe coercion.[13] The war brought to the fore the variegated legal statuses under the French empire-state in two key ways. First, the success of Blaise Diagne in recruiting for the war had the effect of raising hopes for reform, especially among those who enlisted in the French Army and were promised citizenship as a result. Their anger over the '*dette de sang*' (blood debt) owed to them by France would reverberate through the post-war period.[14]

Second, the war left a significant expatriate population of Africans and Antilleans in metropolitan France. As Michael Goebel has recently explained, interwar Paris was *the* anti-imperial metropolis, a space of unparalleled political exchange for many expatriates from African, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly for those living under French rule; 'transnational and transregional networks and intellectual exchange centred in

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[12] Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 109.
[13] On the role of Africans in World War I, see Lunn's outstanding oral history, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom*; Michel, *Les Africains et la Grande Guerre: L'appel à l'Afrique*; Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*; Balesi, *From Adversaries to Comrades-In-Arms*; Clayton, *France, Soldiers and Africa*. On the numbers of West Africans who served in the French Army and on their coercive recruitment, see Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom*, 1, 122, 48.
[14] See Dewitte, *Mouvements Nègres*, 10.

interwar Paris elucidated the systemic global connections of imperialism and opened new horizons', providing 'a vantage point that clarified the contours of a global system'.[15]

Locating Whiteness in French Imperialism

In this section, I move to examining a central element of the racial turn in black writing in interwar Paris: the adoption of the language of whiteness in relation to both global order and the French empire-state. As scholars have recently uncovered in detail, race and whiteness came to play a significant role in interwar France in both metropole and colony: in the development and imposition of immigration controls and regulations; in the fixation on French citizenship as pertaining to those defined as assimilable, leading to racialised and gendered embodiments of Frenchness; and in the heightened consciousness of race expressed in French-controlled Africa, particularly French West Africa.[16]

After assessing how the idea of a global racial struggle which drew upon the concept of whiteness came to influence discourse in interwar France, I address the strongly oppositional view taken by the black newspaper, *La Race Nègre*—in whose analysis French colonialism was seen as constitutively racialised, bent upon a white *corps politique*—that also drew upon a reading and recontextualisation of some of the same sources. I ask how this reading of whiteness came to affect the relationship between black nationalists and Communism, and why even those newspapers and organisations which

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[15] Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis*, 3–4. On the presence of colonial expatriates in Paris during this period see especially, for a general view: Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis*; Liauzu, *Aux origines des tiers-mondismes*; Biondi, *Les anticolonialistes*. On Africans and Antilleans, see Dewitte, *Les Mouvements Nègres en France 1919-1939*; Spiegler, 'Aspects of Nationalist Thought Among French-Speaking West Africans, 1921-1939'; and Genova, *Colonial Ambivalence, Cultural Authenticity, and the Limitations of Mimicry in French-Ruled West Africa, 1914-1956*.

[16] See note 19. I do not undertake here a comprehensive assessment of the politics of interwar France, on which a vast literature exists. For an overview and references, see Thomas, *The French Empire Between the Wars*, 1–30.

hoped to expand French citizenship to Africans and Antilleans also at times adopted the language of whiteness.

This section is intended to connect to, and expand upon, the broader theme of this study on the relationship between nationalism and its attendant and apparently antithetical doctrines (internationalism, transnationalism, pan-nationalism). A guiding theme of this thesis is an interrogation of the conceptual boundary that is often posed between such ideas, which I have suggested are better understood not as abstractly-definable doctrines but as contingent political projects that have emerged historically in relation to global order as a whole and out of specifically enabling material conditions.

The location of whiteness in French imperialism provides a substantive elaboration on this theme. Within both French nationalism and forms of black nationalism in France (linked to African and Antillean nationalisms), a transnational imaginary framed in racialised terms underwrote the idea of the nation and the project of the nation. That imaginary was not simply a mystical vision. It arose from an assessment of how forms of collectivity framed in terms of race existed in a relationship with global hierarchies and the North/South bifurcation of the world. As I explore below, forms of disillusionment with the prospects for expanding French citizenship fuelled black nationalism. But even for those who were not so disillusioned and who continued to believe in the prospects for a reformed France, ideas of racial collectivity and whiteness came to influence their thinking and writing.

The White Atlantic: Interwar France and 'The Invading Flood'

To begin, let us consider an event which took place not at the offices of *La Race Nègre*, but elsewhere in Paris: at the Pasteur Institute, on Rue du Dr Roux in the city's 15th arrondissement. In October 1926, the building was the setting for the Thirteenth Annual

Congress of the Société de médécine publique (Society of Public Medicine). The central topic of discussion was immigration. The keynote address was given by two officials who worked for the French government: Georges Dequidt, from the Ministry of Interior, and Georges Forestier, a departmental health inspector. Together, they warned their audience of 'the advanced indices of the twilight of our Western Civilization and the decline of the white race'. They cited at length the American eugenicist Madison Grant's book *The Passing of the Great Race*, which was originally published in 1916 but had not been translated into French until 1926. The preface to the French translation had been written by Count Georges Vacher de Lapouge, the influential anthropologist, eugenicist and socialist (along with Marx's son-in-law, he had founded the French Workers' Party.) Dequidt and Forestier relayed to the members of the Société the advice of Vacher de Lapouge to his countrymen: it was vital that they not 'forget that the first waves of Orientals and Slavs that are breaking on France presage the invading flood which threatens to submerge that which is left of our civilization and the health of our race.'[17]

I have discussed in Chapter 1 the attentive reading of white supremacist writing—in particular, the writing of Madison Grant's epigone, Lothrop Stoddard, who published *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* in 1920—within the black nationalist movement in the US. The spread of those texts to France demonstrates their ability to cross the Atlantic and to transmit meaning about the world to those in a very different national context. The keynote speakers at the Société de médicine publique (and, as we shall see, the editors of *La Race Nègre*), found that Grant and Stoddard provided a

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[17] Schneider, *Quality and Quantity*, 236. See Dequidt and Forestier, "Les Aspects Sanitaires Du Problème de L'immigration En France." Grant's book was published in the United States in 1916, but its French translation did not appear until 1926. Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Colour*, originally published in 1920, debuted in France in 1925. Vacher de Lapouge, who (along with Gobineau) was an important French influence on Nazi eugenics, had also advocated the idea that selectionist breeding should be performed by men in service to the nation, rather like military service. See Mottier, 'Eugenics and the State', 220.

language for understanding global order and the importance of race within it. Before discussing the adoption of that language by *La Race Nègre*, I want to discuss here the context to its prior adoption by the Société de médécine publique, explaining in particular some of the ways in which racial ordering and thinking came to intersect with French interwar republicanism.

By the time Dequidt and Forestier delivered their address in 1926, France had become the most important destination for immigrants in the industrialised world, surpassing even the United States. Over the course of twenty years France's foreign population almost tripled, a demographic shift unknown to other European nations until after the Second World War. [18] The sociologist René Maunier warned in 1932 that France faced 'penetration' by 'thousands, hundreds of thousands of natives' arriving as immigrants.[19] In response, France developed the 'largest, most sophisticated immigration service anywhere in the world',[20] a vast system of identification, segregation and enforcement directed at the workers, dissidents and refugees who had arrived in France since 1914. Between 1919 and 1933, over 93,000 foreigners were expelled by order of the French Interior Ministry.[21]

Tyler Stovall has shown how the First World War brought a significant racialised and non-European population to France for the first time in the country's history. It was during the war that 'concepts of racial difference based on skin color became a significant factor in French working-class life for the first time', when 'people of color came to symbolize both the war in general and its deleterious impact on the French working class

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[18] Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race*, 1; Lewis, *The Boundaries of the Republic*, 1. See also Ezra, *The Colonial Unconscious*. For key works on immigration in interwar France, see Rosenberg, *Policing Paris*; Noiriel and Tilly, *The French Melting Pot*.
[19] Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 130.
[20] Rosenberg, *Policing Paris*, ix.
[21] Ibid.

in particular'.[22] Immigration policy in interwar France was, as the work of Elisa Camiscioli has demonstrated, simultaneously sexualised and racialised, revealing the 'salience of racial hierarchies and the reproductive practices which sustained them'. Immigrant labour power—a key imperative of interwar policy—was 'evaluated and hierarchized with persistent reference to racial origins'.[23] Camiscioli has also shown, importantly, that while various groups were subjected to racialisation in interwar France (including Jews, white immigrants and colonized people), 'in the decades which preceded the Vichy state, it was a color-based racism which commanded the most authority.'[24] An analysis of debates over mixed-race ('*métis*') children in the French empire by Emmanuelle Saada has also indicated the central role played by race in the definition of French nationality from the 1890s to the 1930s.[25]

The work of these scholars has revealed how, in the context of a demographic crisis provoked by the First World War, French imperial and citizenship policy privileged particular embodiments of 'Frenchness' over others.[26] France was the first country to recognise the pattern of a declining birthrate. That discovery sparked the rise of a powerful pro-natalist lobby, whose efforts culminated in the *Code de la famille*, a law passed in 1939 that, among other measures, severely restricted the sale of contraceptives.[27] Neo-Malthusian, eugenicist, 'social hygiene' and immigration restriction movements emerged. Each claimed to hold the keys to the true biological 'regeneration' of the French population,

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[22] Stovall, 'The Color Line behind the Lines', 739–40.
[23] Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race*, 2–6.
[24] Ibid., 15.
[25] Saada, *Empire's Children* (see especially chapter 7).
[26] On the French republican tradition, see Hazareesingh, *Political Traditions in Modern France*, chap. 3. On the concepts of embodiment and intimacy and their relation to colonialism, see Voss and Casella, *The Archaeology of Colonialism*. For a sociological view, see especially Shilling, *The Body and Social Theory*.
[27] See Watson, 'Birth Control and Abortion in France since 1939'.

influenced by widespread neo-Lamarckian beliefs in the hereditary qualities of populations.[28]

For Saada, the ostensibly abstract rights inherent in French republicanism cannot be dissociated from white racial embodiment: the very foundation of republican citizenship (and the legal framework that it relied upon) was racial, as the *métis* question revealed. For Camiscioli, racial hierarchies and their attendant reproductive practices led to the 'proliferation of racialized embodiments'.[29] In particular, the 'French race' was embodied in the ways in which intimate bodily practices came to signify national and racial membership, despite the abstract individualism upon which republican political theory is ostensibly based.[30]

These developments within the metropole had important concomitants in the colonies, including French West Africa. The deep-seated ambivalence at the heart of French imperial policy between the doctrines of assimilation and association has long been observed.[31] Raymond Betts has shown how the two decades immediately preceding the First World War saw a major debate within the French establishment on the advisability of a policy of assimilation for governing the newly-expanded empire. This period saw the rise of the doctrine of 'association'—a hazily-defined term, but one which was understood to signal a clear break from earlier policies in its unwillingness to incorporate colonial populations into the French body politic.

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[28] Schneider, *Quality and Quantity*, 1–5.
[29] Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race*, 2.
[30] Ibid., 9.
[31] For contemporaneous studies see Roberts, *The History of French Colonial Policy, 1870-1925* and Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa* both written in the 1920s. Later works include Thompson, *French West Africa*; Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914*; Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal*; Crowder, *Senegal*; Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*.

Association emphasised the need for variation in colonial practice, as opposed the supposed rigidity of assimilation; it pointed to specificities of each region (in terms of ethnicity, geography and level of development), as opposed to the application of a single approach to all colonies; and it tended to advocate the 'evolution' of different colonial populations along their own lines, as opposed to their convergence to an ideal standard. As Betts points out, these ideas were not really new. But they found powerful expression in the twentieth century in works like Jules Harmand's Nietzsche-influenced *Domination et colonisation* (1910)—'the systematic repudiation of assimilation', as Harmand declared—and in the rise of scientific ideas of race.[32]

It was during the 1920s, at precisely the time that immigration controls were being built in the metropole, that French colonial policy in West Africa began to display a heightened consciousness of race and of the impermeability of the differences between (white) Europeans and (black) Africans. As Alice Conklin has shown, the key turning point took place during the war itself, when revolts and widespread passive resistance against conscription in West Africa in 1915–16 coincided with the spread of pan-African and anticolonial ideologies in port cities like Dakar. France's post-war international position, defined by a keenly-felt sense of vulnerability, led to a new emphasis on race difference and separation. Sexual relations between French and African people, once encouraged, were now condemned; discourse in France itself on topics such as immigrant labour became more clearly racist; the National Assembly shifted rightwards; and the eugenics, social hygiene and pro-natalist movements experienced rapid growth. 'In West Africa as in France,' writes Conklin, 'an intensifying respect for hierarchy in all its forms—social, sexual, and racial—represented the Third Republic's true face in the 1920's.'[33] Such beliefs

[32] Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914*, 122.
[33] Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 211.

penetrated colonial governance in West Africa, as can be seen in the systematic use of forced labour. For Conklin, the conservative turn within France is connected to the relinquishing of France's pre-war assimilationist aspirations in Africa.

The central elements of population management in interwar France—immigration control, natalism, citizenship policy—were, then, suffused with the imaginative ordering of populations in terms of race. This was what allowed Dequidt and Forestier to cite Madison Grant and implicitly ventriloquize Stoddard. Race theory from the US gave the anti-immigration argument of the French government officials a particularly global valence. It suggested that what Aimé Césaire would call 'the white world' shared a cohesiveness and sense of purpose, and it made a case for the position of France within that world. The adoption of a transnational framework across the White Atlantic in the service of national goals was not unusual: by contrast, it was constitutive of the way in which whiteness operated. As Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds have argued, '[t]he project of whiteness was … at once transnational in its inspiration and identifications but nationalist in its methods and goals.'[34] Interwar France was a key site of this thinking, where a range of eugenicist proposals germinated. Those that were not implemented in the 1930s would find the Vichy "National Revolution" a more amenable environment for their eventual flowering.[35]

The Black Atlantic: Stoddard and 'The Politics of Assimilation'

I turn now to the counter-readings of whiteness in the black newspapers of interwar Paris. Two and a half years after the meeting of the Société de médécine publique which had

[34] Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, 4.
[35] Schneider, *Quality and Quantity*, 281.

warned about the 'flood' of immigration, the radical black newspaper *La Race Nègre*[36] ('The *Nègre*[37] Race') published an article titled: 'Parliamentary representation or a chimeric panacea?'[38] The article was part of an intervention by the newspaper into the much-debated question of parliamentary representation for subjects of the French Empire. It began by observing that, one hundred years after the French colonial conquest, Algeria's indigenous population had been offered only extremely limited parliamentary representation. The question of Algeria's status was being investigated by an inter-ministerial committee. But it could hardly be solved by technical means: the crux of the problem was political ('il est d'ordre politique').

To demonstrate this point, the article compared the treatment of the Antilles and Réunion, which had been easily 'assimilated' into France in 1848 and their populations thus permitted to elect representatives to the French Parliament, to Algeria's 'hypocritical' assimilation, which continued to disenfranchise the majority of its indigenous population. In Algeria, the 'political hypocrisy of assimilation' had immediately dissolved in the face of 'the burning need to protect the European population against the indigenous "flood".' Why should the Algerian case be so different from the earlier cases of the Antilles and Réunion?

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[36] *La Race Nègre* was the newspaper of the political group Ligue de défense de la race Nègre (LDRN), which was formed by Lamine Senghor and Tiemoko Garan Kouyaté out of a split from the Communist-supported group Comité de défense de la race Nègre (CDRN). The CDRN had published its own newspaper, *La Voix des Nègres*.

[37] The word '*Nègre*' has a set of specific and varied connotations in French. It is most often translated as 'Negro', but at other times the sense can be more pejorative. Its meaning was not fixed during the interwar period. A movement to reclaim it as a term of pride formed one important element of black political consciousness in French-speaking territories. Given this history, '*nègre*' does not translate precisely into any of the various English alternatives. I have chosen, therefore, not to translate the term. For an illuminating discussion on this question, see the section 'Translating the word *Nègre*' in Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, 25–38.

[38] N.P.J. "La représentation parlementaire coloniale ou la panacée chimérique?" *La Race Nègre* (henceforth *LRN*), April 1929.

Since the assimilation of those small islands in 1848, explained the article, successive conquests had seen the French Empire expand to Tunisia, Indochina, West and Equatorial Africa, and Madagascar:

> A great empire has been established, covering millions of square kilometres and peopled by around 70 million inhabitants, a figure which, by virtue of the vitality of the indigenous races, could be doubled, or even tripled, in the near future.
>
> Here, the politics of assimilation have been brought to a halt; eyes have been opened to their dangers. The colonial population being superior in number to that of the metropole, what will be the politics of France with regard to its immense 'possessions'? It can no longer be *assimilatrice*; the politics of association, well-understood, would lead us to independence; colonialism being only a form of 'tutelage'.
>
> Inevitably, assimilation will pose the question of political representation in French legislative assemblies: either its full consequences will be accepted or attempts will be made to attenuate them, leading to injustice. Indeed, based on the demographics, the majority of the two Chambers would eventually pass onto colonial representatives. *This would lead to a 'rising tide of colour'*. Revenge of the descendants of Ham and Shem! Good people of France, do not worry! I know your 'honorables' are unwilling to merrily pave the way for their own political obsolescence. Incidentally, the incidents which marked the debate over the last electoral reform […] are significant. This is evidenced by the fact that the amendments seeking an increase in the number of colonial deputies were, in beautiful concert, rejected for all of the old colonies, but adopted for Algeria. It is true that the latter has a European electoral college, while the others are peopled by electors of colour. That told us more than a useless speech would have.

It was, then, 'the menace of a proportional representation', in an empire in which whites were no longer assured a majority, that prevented true colonial reform and accounted for the difference in treatment between Algeria and the Antilles. Hence the opposition of *La Race Nègre* to 'assimilationist' demands.[39] 'Either representation will be

[39] Interwar colonial politics has often been divided into 'assimilationist' versus 'anti-assimilationist' or 'nationalist' camps, with reference to the respective hopes of various groups and figures for expanding political rights within the French imperial structure. Like many others who have written about such politics, I do not think these labels are adequate. What is called 'assimilationist' often refers to contingent projects with strong elements of cultural nationalism; 'nationalists', meanwhile, could also simultaneously make demands for political rights within the

proportional or we should be spared all representation,' the article concluded. The only alternative was colonialism as 'perpetual theft, the violation of the right of peoples to self-determination, the tyranny of the strong against the weak.'[40]

What is immediately clear from the argument made here by *La Race Nègre* is the centrality given to the (unattributed) citation from Lothrop Stoddard. The phrase 'rising tide of color' is first given in English before being translated into French as 'La marée montante des humanités de couleur': a very unusual act of bilingual repetition that self-consciously draws attention to the act of translation. Stoddard's words are italicised for emphasis and invoked at the apex of the argument against assimilationism. While *La Race Nègre* was, clearly, opposed to the political positions articulated by the Société de médicine publique, it too found in Grant and Stoddard a convincing argument for understanding the politics of France and a key source for intervening in the debate over political assimilation. For both organisations, the policy of interwar France in relation to the racialised populations it managed in metropole and colony could only be understood through a reading of race theory which emerged from the US but which possessed a global outlook. Race was seen as essentially global and indissolubly connected to state power. As a metaphor for threats to the core-periphery global order, 'the rising tide of color' spoke to diverse audiences within France.[41]

For *La Race Nègre*, the language of whiteness provided a means of conceptualising and indicting the intra-imperial solidarities which undergirded global order and which necessitated a black nationalist project. An article in the newspaper in 1929 explained that

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French system. As a shorthand, I use 'assimilationist' and 'anti-assimilationist', with inverted commas, in this study.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Such views continued to be held by powerful French politicians, as witnessed by Edouard Herriot's outburst in the Assemblée nationale constituante in 1944 that post-war reforms would make France 'the colony of its colonies' (to which Léopold Sédar Senghor immediately responded: 'This is racism!'). Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*, 105.

Africa's poverty was due to its 'division, in the face of the European colonial solidarity of the nineteenth century'.[42] A year later, George Padmore wrote in the newspaper 'of the 'terror of the white governing class' in the United States.[43] 'By laying the foundation of a European federation, the white nations have shown their desire for a lasting peace between them,' another article argued the same year. 'But in this organisational effort undertaken to achieve the peace that everyone seeks, the subjected peoples are forgotten. They too aspire to peace, justice, and especially freedom.'[44]

Whiteness and Communism

At this point, I want to discuss how an analysis of whiteness came to play a role in the split between black nationalists and the Communist movement in interwar Paris, with some brief background on the relationship between the Comintern, the French Communist Party (PCF), and black politics in the metropole. I will focus in particular on the trajectory of *La Race Nègre*, the premier black nationalist newspaper of Paris, which I have discussed above.

After the First World War, many African and Antillean activists had been drawn to the Comintern which, in striking contrast to the European socialist parties, foregrounded the issue of colonial liberation.[45] In June 1921, the French Communist Party (PCF) created the Comité d'études coloniales to provide a forum for theoretical discussions on colonialism for both French and colonial activists.[46] At the same time, the mass

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[42] "Vox Africae," *LRN*, March 1929.
[43] George Padmore, "How the *Nègre* farmers live in America," *LRN*, July 1930.
[44] "Les peuples d'Extrême-Orient contre l'impérialisme anglo-saxon," *LRN*, September 1930.
[45] This also played a role in the attraction of the PCF to many French intellectuals, particularly from 1945 to 1978. See Hazareesingh, *Intellectuals and the French Communist Party* and Hazareesingh, *Political Traditions in Modern France*, chap. 11.
[46] This discussion of the Comintern and black movements draws upon Dewitte, *Mouvements Nègres*, especially chap. 3; and Murphy, "Defending the 'Negro Race.'"

organisation Union Intercoloniale (UIC), with its accompanying journal *Le Paria*, was created exclusively for colonials. The UIC would play a significant role in the political education of a generation of African, Antillean, Asian and Arab activists in France.[47] The prominent role the UIC played in opposing the Rif War in 1925 helped with recruitment among Maghrebians, but also met with the disapproval of some Antilleans, who saw Abd-el-Krim as a feudal leader undeserving of Communist support. It became clear to many African and Antillean members at this time that their regions of origin were not at the centre of the Comintern's vision for anticolonial activity.

The split between the PCF and *La Race Nègre* is best understood with reference to some of the key figures involved in that newspaper. Lamine Senghor, its founder—no relation to Léopold Sédar Senghor—was born in Senegal in 1889. He had enlisted with the *tirailleurs sénégalais* two years into the First World War. In 1917, he was gassed at Verdun and contracted tuberculosis, two events which would debilitate him for the remainder of his life. After the war he became one of the central figures of the PCF's Union Intercoloniale, spending his last years in frenetic political activity. He took the decision to form a new organisation for black people in late 1925.[48]

In February 1926, Senghor created the Comité de défense de la race Nègre (CDRN) along with an accompanying newspaper, *La Voix des Nègres*—which continued to receive some Communist support—and became involved in organising black seamen and workers in French port cities. 'Moving from boat to boat, from establishment to establishment, and going wherever he could find a man of color,' observed a French police intelligence officer,

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[47] By 1925, the membership of the Comité d'études coloniales included such luminaries as the Algerian Hadj Ali, the Vietnamese Nguyen The Truyen (who later became Ho Chi Minh), the Guadeloupean Max Bloncourt, and the Senegalese Lamine Senghor. See Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis*.

[48] On Lamine Senghor, see: Murphy, 'Tirailleur, facteur, anticolonialiste'; Murphy, 'Defending the "Negro Race"'; Dewitte, *Mouvements Nègres*, chap. 4.

'he made such a name for himself that many Blacks regard him as their future liberator.'[49] Like other organisations which Goebel has termed 'ethno-political', the CDRN gained a reputation 'by taking up contract disputes with domestic servants, offering legal advice and intervening with French authorities.'[50] The next year, Senghor's international profile grew dramatically with his attendance at the League Against Imperialism Conference in Brussels. Differences within the CDRN led to a split: Senghor then formed the Ligue de Défense de la Race Nègre (LDRN) in 1927, whose newspaper, *La Race Nègre*, was less Communist and more black nationalist in orientation. As Senghor grew increasingly ill, an activist from French Sudan (now Mali), Tiémoko Garan Kouyaté, came to play a more prominent role in the organisation.[51]

After 1931, mutual distrust between the Communists and black nationalists grew. Tiemoko Garan Kouyaté left *La Race Nègre* in an acrimonious split; its editor became Emile Faure, a mixed-race, Senegalese engineer who had been educated in France.[52] The newspaper's direction of travel away from Communism was only hastened when, from May 1934, Moscow ordered the muting of colonial criticism during the Comintern's Popular Front period. The Communists were 'shrewd agents of imperialism', thundered *La Race Nègre* later that year.[53] It increasingly expressed scepticism about the possibility of solidarity between black and white workers.

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[49] Dewitte, *Mouvements Nègres*, 128.
[50] Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis*, 101.
[51] On the LDRN see, in the Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer in Aix-en-Provence: 2MiA/242; 3slotfom/24; 3slotfom/37; and 3slotfom/45. On Kouyaté, see especially Dewitte, *Mouvements Nègres*; Genova, *Colonial Ambivalence, Cultural Authenticity, and the Limitations of Mimicry in French-Ruled West Africa, 1914-1956*; Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis*.
[52] Faure was born in Saint-Louis, Senegal. He became a leading black activist in France and evinced a strong emphasis on cultural and racial nationalism. In 1938, he undertook a rapprochement with the Left and worked with Daniel Guérin to try and build a common plan of action with Kenyatta and Padmore in London. After the war, he was convicted and deported to the Ivory Coast. See Gérard, *European-Language Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 363, note 64.
[53] "Condamnation des Nord-Africains," *LRN*, Nov-Dec 1934.

In its November-December 1934 issue, now under Faure's editorship, *La Race Nègre* denounced the 'white masters' who applied the 'principle of divide and rule' in order to sow division among black people and appropriate their achievements.[54] It was often said that colonialism was only in the interests of major capitalist companies, while the European population at large was innocent. If this were true, the newspaper argued, overthrowing the colonial system would be a relatively simple matter, given the trend for 'Anglo-Saxon capitalism' to accommodate itself to the granting of formal independence—as evidenced by the US in Haiti and the Philippines, and the UK in its dominions. But on the contrary:

> resistance will be strong because the true beneficiary of colonisation is a supremely selfish and comfortable being. He is someone who believes that everything is due to him, and who admits no sacrifice except from other people. He is the one who pitilessly destroyed the Redskins of the American continent, the Caribs of the Caribbean, the Kanaks of Australia.
>
> *The beneficiary [profiteur] of colonialism is the European population itself.*
>
> … The peoples of Europe, too, profit from colonialism. It is to defend the French worker, whose job involves transforming exotic products, that Governors combat, whether openly or surreptitiously, all local industries. The housewife is happy to have her oil and chocolate on the cheap. Small households fit themselves out with decent and inexpensive furniture thanks to the wood of our forests. Those who really believe that the dictatorship of the proletariat would put an end to the voracity of these classes are very naïve indeed.

Another article in the same issue meanwhile denounced the white 'bourgeois parvenu'—'even the communist'—who, 'imbued with a sense of his racial superiority', saw travel to the colonies as a way of hauling himself up the class ladder at home.[55]

These late 1934 articles in *La Race Nègre* represent the furthest extent of disillusionment in cooperation with the white European Left across the whole range of

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[54] "Notre ligne politique," *LRN*, Nov-Dec 1934.
[55] Ludovic-Morin Lacombe, "HAITI: Communisme et Nationalisme," *LRN*, Nov-Dec 1934. This article, which dismissed the 'white parvenu' as a 'porter' with airs and graces, was not the only instance of a vein of classism in *La Race Nègre*.

black francophone writing of this period.[56] W. E. B. Du Bois, the African American intellectual and theorist of race, had famously taken a different direction to Lenin in his early analysis of imperialism during the First World War, when he saw imperialism as a result of class conflict in the imperial powers but emphasised the role of race, and especially whiteness, in resolving (or at least proroguing) this conflict, by incorporating white workers into the imperialist project. This was why, Du Bois had argued, an increase in the structural power of labour had *not* weakened imperialism, despite Marxist predictions.[57]

Under the black nationalist Emile Faure, *La Race Nègre* took this argument to its fullest extent. Because the 'beneficiary of colonialism' was 'the European population itself', it was foolish, they argued, to propose a commonality of interests between Europeans (even European workers) and the colonised. They emphasised in particular the fact that colonial service provided a means of class mobility for workers in imperialist countries, an instantiation of the broader sense in which such workers had come to rely upon the colonies for their own advancement.

Meanwhile, images of the destruction of previous populations by European settlers were invoked to destabilise the division between settler and non-settler colonialism— a feature of this writing that I shall examine in more detail in the next chapter. This reminded the readers of *La Race Nègre* that European settler colonialism had mobilised Europe's exploited classes for the purposes of colonial rapacity. At the same time, the focus of the article was on an *international* division of labour, in which colonial products—'oil and chocolate', 'the wood of our forests'—were exploited for the benefit of white Europeans. This configured whiteness as the ideology undergirding global inequality.

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[56] They might be read as prefiguring some of Césaire's more radical statements in *Discourse on Colonialism* (36) about the 'European bourgeois'—'that he has a Hitler inside him, that Hitler inhabits him, that Hitler is his demon'. But Césaire did not make such statements about European workers.

[57] I have discussed Du Bois's work on whiteness in Younis, '"United by Blood"'.

La Race Nègre had by now broken with the PCF and Comintern. Its position may not initially seem totally dissimilar from those that had been taken by the Comintern. Lenin had, after all, accepted that: '*To a certain degree* the workers of the oppressor nations are partners of *their own* bourgeoisie in plundering the workers (and the mass of the population) of the oppressed nations.'[58] And this theme had been taken up in *Le Paria*, the official newspaper of the Comintern-affiliated Union Intercoloniale. An article published by 'Ali Baba' in December 1923 had explained that while modern imperialism was a result of late-stage monopoly capitalism, '[t]he European proletariat, before the beginning of this century, remained impassive in the face of the predatory policy that was colonial imperialism: the oppression of millions of natives in exotic countries had maintained a decent standard of living for the European worker.'[59]

Yet for the Comintern, a level of participation in the imperial project by European workers was not thought to preclude the possibility of transnational solidarity between workers across the imperial divide. By contrast, during the dialling down of anti-imperialist rhetoric during the Comintern's Popular Front policy, *La Race Nègre* found itself radically sceptical of the possibility of such solidarity. That scepticism drew upon the conceptual language of whiteness in order to explicate the global relationship between race and power to which, they argued, even Communists were not immune. A current of this scepticism endured in anticolonial thinking. Fanon, writing in 1957, would give it unequivocal expression: 'In a colonial country, it used to be said, there is a community of interests between the colonized people and the working class of the colonialist country. The history of the wars of national liberation waged by the colonized peoples is the history of the non-verification of this thesis.'[60]

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[58] Krausz, *Reconstructing Lenin*, 169. Emphasis in original.
[59] Ali Baba, "L'Impérialisme et la politique coloniale," *Le Paria*, December 1923.
[60] Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, 82.

Whiteness and 'Assimilationism'

I have focused here on interpretations of whiteness in *La Race Nègre*, which was the only major explicitly nationalist black newspaper in interwar Paris and the most radical in terms of its approach to the race question. How far did these views affect other newspapers published by Africans, Antilleans, and black French citizens in interwar Paris? Other newspapers, such as *La Dépêche Africaine*, *Les Continents, Africa, L'Etudiant Noir*, and *Le Cri des Nègres* did not arrive at the same level of scepticism towards the very possibility of black-white cooperation as *La Race Nègre*.[61] Neither did the far more regulated and repressed press in French West Africa, where there remained strong official opposition to the notion of understanding politics in terms of race. In July 1919, for example, the Dakar-based newspaper *A.O.F.*—a European-dominated publication whose editor was the white French lawyer Paul Defferre and whose political director was the Senegalese politician Lamine Guèye—vociferously denounced activists who had made 'the question of color' so prominent in the colony.[62]

For the Paris-based newspapers, notwithstanding their varied and pressing criticisms of imperialism, French imperialism did not come to be seen as constitutively defined by whiteness and intra-imperial white solidarity in the way that it did by *La Race Nègre*. But these newspapers nevertheless dealt with the question of whiteness in ways that may be surprising given their ostensible political stances.[63] One telling example appears in

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[61] The former two newspapers are typically termed 'assimilationist' for their emphasis on securing citizenship rights for black French subjects. That term can, however, be misleading because such a view did not necessarily involve renouncing forms of separate cultural and political identity. See note 39.

[62] Pascal Dumont, "Solidarité," *A.O.F.*, June 26, 1919.

[63] See, for example, *Les Continents*. 15 May 1924. L'Esclavagisme Colonial. *Les Continents*, run by René Maran and Kojo Tovalou Houénou, was affiliated to the Ligue Universelle de Défense de la Race Nègre (LUDRN). Though branded as Garveyist by the French authorities in an internal report, the newspaper was technically assimilationist in its demands, seeking not independence but the elevation of black French subjects to citizens. See Dewitte, *Mouvements Nègres*, 120; Hill, *The Garvey Papers X*, X:171, note 1.

an article in *La Dépêche Africaine*. Published in July 1928, the article was titled 'L'Aristocratie Blanche Contre les Peuples de Couleur' (The White Aristocracy Against the Peoples of Colour). It consisted of a series of extracts of the recent writing of Paul Morand, the leading French avant-garde writer and white supremacist whose popularity soared during the interwar period.[64] His work had already been criticised for its exoticist representations of Africa and blackness by Paulette Nardal in the first issue of *La Dépêche Africaine* and by Garan Kouyaté in *La Race Nègre*.[65] But a brief preface to these extracts of his work in *La Dépêche Africaine* did not reference those critiques. It explained instead that the 'esteemed' Morand had been 'to the Caribbean, to Louisiana and to the African heartlands, where he studied the living conditions, customs and mores of the blacks, which he accurately described in his new book *La Magie Noire*. The brilliant novelist resumed in *Le Journal* his impressions of the journey in the following article, where he demonstrates the lamentable situation in which the great majority of populations of colour find themselves.'

Next came the extracts from Morand. He began by 'affirm[ing] that, compared to the peoples of colour, whites—all the whites, including the most miserable—form a privileged aristocracy.' Yet he did not proceed to reflect upon this observation in terms of its injustice, as one might have assumed from the prefacing editorial remarks. Instead, he reflected upon its dangerous implications for France as a white country:

> For France, everyone knows, is a palace. In front of so many frozen or burning deserts, torrents without water, deadly climates, these crowded

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[64] Paul Morand, "L'Aristocratie Blanche Contres les Peuples de Couleur," *La Dépêche Africaine* (henceforth *LDA*), July 1928. In 1929, these extracts would be published in a new book by Morand, titled *Hiver caraïbe*. Like Gobineau, Morand was a racist who was nevertheless genuinely popular among some black intellectuals for his willingness to concede that there was value in cultural and racial difference. Morand's book *Magie Noire* was controversial among black intellectuals in Paris: for a critique of the book, see Kouyaté's review in *LRN*, October 1928.
[65] Sweeney, *From Fetish to Subject*, 119–24.

> [surpeuplés] continents where the real proletarian forces are recruited, are our people of the extreme left naive enough to believe that they will be left to live in peace, in their fat Norman lands, on the banks of their rivers full of studs, under their soft southern sun (O greengrocers, 'Var Rouge' millionaires!), that they would be allowed to keep these French lands, with barely seventy-eight inhabitants per square kilometer? Do our French Communists know what terrible and relentless brothers they are about to acquire?
>
> Which police force could stop the entry of millions of Blacks [Noirs] into a country whose borders have disappeared? What labour regulations will prohibit these overloaded ships of Chinese agricultural labourers coming to exploit every inch of the Cote d'Azur, to enjoy the sweet smell of its sap, to impoverish the soil with their insect-like toil that knows neither night nor day …?
>
> Hardly will our committees of peasants and soldiers have prised power from our bourgeois hands than at their newly-rich door will come knocking the famished and terrible Asian migrations of the real poor, the real beggars, for whom communism is not a word or a fad but an eternal, organic state; hordes of aggressively-thrust hands and bared teeth; with stretched-out arms and gaping jaws.

Morand clearly knew his Stoddard.[66] Like Stoddard, his vision was of a global, Darwinian struggle of races in which a 'white aristocracy' must preserve its predominance at all costs or face a terrible reckoning, during which Africans and Asians—'the real proletarian forces'—would deluge Europe. As we have seen above, this vision had travelled through translations of Stoddard and Grant to the podiums of the Société de médécine publique. The editors of *La Dépêche Africaine*, an 'assimilationist' newspaper which aimed to 'serve as a connecting link between men of colour', and which supported a multiracial vision of French citizenship—they maintained that the 'colonial empire of France is indivisible and unalienable'[67]—evidently could not have supported this view. But they thought it important and influential enough to quote at length, pointing to Morand's admission of a 'white

[66] Stoddard had warned of the 'tremendous and steadily augmenting outward thrust of surplus colored men from overcrowded colored homelands' which were 'already populated up to the available limits of subsistence.' Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy*, 231.
[67] Pierre Taittinger, "Pour la plus grande France,", *LDA*, July 1928.

aristocracy' and reproducing without additional comment his vociferously white supremacist views.

Meanwhile, *Le Cri des Nègres*, the newspaper of a Communist splinter from the Ligue de Défense de la Race Nègre, explicitly rejected a blanket anti-white hostility which, they argued, characterised an earlier period of black organising that had now been superseded. They pointed to Communist defense of the Scottsboro boys in the US as an example of intra-racial solidarity.[68] But when condemning the US occupation of Haiti in 1934, they printed a denunciation of such 'colonial fascism'—which earned a comparison to Hitler—as 'white imperialism'.[69] The short-lived *Le Colonisé*, another 'assimilationist' newspaper,[70] found in November 1936 that the line between Nazism and colonial racism was becoming blurred: 'In the same way as the Jews, the races of colour feel themselves in effect threatened by the storm of racism which sweeps across Germany with so much violence. They fear that tomorrow, other nations—colonisers—will be carried into this odious whirlwind.'[71] And Kouyaté's late journal *Africa*, which came to represent the view of the 'neo-assimilationist' Left after Kouyaté had rejected the politics of *La Race Nègre*, continued to argue that 'the colonial regime was born of war. It is by force that the whites imposed their domination on the men of other races.'[72]

In all these newspapers, none of which were 'black nationalist' in the sense that *La Race Nègre* was, the whiteness of imperialism was cause for concern and reflection. For some, like the group around the Nardal sisters, whiteness was not understood in a necessarily negative light, but nevertheless came increasingly to be contrasted with

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[68] "Au Pays du Lynch," *Le Cri des Nègres* (henceforth: *CDN*), January 1934.
[69] "Un appel de Journalistes Haïtiens: Aidez-nous dans notre lutte contre la dictature de Président Sténio Vincent!" *CDN*, June 1934.
[70] Dewitte, *Mouvements Nègres*, 369.
[71] "Appel," *Le Colonisé*, November 15, 1936.
[72] "Aprés [*sic*] 35 ans de luttes contre l'oppression coloniale," *Africa*, December 1, 1935.

alternative values and cultures emerging from the African heritage of *assimilés*. 'We are fully aware of what we owe to white culture,' wrote Paulette Nardal in 1932 in *La Revue du Monde Noir*, 'but we intend to go beyond the framework of this culture ... to try to give back to our fellows the pride of belonging to a race whose civilisation is perhaps the most ancient in the world.'[73] Similarly, Aimé Césaire, writing in *L'Étudiant Noir*, mocked the '*Nègre*' who 'put himself into the school of the Whites: he wanted to become "other": he wanted to be "assimilated."'[74]

Writing about immigration and race in interwar France, Elisa Camiscioli has pointed out that 'there is ample evidence that racial ideologies were constructed and concretized in a world-system rather than confined to the boundaries of one nation.'[75] As I have tried to show, the globality of racial ideology and practice was recognised in both official governmental quarters and by African and Antillean activists and newspaper publishers in interwar Paris. For some, like the editors of *La Race Nègre*, the developments of the 1930s brought the power of whiteness to the fore as the binding agent of the global core. To them, the promise of anti-imperial solidarity from white European workers was hollow: populations of the imperial core, including workers, together participated in colonial plunder. The consequences for assimilationist politics were clear. 'There can be no assimilation between a colonised people and a colonising people,' stated the newspaper in 1930, 'even less so between an oppressed race, treated as inferior, and the so-called 'superior' race oppressing it.'[76] The global racial hierarchy generated by imperialism simply precluded integrationist possibilities.

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[73] Paulette Nardal, "L'Eveil de la conscience de race," *La Revue du Monde Noir*, April 6, 1932. For a discussion of this article, see Gérard, *European-Language Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 366–67.
[74] Aimé Césaire, "Nègreries," *L'Étudiant Noir*, March 1935.
[75] Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race*, 14.
[76] "Madagascar," *LRN*, Feb–March 1930.

Other newspapers did not go as far as *La Race Nègre* in conceptualising France as constitutively and irrevocably 'white.' But they too, notwithstanding their expressed equivocation on the matter of colonialism *en tant que tel*, could also cite an understanding of the world as a 'white aristocracy' ranged against all the 'peoples of colour'; Communist newspapers, which believed in the prospect of interracial cooperation, could denounce 'white imperialism'; black assimilationists, who did not renounce French culture, could pillory and reject the idea of becoming 'white'.

The word 'white' was far less prominent in the black press of interwar France and West Africa than in British-controlled West Africa where, as we have seen in Chapter 2, whiteness and 'white prestige' became a dominant theme. But when it appeared in France, carrying citational traces from the US, it threatened to destabilise the conceptual barriers between France and the global system as a whole, revealing a powerful logic of world power and hierarchy. The identification of whiteness was less a question of a dichotomy between pro- or anti-assimilationist politics than it was a manifestation of the need to discover connections between French imperial policy and political developments in the world as a whole.

'The Individual Counts for Nothing': Race and Collectivity

I have been describing in this chapter the ways in which a series of black newspapers published in interwar Paris conceptualised imperialism and its relationship to race and whiteness. As I have suggested in previous chapters with regard to African American and West African newspapers, the political thought of the interwar Black Atlantic was contingent upon the material developments—particularly literacy, print, and travel—that constituted the backdrop to these new articulations of political critique and belonging. Duncan Bell has written in relation to the idea of 'Greater Britain' that '[t]echnological

change was important not only because it helped to meet imperial "goals," but because it reshaped the very identity of the goals themselves.'[77] I have been suggesting that we can think of technological change in the Black Atlantic in a similar way: not simply as facilitating an oppositional narrative about, and project for, global order—though that was crucial—but also as shaping understandings about what the world *was* (a global ontology) and what the role of political community was within it (a global ethics).

Both ontology and ethics interpenetrated, so that as understandings of the world expanded in scale, so did conceptions of political affinity. These latter conceptions did not, however, take the form of an abstracted cosmopolitanism. They had far more complex political manifestations. These were multiscalar, working on local, regional, national, and global levels. At the same time, they also mobilised the concept of race in an oppositional sense, often expressing an apparently paradoxical vision that involved the embrace of racial solidarism in the service of the dissolution of the racial ordering of the world. This was because they tended to recognise the role played by race in undergirding the world's core hierarchies and bifurcation, a role that precluded the simple renunciation of race.

The black newspapers of interwar Paris offer a range of elaborations on these themes. They often reflected upon the nature of political affinity in the modern world and on the relationship between the individual and the community in that world. 'Know that within the modern world, the individual counts for nothing,' *La Race Nègre* counselled in June 1927. 'All is done in the name of the collectivity, even the mistakes—indeed, some of the crimes.' The newspaper warned its readers not to 'confuse' the 'artificial community' of France 'with your own. In France, you enjoy a level of tolerance, but in the colonies, you have no rights.'[78] The very title of the Communist pan-colonial journal *La Paria* (The

[77] Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, 65.
[78] "La Nécessité de Nous Organiser," *LRN*, June 1927.

Pariah), published in Paris by the Union Intercoloniale, similarly suggested a sense of isolation and outsiderness as a result of the colonial condition. Fernand Gouttenoire de Toury explained in the newspaper's first issue that '[a]s well as the oppression of the capitalist regime which weighs upon the proletarians of all countries, the natives also have to endure the yoke imposed upon them by the prejudices of nationality and race: among the slaves of this world, they are twice enslaved: indeed, they are the pariahs, as the title chosen for the journal of their demands indicates.'[79]

The experience of being a 'pariah'—in literary texts, as we shall see in the next chapter, a strikingly similar idea was expressed as 'loneliness'—emerged from an understanding of global ontology as constituted through European imperialism into a racialised core-periphery order, in which the periphery was both excluded and marginalised through its unequal incorporation into that order. The image of self-appointed colonial representatives arriving in Paris for the Peace Conference in 1919, only to be barred from the proceedings, was a stark instantiation of this idea.[80] Yet just as we have seen in other Black Atlantic locations, in the black francophone publications a critique of the role of race in ordering the world and undergirding imperial iniquities did not tend to result in the renunciation of 'race' itself as a mode of affinity. In fact, the black newspapers of Paris published a host of articles and discussions during the 1920s and 1930s on the importance of race, Africa, pan-Africanism, and the African diaspora. This was closer to a 'racial turn' than a rejection of race.

As with contemporaneous texts like Marcus Garvey's *Negro World*, which I have discussed at length in Chapter 1, one can find frequent reference in this black francophone writing to the essentialist idea of race that came to typify popular understandings of

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[79] Fernand Gouttenoire de Toury, "Le PARIA ne demande que la Justice," *Le Paria*, April 1, 1922.
[80] See Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*. The First Pan-African Congress was held in Paris in February 1919 in order to coincide with the Paris Peace Conference.

Négritude. But it would be a mistake, I think, to explain these discussions of race simply as reflections of a dominant tradition of European race-thinking,[81] or as a kind of racist anti-racism.[82] There was, I would argue, a materially- and historically-rooted assessment of race that lay at the heart of the racial turn in black francophone writing, out of which the propositions for forms of solidarism in terms of race were proposed..

To explore this point, let me suggest a brief comparison between notions of racial togetherness expressed in *La Race Nègre*, a 'black nationalist' newspaper, with *La Dépêche Africaine*, an 'assimilationist' publication. For the former newspaper, writing in 1934, the conceptualisation of Africans as a united nation was central: one therefore reads about 'this *nègre* nation, which suddenly reveals itself to be ONE, in its diversity of habitats, languages and customs'.[83] *La Dépêche Africaine*, notwithstanding its divergent political positions, used strikingly similar language. In its first issue, published in 1928, it explained that those of African descent across the world now understood themselves to be 'a single race'[84] and needed a newspaper to 'serve as a connecting link [*trait d'union*] between the *Nègres* of Africa and Madagascar, the Antilles and America, in order to establish a universal correspondence between men of colour.'[85]

The positioning of *La Dépêche Africaine* in this way was premised upon a view of how history had generated artificial divisions of space and culture that worked to obscure the common position of black peoples. As Jane Nardal wrote:

> Blacks of all backgrounds, nationalities, customs and different religions feel vaguely that they belong, despite everything, to a single race. Previously the most favored blacks looked haughtily toward their colored brethren, in all likelihood thinking of them as being of a different essence than themselves: on the other hand, those blacks who had never left

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[81] See, for an example of this argument, Gilroy, *Against Race*.
[82] See, inter alia, Sartre, *Black Orpheus*.
[83] Emile Faure, "Abyssinie: L'aggression italienne," *LRN*, Nov–Dec 1934.
[84] Jane Nardal, "L'internationalisme noire," *LDA*, Feb 1928.
[85] Ibid.

> African soil to be taken into slavery saw as vile beasts those whom the whites had enslaved, then freed, and then moulded in their own image. Then came the war, the uprooting, the meeting in Europe of blacks of all origins, the suffering of the war and the disappointment after it was over.

Referring to the 'discovery' of African art, especially sculpture, by Europeans, Nardal argued that this had generated a newfound 'pride in being negro, in returning to Africa, the cradle of negroes, in remembering a common origin.' Yet this was not enough on its own to generate racial cohesion. Looking across the Atlantic to the achievements of African Americans, she exclaimed that 'what interests us above all, [is how] the prejudices of whites around them have produced for them an unparalleled race consciousness and solidarity.'[86] 'THE BLOOD OF A BLACK MAN LINKS HIM WITH BLACKS WHEREVER THEY ARE FOUND', stated another article in the newspaper three months later. The newly politicised black man was 'awakened to the group interests. He knows the underhand methods of the policy of colonial governments: he knows what is wrong and ought to be remedied.'[87]

In these examples, both *La Dépêche Africaine* and *La Race Nègre* understood race simultaneously in essentialist terms and as a contingent result of history. Both newspapers communicated pan-African solidarity as possessing in the present moment a new kind of scale, a particular temporality, and a kind of transcendence of cultural specificity. These expressions of pan-Africanism did not only enable explorations of unity but also of

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[86] Ibid. *La Dépêche Africaine*, a Parisian monthly, was founded and edited by the Guadeloupean Maurice Satinueau (he would later be elected to the French national assembly as the representative from Guadeloupe); it published mainly Antillean writers, but focused on French colonial abuses in Africa. It argued for colonial reforms, greater self-rule in the colonies and an easier route to naturalisation for colonial elites—but not for outright independence. See Gérard, *European-Language Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 363; Genova, *Colonial Ambivalence, Cultural Authenticity, and the Limitations of Mimicry in French-Ruled West Africa, 1914-1956*, 138.
[87] H. Dingwall, "Yesterday and To-day: The Transition Black-Man," *LDA*, May 1928.

difference, as can be seen in the many discussions of African American life in the black francophone press.

As we have seen with Nardal's article, much of this writing about African Americans was celebratory. 'No race in the world can claim to have made, in sixty years, as much progress as the *nègre* American race,' argued an article in *La Race Nègre*. Indeed, '[t]he average *nègre* American is more educated than the average European.'[88] Harlem, '*la cité nègre*', was described in detail and its black-run newspapers listed.[89] '[W]e must recognise,' argued another article in the newspaper, 'that the [economic] efforts of the blacks of America and the Caribbean (large and small), despite the systematic obstruction of the whites, have been successful'.[90] A writer in *L'Étudiant Noir* argued in 1935 that the peculiar situation of African Americans as a segregated minority in a wealthy Western country meant that they 'have been able to, have had to, better and more wholly conserve the African soul, and especially the need of finding it in its plenitude'.[91]

In one sense, the achievements of African Americans were promoted as a way of demonstrating the equality of the races. But by emphasising African American progress, these articles also engaged in important forms of comparativism: with the worse conditions of African-descended peoples elsewhere—including, despite official blandishments, in the French empire—as well as with, conversely, the similarities in the racism of both the French and American empire-states. The attacks upon African Americans could therefore be seen to demonstrate the enduring power of racism even in capitalism's most ostensibly modern and progressive sectors.

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[88] Fan Shine, "L'Egalité des Races," *LRN*, Nov–Dec 1927.
[89] "La cité nègre," *LDA*, Nov–Dec 1927.
[90] André Beton, "Par le fusil ou par l'argent?" *LRN*, May 1928.
[91] Gilbert Gratiant, 'MULATRES … pour le bien et le mal," *L'Etudiant Noir*, March 1935.

Black francophone newspapers, particularly those which were Communist-linked, excoriated Jim Crow racism, which through '[b]anishment, servitude, legal injustices, lynching, slavery—both actual and in the form of indenture' worked to create a 'system of oppression' that aimed 'to make of this race an inferior and servile caste, exploited by all the other classes of society', as *La Voix des Nègres* explained.[92] George Padmore, writing in *La Race Nègre*, described how African Americans were subject to the 'terror of the white governing class' in the form of neo-serfdom, debt peonage and prison labour, a system in which some African American workers endured 'conditions of life more primitive than some colonial regions'.[93] An article by Maxime Gorky in *Le Cri des Nègres* similarly depicted 'the terror against *Nègres* in the United States.'[94] Reportage of the Scottsboro case, promoted in the French Communist press in particular, underlined the injustices faced by African Americans.

But comparison with the US could also be wielded as an important discursive weapon in the French context by drawing attention to similarities in anti-black racism. A striking example of this appears in *La Race Nègre* in September 1930. In an article about lynching, the newspaper argued that it would be wrong to assume 'America holds a monopoly on hatred of the Negro. In all capitalist countries, racial prejudice exists and manifests itself in a variety of guises. And France is not exempt from this.' As evidence, a hazy photograph was reproduced depicting the hanging bodies of the participants in the Kongo-Wara Rebellion in 1928. The newspaper explained that the photograph 'represents a "salutary example" of repression in French Africa'.[95] Elsewhere, *La Race Nègre* argued that French imperialism was not less but *more* oppressive than its counterparts— 'the most

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[92] "Résolutions commune sur la question nègre," *La Voix des Nègres*, March 1927.
[93] George Padmore, "Comment vivent les fermiers nègres en Amérique," *LRN*, July 1930.
[94] Maxime Gorky, "La terreur contre les Nègres aux États-Unis," *Le Cri des Nègres*, October 1931.
[95] "Le lynchage des nègres aux Etats-Unis," *LRN*, September 1930.

conservative colonialism'—by comparing the 'intellectual relations with the outside world' enjoyed by Africans in 'English colonies' to the repressive atmosphere in French-controlled Africa.[96] Such acts of comparison directly contravened the insistence, in pro-French imperial writing, on French singularity and uniqueness.

References to African enslavement also implied a form of temporal comparativism that carried important connotations for the present. *La Voix des Nègres* exclaimed in 1927 that 'slavery' was now 'prohibited in retail but allowed wholesale'[97] and that while the 'most primitive form' of slavery had been abolished, 'enslavement, exploitation and extermination' of black peoples was ongoing.[98] *La Race Nègre*, contemptuous of the possibility of assimilation, observed that '*nègres* have always been, and will always be, treated as slaves' by colonial powers. The only development they were permitted was that which served the interests of those powers.'[99] Later, they decried forced labour as 'the system of slavery that has decimated African populations'.[100] These acts of comparison connected all imperial powers, including the US and France, with a global order that had systematically undermined black and African life. Building upon the idea of colonial status as akin to that of a 'pariah', they also implied that the experience of racialisation was, for African-descended peoples, a form of marginal incorporation—what Orlando Patterson has aptly called 'social death'—into international society.[101]

For black writers in Paris, then, the interwar racial turn can be seen to have contributed to a positioning of African-descended peoples under French national-imperial

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[96] "La générosité française sous la IIIe République," *LRN*, September 1927.
[97] "Ce qu'est notre Comité de Défense de la Race Nègre," *La Voix des Nègres*, January 1927.
[98] "Résolutions commune sur la question nègre," *La Voix des Nègres*, March 1927.
[99] "Madagascar," *LRN*, February–March 1930.
[100] "Banque Nègre," *LRN*, April 1931.
[101] Sociologist Orlando Patterson has identified 'social death' as the key defining feature of slavery within societies Slavery, Patterson argues, is a parasitic relationship between master and slave which always entails the violent domination of a person who is socially dead: that is, someone who has undergone alienation from all ties of blood and birth. As an institution, slavery thus incorporates enslaved people on the margins of society. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*.

rule within a global racial order, just as was being expressed at other vectors of the interwar Black Atlantic. This process, I have been suggesting, was contingent upon the materiality of the print cultures that enabled new forms of global thinking. In the context of interwar Paris, one significant element of this process is migration. Michael Goebel has recently highlighted how there appears to have been 'something inherent in the very process of migration' which had radicalising effects on colonials in Paris, who often arrived in the metropole as relatively apolitical individuals only to leave as anticolonial activists.[102]

The power of these print circuits was understood by the French colonial authorities in West Africa, who expressed concern at the 'propaganda' of black newspapers in France, which they closely monitored,[103] and at the idea of radical African Americans encouraging supposedly placid Africans to rebel (these same authorities inadvertently provided us with much of the best evidence of these circuits, including the archives of virtually all the francophone newspapers I examine in these chapters.) The *Negro World* was banned in French West Africa and foreigners possessing it were expelled from the territory; later, the French consul-general in New York wrote a note to the French Ministry of External Relations in Paris in 1922 observing with concern that Garvey had dismissed the ban as ineffective.[104] The previous year, a report to the French Minister of Colonies had observed that '"our natives" … do not [yet] seem to have moved towards pan-African or communist forms of mysticism. But the danger of contamination is at present pressing enough—

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[102] Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis*, 4.
[103] A French government report on 'Revolutionary Propaganda in France' observed with concern the publication of the journal *Les Continents* by Kojo Tovalou Houénou, the self-styled African prince who, at one point, forged close links with the Garvey's movement. The journal's 'sympathy for negroes goes as far as an undeniable predilection for the pan-blacks', the report worried; after all, 'the newspaper is above all Garveyist' and its editor planned to travel to the US to study there black populations. Hill, *The Garvey Papers X*, X:171.
[104] See telegram M. Merlin, Dakar (25 July 1922); telegram M. Merlin, Dakar (30 June 1922); and telegram Le Consul General de France a New York à Son Excellence Monsieur le Président du Conseil, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, 27 June 1922, all in 3slotfom/84, Les Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence.

especially in the large ports where, as in Dakar, subversive elements of all stripes meet and mingle, and where news carried in by ships can easily be exploited by troublemakers—that all preventative measures should be applied, and all means of preservation implemented.'[105] From precisely the inverse perspective, Claude McKay's lyrical paean to Marseille written in 1929, *Banjo*, was a celebration of the new pan-African communities created by the great imperial ports.[106]

Travel outside the French context provide an important angle on some of recent writing on the French interwar empire. Gary Wilder's study of the French interwar state and its colonial project, for example, has argued that we should see France at this time as 'an imperial nation-state organized around a constitutive contradiction between political universality and particularity', neither of which can simply be transposed onto republicanism or colonialism, because '[t]here were universalist and particularist dimensions of republican and colonial poles of the imperial nation-state, each of which contained emancipatory and oppressive dimensions.'[107] For Wilder, being able to 'refigure the nation-state as imperial'—the basis of his book—is a radical challenge to 'methodological nationalism.' But his singular focus on the French empire-state means that he fails to address the reasons for such persistent traversing of boundaries between France and the world by so many of the colonial writers and political actors in interwar Paris.

My reading of the interwar black newspapers of Paris suggests a view that operates at a level above the French empire-state, encompassing the disequilibrium of the system as a whole and its attendant ideologies of bifurcation. Just as race was inherently and

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[105] See Lettre à Monsieur le Ministre des Colonies De M. Merlin; Sujet: Propagande révolutionnaire; 14 Feb 1921, in 3slotfom/84, Les Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence.
[106] McKay's book was deeply influential on the young progenitors of *Négritude*, as we shall see in the next chapter.
[107] Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 5–6.

inescapably global, so was its operation within the French imperial context an instantiation of a global condition: 'but a local phase of a world problem', as W. E. B. Du Bois wrote of the African American condition.[108] The apparently antinomical nature of an expanding capitalism, which seemed to both seek abstract subjects and to produce difference between its subjects, was also global phenomenon, not simply a product of any one empire.

This is why, I have suggested, the black newspapers of Paris were persistently global in outlook, and why they engaged repeatedly in acts of discursive comparison. It also provides another angle to what I have described as the racial turn across such writing. Both 'nationalist' and 'assimilationist' newspapers expressed forms of pan-African solidarity as interventions into a present political moment that were closely tied to the role of political collectivity. Race consciousness was seen to possess a new scale, a particular presentness, and the ability to transcend cultural specificity. Through acts of imaginative travel and comparison, newspapers attached to African and Antillean organisations in Paris could reassess the colonial system and the range of possibilities within it.

Conclusion

In his *Discourse on Colonialism*, published in 1950, Aimé Césaire attacked the 'colonialist and racist consequences' of European Christian supremacism, whose victims had included 'the Indians, the Yellow peoples, and the *Nègres*'. Identifying 'racial pride' as a 'poison' that had been 'distilled into the veins of Europe', Césaire also attacked the record of European colonialism, arguing that Europeans had 'tolerated … Nazism before it was inflicted on them'—'they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because, until

[108] Du Bois, *W.E.B. Du Bois on Asia*, 33.

then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples.'[109] Two years later, in *Black Skin White Masks*, Frantz Fanon proposed the notion of 'epidermalization' to explore the psychological effects of colonization on subjects who were racialised as black, foregrounding the role of race and racism in the operation of colonial power. [110]

The focus of both Fanon and Césaire on colonialism's *racial* constitution, structure and effects would have been very far from obvious only four decades earlier. They can be seen as drawing upon the major changes that took place in the interwar period that I have been describing in this chapter. Examining a range of articles in newspapers published by African and Antillean organisations in interwar Paris, I have suggested that the adoption of a lexicon of race and whiteness in such texts heralds a significant 'racial turn' that contributed to the articulation of a series of connections between French imperialism and the global racial order.

How do we read these discussions of racial collectivity, and the print circuits upon which they relied, in the context of nationalism theory and international relations writing about decolonisation? By employing the lexicon of race to describe aspects of French imperialism and to identify its underlying imperatives, black francophone writers employed a comparativist and transnational perspective to undermine the discourses of legitimation for that imperialism. Where they were, like *La Race Nègre*, explicitly nationalist, their understanding of nationalism as a political project was spurred by this transnational analysis. Their arguments about the non-assimilability of large populations of non-whites into France therefore employed language from American race thinking. As

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[109] Césaire and Kelley, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 34–36. This echoed Du Bois, who had written, in *The World and Africa* (1947), that: 'There was no Nazi atrocity—concentration camps, wholesale maiming and murder, defilement of women or ghastly blasphemy of childhood—which Christian civilization or Europe had not long been practicing against colored folk in all parts of the world in the name of and for the defense of a Superior Race born to rule the world.'
[110] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*.

I have described throughout this thesis, black nationalism in Paris, like other Black Atlantic nationalisms, arose in a world already shaped by European nationalisms and their attendant racial-political imaginaries. Within a specific material context shaped by imperialism and the war, which had left significant populations of racialised subjects of the French empire-state living in the metropole, they grappled with the global racial order that had been constructed through the unequal encounter between Europe and the extra-European world.

Nous, nègres, nous devons nous convaincre
de l'historicité de notre rôle futur.

— LA RACE NÈGRE, November–December 1928

5

Time, Settlement and Négritude

This chapter is the second of two in which I analyse texts produced by African and Antillean activists, writers, poets and intellectuals in interwar Paris. Across the two chapters, my overall argument is that the flourishing of racially-inflected perspectives on French imperialism by black writers in interwar Paris was shaped by a series of traversals beyond the boundaries of France and its empire. Such boundary-crossing contributed to the articulation of a series of connections between French imperialism and the global racial order. The previous chapter delineated that argument with reference to three areas: the modes of government under which African-descended peoples were ruled by France during the interwar period; the adoption of a lexicon of whiteness and race, in both white- and

black-authored texts of the period; and ideas of racial collectivity that came to prominence in the black writing of the time.

In this chapter, I expand that argument in a number of different directions. I begin by delving into the politics of temporality in relation to black nationalist political expression in interwar Paris. Through an examination of a number of articles published in the black nationalist newspaper *La Race Nègre* between 1927 and 1930, I suggest the mode of nationalism expressed in that newspaper defies some of the theoretical propositions about 'nationalist time' that have been put forward by some scholars. I argue that the reasons for such discordance can help us to re-evaluate some of the traditional ideas about nationalism itself. For *La Race Nègre*, a performative invocation of a black and anticolonial future was intimately related to a vision of a new global order: not a simple territorial nationalism, but a transnational and inherently anticolonial vision that advocated a consciousness of the processes of racialisation that undergirded the imperial order.

I also explore one significant commonality between this francophone writing and the writing that was produced in British West Africa at the same time (see Chapter 3): an interest in, and heuristic theorisation of, the role of settlement in European colonialism. While in the academic study of black francophone interwar writing this element has been virtually ignored, I try to show how such concerns permeated such writing in French, just as they did West African writing in English of the same period. The significance of such writing, I suggest, is the way in which it adopted citational and comparative techniques to destabilise narratives about French imperialism, drawing connections—both historical and spatial— between settler colonial extirpation, from Australia to Algeria, and colonial subjecthood under the French empire-state.

Finally, I discuss a range of literary texts published by black writers in French during the 1920s and 1930s, many of which have been grouped under the banner of

Négritude. I show how those texts, in their own ways, propounded many of the same themes that I have found in the newspapers: the globality of race, the naming of whiteness, anxieties over settlement, and spatio-temporal comparativism. In particular, I explore how conceptions of blackness in both early Négritude texts and black Parisian newspapers emphasised the connection between race, labour and embodiment, insisting upon the inherent globality of the experience of racial subjecthood. I suggest that many of the texts of Négritude, as well as related literary writing produced around the same time, contained worldly perspectives on race that concord, in important ways, with the generally material and global perspective across the interwar Black Atlantic.

Black Nationalism's Temporal Politics

I have previously argued that the scholarly work on nationalism has not done enough to reflect the complexity of political affinities contained within many nationalisms and the relationship of those affinities to global visions and to particular projects for reforming global order (see the Introduction). In this section, I want to expand upon this point by outlining some of the theoretical arguments that have been made in relation to temporality, nationalism and imperialism, before examining conceptions of history and temporality in a number of articles published in *La Race Nègre*, the black nationalist newspaper published in Paris.[1]

The nationalism of that newspaper can tell us, I suggest, something about nationalism itself, notwithstanding its supposed marginality. The discursive (trans-

[1] *La Race Nègre* was the newspaper of the black political group Ligue de défense de la race Nègre (LDRN), which was formed by the West African political activists Lamine Senghor and Tiemoko Garan Kouyaté, who had both been active Communists, out of a split from the Communist-supported group Comité de défense de la race Nègre (CDRN). I have discussed the newspaper and the life and work of Lamine Senghor in more detail in the previous chapter.

)nationalism of *La Race Nègre* was a language specifically aimed at addressing the forms of temporal ossification and exclusion that racialisation imposed upon African and African-descended subjects of the French empire-state. It was, then, a discursive 'practice of power'[2] in which temporality became a battleground for challenges, questions or subversions of the forms of 'imperial time' and its specific, racially-inflected temporalities. There is no easy way to draw a line between the 'nationalist time' of *La Race Nègre* and the modes of time it employed that seem to interrupt and destabilise nationalism. As I have been suggesting throughout this study, we are better placed to understand such nationalism with reference to global order as a whole and oppositional projects in relation to that order, rather than in terms of a modular political form built upon a linear reconfiguration of time.

Time, Imperialism and Nationalism

The interest in temporality within modern nationalism studies is connected to a body of work that has sought to address the Western transition to modernity through an assessment of changing conceptions of time.[3] Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* introduced the concept of the *figura* to describe the representation of temporal reality in Christian literary works of late antiquity and the Middle Ages. In those literary works, Auerbach argued, time was conceptualised as 'a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present'.[4] Benedict Anderson later connected the lapse of this essentially religious conception of time to the rise of what Walter Benjamin had called 'homogenous, empty time'—a concomitant of capitalist expansion—which was, for Anderson, essential in allowing for the possibility of imagining the modern nation. Losing its ability to signify prefiguration and fulfilment,

[2] See the Introduction for a discussion of this phrase.
[3] See especially Koselleck, *Futures Past*.
[4] Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 74. See also his essay 'Figura' in *Scenes From the Drama of European Literature*.

simultaneity gave way to the idea of 'temporal coincidence' and became 'measured by clock and calendar.'[5] Newspapers, for example, came to offer 'a complex gloss on the word "meanwhile".'[6] This change in 'apprehensions of time' was, Anderson argued, 'more than anything else, [what] made it possible to "think" the nation'.[7]

Prasenjit Duara, a historian of China, has written about nationalism and temporality in relation to postcolonial states. In *Rescuing History from the Nation*, a book largely focused on Chinese nationalism, Duara suggests that nationalist histories have adopted linear and evolutionary histories of the nation that are premised upon an Enlightenment and colonial model. The result is a 'national history' that 'secures for the contested and contingent nation the false unity of a self-same, national subject evolving through time'. This allows 'the nation-state to see itself as a unique form of community which finds its place in the oppositions between tradition and modernity, hierarchy and equality, empire and nation.'[8] Elsewhere, Duara has expanded upon this idea of 'linear history', which, he argues, 'often dispenses with god and replaces it with the model of a unified actor—the subject, the nation—moving forward in time conquering uncharted territories'.[9] A three-way relationship between people, a history and a territory is, then, a defining feature of modern nationalism.[10]

Scholars writing about imperialism within the field of international relations have recently begun to examine in detail the temporalities of sovereignty and the specifically temporal mechanisms by which empires have extended and buttressed their power.[11] Their

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[5] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 24
[6] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 25.
[7] Ibid., 2.
[8] Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*, 4–5.
[9] Duara, 'The Regime of Authenticity', 291.
[10] Ibid., 289.
[11] The volume by Kimberly Hutchings, *Time and World Politics*, pioneered an international relations approach to the study of temporality. For the connection between temporality and imperialism within the study of international relations, see Mueller, 'Temporality, Sovereignty,

work builds upon insights by postcolonial scholars like Dipesh Chakrabarty, who famously depicted non-Europeans as being confined by imperialism 'to an imaginary waiting room of history'.[12] With reference to anticolonial figures like Padmore and Gandhi, who called for immediate self-government, Chakrabarty has written about how they rejected the colonial view of 'developmental time' and 'replaced the structure of "not yet" in their imagination with the horizon of "now".'[13] Another body of literature has examined understandings of time in non-Western societies, exploring the complexity of such concepts and detailing how transforming them became a key drive of the imperial project.[14]

Turning specifically to France, the study of French history has been replete with discussion of memory and time.[15] French imperial exhibitions offer stark visual representations of the ways in which colonialism could ossify its subjects, placing them in an imagined zone of unchanging antiquity to be contrasted with the unceasing newness of the metropole.[16] Looking at interwar French West Africa, Gary Wilder has argued that the tension between contradictory imperatives of colonial administration 'was partly stabilized by a policy of temporal deferral that racialized and disenfranchised Africans within a republican framework.'[17] Wilder argues that both cultural racism and antiracist

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and Imperialism'; Agathangelou and Killian, *Time, Temporality and Violence in IR*; Hom et al., *Time, Temporality and Global Politics*; Stockdale, *Taming an Uncertain Future*.

[12] See also Gregory, *The Colonial Present*.

[13] Chakrabarty, 'Subaltern History as Political Thought', 255.

[14] For a discussion of this work in relation to Africa and the African diaspora, see Adjaye, *Time in the Black Experience*.

[15] See, perhaps most famously, the three-volume work by Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire*. As Perry Anderson has highlighted, however, much of that writing, including those three volumes, has tended to sidestep the imperial question: 'the entire imperial history of the country, from the Napoleonic conquests, through the plunder of Algeria under the July Monarchy, to the seizure of Indochina in the Second Empire and the vast African booty of the Third Republic, becomes a *non-lieu* at the bar of these bland recollections'. Anderson, 'Union Sucrée'.

[16] These include the grandiose Paris Colonial Exhibition in 1931, which covered some 500 acres and took twenty-five years of planning. For a discussion of temporality in the context of the 1931 Colonial Exhibition, see Watt, 'Constructions of Minority Identity in Late Third Republic France', 43–45.

[17] Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 118.

evolutionary humanism were synthesised in French imperial policy through the mechanism of temporal deferral, as evidenced by the claim of the leading colonial administrator, Albert Sarraut, that '[native] aspirations to the highest positions of authority will be satisfied in a certain future whose date is still indeterminate'. Another administrator, Jules Brévié, stated simply that France was a nation which had 'reached the age of adulthood'. There was at work here an 'implicit evolutionary logic', states Wilder, in which cultural differences were attributed to different stages along a singular trajectory to modernity. As a result, the policies of colonial reformers 'maintained Africans in a provisional yet perpetual hierarchy of difference'.[18] African social evolution was seen simultaneously as a desirable ideal and as an immediate danger. '[O]nce introduced into the house with rights equal to those of the masters, presumptuous and demanding, they will soon want to be the masters,' warned one report commissioned by the French government in 1925.[19]

Writing about immigration policy in the metropole, Elisa Camiscioli has also argued that 'racial hierarchy was a constitutive feature of immigration discourse in interwar France' which mobilised a racialised conception of temporality. That discourse 'explicitly and repeatedly referred to people of color as impossible to assimilate, and thus no concrete timeline for their integration was suggested ... they were coded as biologically distinct and particularizing elements, and race mixing with them could only lead to degeneration for the French nation.'[20] Colonised subjects of colour were placed outside an evolutionary temporal frame entirely, Camiscioli suggests—unlike white immigrants to France whose assimilation was understood as possible, however potentially time-consuming. In contrast to Wilder's emphasis on endless proroguing—'provisional yet perpetual'—Camiscioli suggests something closer to temporal exclusion for racialised subjects.

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[18] Ibid., 124–26.
[19] Ibid., 136.
[20] Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race*, 156–57.

My aim here is to draw out some of general features of writing on temporality, nationalism and imperialism in view of studying the temporalities contained within francophone black nationalism. As an essentially modern phenomenon, nationalism has been understood to be related to modern conceptions of time—capitalist, homogenous, secular—which superseded older, more mystical forms, as emblematised in the emergence of the newspaper and its calendrical and simultaneous regularity. National time has typically been represented as essentially linear in conception, drawing from Enlightenment and colonial models. It replaces divine providence with the sanctified image of the nation, which is projected both backwards, into the mists of time, and forwards, into an eternal future.

Meanwhile, imperial time tends to invoke separation and bifurcation between the presentness of the metropole and the antiquity of the colony, with evident implications in terms of political freedom for colonial populations. Since to be racialised is, as Maurice Olender has written, to be 'marked by a stagnation in time, deprived of all historical mobility' and therefore to be seen in terms of 'the impossibility of change,'[21] racialised populations could be fixed as unassimilable and outside modern time altogether. Yet interwar colonial developmentalism could also, paradoxically, suggest a distant convergence, in which endless deferral took the place of eternal separation. This was the context in which black nationalist writing emerged in interwar Paris.

Projecting Anticolonial Time in *La Race Nègre*

[21] Olender, *Race and Erudition*, xix.

In this section, I want to examine the relationship between French interwar imperialism, black nationalism and temporality by focusing on a number of articles published in the black nationalist newspaper *La Race Nègre*, between 1927 and 1930. I want to suggest a number of ways in which the multiple temporalities at play in the black nationalism of that newspaper relate to the theoretical work on nationalism.

At the end of 1927, an article titled 'Qu'est-ce que la civilisation?' (What is civilisation?) was published in *La Race Nègre*. The article recalled a familiar theme: the violence that colonialism had visited upon peoples of African descent and the concept of 'civilisation' that had legitimated such violence. It cited Maurice Delafosse, who had said that European civilisation had 'turned away from its true path'. 'Our race urgently needs to improve', it accepted. But how could such improvement be possible in the context of the 'savage' partition of Africa among European powers?

> We *nègres* must convince ourselves of the historicity of our future role. Today, all that is expected of us is to be servants [on ne veut de nous qu'à titre de valets.] But if we work conscientiously to safeguard the dignity and prestige that have, for so long, been trampled underfoot; and if we work towards the affirmation of our personality and civilisation—which will grow as a result of many external acquisitions, as long as they are safeguarded against certain putrid ferments—tomorrow, our young race will be reckoned with. We must understand our position as pariahs. European civilization in Africa, instead of making us happy and prosperous, will always invoke, as it were, the bloody nuptials of the [daughters of] Danaus and [sons of] Aegyptus.[22]

Multiple temporalities are clearly at work here. The striking first sentence conjoins past, present and future in an exercise of racial-nationalist will. The paragraph immediately moves to the present, exhorting a communitarian consciousness ('our personality and civilisation') in order to build—'tomorrow'—a powerful race. The final sentence then reaches back again, to Western antiquity, to find a parallel between the relationship

[22] "Qu'est-ce que la civilisation?" *La Race Nègre* (henceforth: *LRN*), November–December 1927.

between France and its colonies. The way that race is understood here may initially appear to be straightforwardly essentialist. But a closer look shows that race is also self-consciously constructed through an act of will—'we must convince ourselves'—upon which its multiply temporal existences are all contingent. Crucially, such racial-national construction can only take place through a recognition of an oppressive and subservient present. It is only by comprehending the relationship of imperialism and black labour ('all that is expected of us is to be servants') that those of the African diaspora can understand how their history and their future are connected.[23]

Another article, published in 1930, assessed the 'fate of *nègres* across the world'. It found that '[f]or centuries and in almost all countries, *nègres* have been considered as pariahs. They are treated everywhere like second-class creatures; tormented by colour prejudice in one place, suffering elsewhere from atrocious servitude.'[24] Here, a diachronic approach emphasises the historical consistency to racialised oppression. That historical perspective is seen to override spatial dispersal with another kind of spatial condition signified by the use of the word 'pariah', which suggests a kind of enforced outsiderness in relation to international society and, at the same time, a peculiar globality borne of the experience of racialisation.[25] Space and time are connected with reference to labour ('servitude'), which is understood to relate essentially to the black condition.

Finally, an article by André Beton in the November–December 1928 issue of *La Race Nègre* counselled blacks not to accept the ostensible assistance of 'certain whites who take us by the hand and invite us to follow them', because '[w]e would simply be changing masters, and making our position worse.' He added:

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[23] This also provides an interesting perspective on Achille Mbembe's recent argument that Garveyism was based on a 'promise of a reversal of history'. Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, 156.
[24] "Le sort des nègres à travers le monde," *LRN*, November–December 1927.
[25] I have discussed the use of this word in more detail in the previous chapter.

> [W]e must recognize that the efforts of the blacks of America and the Caribbean (large and small), despite the systematic obstruction of the whites, have been successful ... Of course, European governments, aided by Africa's situation, have been able to paralyse all the intellectual and moral efforts of blacks, depriving them of the most elementary instruction; but they are forced to recognize that even simply the exchange of goods, the passage of traders, tourists and the presence of officials has opened the eyes of so-called *indigène*. Now that he recognises as illusory the force behind which hides the authority dominating him, he feels hope, and with good reason; he looks his black brother in the face, and makes him feel that he is counting on his support in order to breathe freely. He instinctively understands that he must lend a hand to his race to liberate it from white oppression.

Beton celebrates here the colonial *present* for its unintended consequences of uniting black peoples and generating racial consciousness.[26] Technologies of imperialism are identified—'the exchange of goods, the passage of traders, tourists and the presence of officials'—as having had effects that could not be controlled by the colonial powers, despite their strenuous efforts to the contrary. Suffusing this writing is a nowness, not dissimilar to the 'New Negro' writing we have explored in Chapter 1, that ruptures the sense of unchanging and subservient continuity implied in imperial authority and allows Africans to see the illusory nature of (white) colonial power and the necessity of anti-imperial racial collectivity. This is what allows them to 'breathe freely'.[27]

How do these multiple temporalities at play in the black nationalism of *La Race Nègre* relate to the theoretical work on nationalism? In one sense, a nationalist newspaper

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[26] The idea of a diaspora coming to consciousness in the seeking of state also has strong Zionist resonances, which were sometimes explicit in the newspaper. For a discussion of the associations between black (trans-)nationalism and Zionism, which dates back at least to E. W. Blyden's pamphlet *The Jewish Question*, see Hill, 'Black Zionism: Marcus Garvey and the Jewish Question'. In the case of Ghana, Manning Marable has argued that this relationship endured into the independence period, despite Israel's support for white-minority regimes on the continent. See Marable, *African and Caribbean Politics*, 121–22.

[27] The words 'breathe freely' here resonate with Fanon's statement that 'We revolt simply because, for many reasons, we can no longer breathe', and with the contemporary Black Lives Matter movement against racist police brutality, which took as a slogan the last words of Eric Garner: 'I can't breathe.' See Lowery, *They Can't Kill Us All*.

espousing a racial-national collectivity stretching backwards in time and forwards into the future might be seen to conform to the models suggested by Anderson and Duara. Yet in other ways, *La Race Nègre* is clearly ambivalent on the question of a doctrinal nationalism, alongside which it evinces forms of racial transnationalism, a general disinterest in territorial control, and multiple and apparently contradictory political affinities (race, nation, pan-colonial). The discursive superimposition of multiple temporalities in these articles also sits uneasily with Anderson's suggestion that, with modern nationalism, simultaneity ceases to signify prefiguring and fulfilment and gives way instead to the clock and calendar.

Like much of the press of the interwar Black Atlantic, the sporadic publication schedule of *La Race Nègre* and its interspersal of contemporary stories with classic themes, with much of the content of any one issue clearly having been written at different times, brings into question the kind of calendrical and temporal regularity we might usually associate with newspapers. The paper's Garveyist inclinations meanwhile included strong prefigurative elements through the mobilisation of religious teleologies. The suggestion that the future existence and flourishing of African peoples possessed 'historicity' carried, for example, distinctly teleological overtones, a form of transnational nationalism that was imbued with ideas of prefiguration and fulfilment.

I want to suggest that these contradictions can only be understood when they are contextualised within the framework of an imperial temporality that the black nationalism of *La Race Nègre* sought to challenge, and in relation to a global order against which it levelled its critique. The backdrop to these articles was the temporal deferral of possibility of African political sovereignty, alongside severely limited possibilities for integration within the metropole for racialised populations. The newspaper also found that French colonialism possessed and exerted its own kind of temporal permanence, crowding out

possibilities of political progression for its subjects. It was becoming, the newspaper declared in 1929, 'an eternal fact' to which the only solution could be 'permanent protest.'[28]

I think we can most usefully understand the discursive (trans-)nationalism of *La Race Nègre* as a language that was designed specifically to address the forms of temporal ossification and exclusion that racialisation imposed upon African and African-descended subjects of the French empire-state. As a result, in its temporal positioning *La Race Nègre* insisted on the modernity of blackness; saw black and African history as having been shaped by imperial capitalism; described a present of dispersal and racialised oppression that made blackness a global condition which could not be neatly demarcated within existing political boundaries; envisaged a future of genuine political and economic sovereignty for black peoples, as long as collective action were taken; outlined a vision of the future in which '[r]acial prejudice will be history'—that is, a future in which the actual (racist) present will be historicised at the same time as the 'historicity' of Africa will be conveyed into modernity.

I have suggested in this study that interwar discourses of black 'national' sovereignty were not simply imitative adoptions of European communitarian ideologies. More accurately, they began with a reading of the global order and discursively challenged that order through an insistence on the possibility of black and African sovereignty. I think we should see this as a political intervention taking place in an existing space of discursive power that posited a relationship between race or its metonyms and sovereign impossibility. This approach moves away from the traditional insistence on associating forms of apparently nationalist discourse with an abstractly-defined doctrinal 'nationalism'.[29]

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[28] "La répression se prépare contre nous," *LRN*, March 1929.
[29] See the Introduction for a discussion of this writing.

La Race Nègre shows us that questions of time and temporality could became a battleground for discourses that sought to challenge, question or subvert forms of 'imperial time' and the specific temporalities that reinforced racialisation and the construction of racial and colonial subjects. Elsewhere, the newspaper opposed and rejected the colonial strategy of temporal deferral in relation to the question of assimilation—'native representation in Parliament is not the solution, *either now or in the future*'[30]—and insisted on an anticolonial future: 'The colonial world is moving towards its liberation. It is possible to delay this moment—through intimidation, corruption and repression—but sooner or later it will arrive.'[31] The latter statement may evoke Duara's nation moving through linear time; yet the actor in question has become the entire 'colonial world', not any single nation. In the black nationalism of *La Race Nègre*, however essentialist some of its manifestations may have been, it was the imperial order itself that was under attack and in relation to which a nationalist discourse was developed. And in its Garveyist inflections and its explicit solidarity with the colonised world, the newspaper moved outside the French context to build its discursive temporal strategy.

Temporality, Assimilationism and Print Circuits

I have been focusing on *La Race Nègre* because, as a nationalist newspaper, it is most relevant to my overarching theme of the relationship between nationalism and other political affinities. *La Race Nègre* was not representative of the interwar black press, as I have explained in the previous chapter. Its approach to colonialism and to the prospect of collaboration with whites was more deeply cynical, and its advocation of pan-African racial

[30] "La représentation parlementaire coloniale ou la panacée chimérique?" *LRN*, April 1929. Emphasis added.
[31] "La 'Démocratie' contre les coloniaux," *LRN*, April 1929.

unity more prominent, than any other comparable newspaper. But while clear political differences divided these newspapers, all faced a similar predicament with regard to the temporal double-bind in which the French empire-state placed its black subjects. As a result, all engaged in forms of performative engagement with dominant temporalities. I think that we can understand these engagements and performances as being connected by a transnationalism that recognised the globality of racialisation.

La Dépêche Africaine, for example, an 'assimilationist' newspaper, did retain some hope in the temporal deferral strategy of the French empire-state. Writing in the newspaper in February 1928, P. Baye-Salzmann began by observing that the 'problem of the black race' seemed to be a topic of discussion everywhere. He dismissed the 'insurrectionist attitude towards French tutelage' that was gaining traction; 'my brothers in race,' he argued, 'remain essentially French.' But he immediately followed this statement with the following acknowledgement: 'Certainly, we have suffered at the hands of France's emissaries; and at their hands, we suffer greatly still. There are even memories we cannot evoke without a shiver of revulsion.'

Baye-Salzmann went on to explain to denounce 'certain *nègre* communists with demagogic tendencies' and argue that 'aside from the functionaries who act like petty tyrants [les Nemrods au petits pieds] there are the true colonisers who are benevolent towards the natives'. And yet, he admitted, there were serious problems with French rule in Africa:

> The blacks, notably the young who, since the war, have evolved by leaps and bounds, want at any cost to be free of the legislation known as the *indigénat*. It is anarchic, restrictive and despotic. It is ridiculous and outdated, humiliating for a people who have already a consciousness of themselves. It is, in the end, a sombre stain on the work of colonisation—that is to say, of peace and light—which chases France, and which

> constitutes a dangerous argument in the service of Francophobes who seek moral disintegration in the colonies.[32]

P. Baye-Salzmann's article is illuminating on the matter of discursive temporal strategy even for an 'assimilationist' newspaper, which consisted of a joint emphasis on the *presentness* of black suffering under French imperialism as well as its historical lineage. His qualified defence of French imperialism strongly criticised—just like *La Race Nègre*—the temporal stasis in which colonised Africans had been placed by the French Empire.

I have discussed Jane Nardal's well-known essay in *La Dépêche Africaine*, 'Black Internationalism', in the previous chapter. That essay proclaimed the newfound unity of blacks of 'all backgrounds, nationalities, customs and different religions'.[33] In another issue, H. Dingwall meanwhile argued that the new 'transition Negro wants the very same opportunities as are afforded to whitemen, because he has contributed in material wealth no small share of the means that make possible the great advances in European development.'[34] At these moments, we can observe *La Dépêche Africaine* celebrating the spoils of the colonial present for helping to generate pan-African racial collectivity in language very much like that of *La Race Nègre*.

At the core of all of these temporal engagements was an understanding of race in relation to global history. As the journal *Africa* explained, 'the black masses were, due to the vicissitudes of History, brutally snatched and scattered in various places in the globe', and yet in these places 'they continue to evolve, giving proof of progress, dignity and national grandeur'.[35] The black masses were, then, subjects *and* agents of history, both historically constituted and constantly evolving. This understanding of globality and

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[32] P. Baye-Salzmann, "Le Problème Judicaire," *La Dépêche Africaine* (henceforth: *LDA*), February 1928.
[33] Jane Nardal, "L'internationalisme noire," *LDA*, February 1928.
[34] H. Dingwall, "Yesterday and To-day: The Transition Black-Man," *LDA*, May 1928.
[35] "A nos lecteurs!" *Africa*, December 1, 1935.

history in relation to the present emerged in part from the print circuits within and across which such views were propounded, as I have been suggesting throughout this study. As newspapers that circulated both openly and clandestinely, these writings were enabled by colonial modernity just as they sought to transform that modernity into a postcolonial future.

Black nationalism and internationalism were constituted by material and ideational travel across the Atlantic. This was a self-conscious process. '[T]he existence of newspapers is indispensable for progress,' wrote *Le Cri des Nègres* in 1934, celebrating its own increasing penetration from Marseille to California, where it was carried 'in the hands of *nègre* sailors, who transport and spread it in all corners of the world'.[36] Another article in the newspaper beseeched 'each worker who receives the journal' not to be content 'simply by reading it; he has another task to accomplish, which is to make it known, to propagate it.'[37] *La Dépêche Africaine* referred to the West African newspaper *La Voix du Dahomey* as 'our colleague [confrère]'[38] and to the *Chicago Defender* as 'the great Negro-American daily'.[39]

Later, *La Race Nègre* would write bitterly of the suppression it faced at the hands of the colonial authorities, while both the *Cri des Nègres* and *La Dépêche Africaine* reported the suppression of the Dahomeyan press with concern.[40] The imprisonment of Louis Hunkanrin, the great Dahomeyan activist and editor, received particular attention.[41] In the metropole, while the French government was not able to enact widespread censorship of the press, it was able to shut down a series of Arabic- and Vietnamese-language

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[36] "L'Afrique noire réclame le droit d'avoir ses journaux indigènes," *Le Cri des Nègres,* August 1934.
[37] ["Editorial"] *Le Cri des Nègres*, June 1934.
[38] "La Liberté de la Presse en A.O.F," *LDA*, June 1928.
[39] René Maran, "Le Nègre aux États-Unis," *LDA*, December 1939.
[40] "La Liberté de la Presse en A.O.F." *LDA*, June 1928.
[41] See, for example, "L'affaire Hunkanrin," *LDA*, April 15, 1930.

newspapers as 'foreign' newspapers.[42] Other newspapers linked to African and Antillean activists in Paris also reflected upon their own materiality and the role they might play in connecting disparate populations. The Communist pan-colonial newspaper *Le Paria* had been founded, it explained, because '[f]or the native masses of the French colonies there is, in effect, not a single historical precedent of a newspaper created to protest their suffering and joint misery, without distinction of country or race'.[43] These examples—a small sample—should give some sense of the self-consciously material dimension to the diaspora-building project that these newspapers performed and enacted.

We might think, then, of technically 'assimilationist' black newspapers in interwar Paris as engaging in a series of discursive struggles over temporality. Where the colonial present was seen to posit the 'unreadiness' of Africans, black writers insisted on their progression and 'evolution'. Where colonised subjects were placed outside time entirely by metropolitan France, black writers emphasised both the presentness *and* the history of the African diaspora, its historical connection and contribution to Europe, its rightful future. The desire to retain a political connection with France did not contradict a black transnationalism which recognised the globality of the black condition. Time was a field of power through which black newspapers repeatedly reached beyond the French empire-state to the broader context of global imperialism and the role of race as an ordering principle within it.

The Surplus Body: Settler Colonial Analysis in Francophone Black Newspapers

In one particular area, black francophone writing brought together the notions of racialised embodiment and temporality under modern imperialism. This was in the matter of

[42] Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis*, 86.
[43] "Appel!" *Le Paria*, April 1, 1922.

European colonial settlement and settler colonialism as a category, examined in relation to African peoples of the continent and diaspora. Such concerns suffused interwar black writing in Paris, just as they did in the West African writing in English of the same period which I have discussed in Chapter 3. Why did these newspapers, published in Paris largely by African and Antillean expatriates whose countries of origin had not seen the arrival of significant numbers of French *colons*, show such interest in colonial settlement? The significance of such writing, I suggest, is the way in which it adopted citational and comparative techniques to destabilise narratives about French imperialism. It did this by drawing connections—both historical and spatial— between settler colonial extirpation, from Australia to Algeria, and colonial subjecthood under the French empire-state in 'non-settlement' zones like West Africa.

Let me begin by examining some of the writing of Lamine Senghor, the Senegalese Communist and pan-African militant who founded *La Race Nègre*.[44] In 1927, Senghor wrote a political allegory *La violation d'un pays* (The Violation of a Country), a didactic pamphlet about the impact of French colonialism on Africa.[45] Senghor's pamphlet has been studied in terms of its political vision and allegorical style.[46] Less remarked upon, however, has been his positing of colonial genocide as a specific possibility that relates to the African setting. During the part of the story which corresponds to the early colonial period in Africa, there is a description of battles taking place between colonial powers eager to 'conserve the privileges acquired through crime.'

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[44] I have discussed the career of Lamine Senghor in the previous chapter.
[45] It was prefaced by Paul Vaillant-Couturier, a prominent PCF militant, who argued that the story was representative of the history of colonialism.
[46] The best discussion of writing on the pamphlet can be found in Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, 229–34. See also Guernsey, 'Lamine Senghor's La Violation D'un Pays as a Precursor to Cultural Nationalism'.

The results, we are told, can be found in a series of treaties, reducing the 'innocent' inhabitants of the territories that were carved up 'to complete slavery … This business [ce commerce] even managed to repopulate some islands, which had been inhabited by red rather than pink men. They were destroyed by the whites [pales] whose invasion they had resisted until the end, until the last unit of their race. (What an example!).'[47] We do not know the reach of this pamphlet, but the historian J. S. Spiegler has located at least one incident recorded in the French colonial archives of its illicit transmission in West Africa.[48]

In the same year that *La violation d'un pays* was published, Lamine Senghor served on the commission for the publication of a series of Joint Resolutions on the Negro Question at the League Against Imperialism Conference, held in Brussels in 1927. As reported in both the *Le Courrier des Noirs* and *La Voix des Nègres*, the resolutions discussed the relentless spread of Western power across the African continent—'[i]n Kenya and Sudan, the expropriation of lands and the extermination of people has been ferocious'—and expressed revulsion at the state of legally-sanctioned racism in the southern US, 'where the spirit of barbaric slavery continues to dominate. Banishment, servitude, legal injustice, debt and peonage, lynching and savage violence degrade and annihilate these peoples.'[49]

Three years later, *La Race Nègre* found that 'French colonialism in Equatorial Africa has been marked by a piling up of odious crimes and murders, by the oppression of the population that is difficult to convey, by the devastation of entire regions and by a methodical decimation of the inhabitants.' They noted, in particular, the devastating losses of population in the Congo, which they estimated at 10-20 million: '[a] half-century of

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[47] Lamine Senghor, *La violation d'un pays*, 23.
[48] Spiegler, 'Aspects of Nationalist Thought Among French-Speaking West Africans, 1921-1939', 126. See also Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, 231.
[49] "Le Congrès de Bruxelles," *Le Courrier des Noirs*, November 1927. Emphasis added.

colonisation has brought nothing to AEF except servitude, misery and the death of a race.'[50] Two months later, the newspaper observed with alarm the scale of land theft by the 'colonising State' in Africa: worse, for the African peasants, 'thousands of hectares of concessions are distributed, violently, to white strangers, right under their very noses, a process against which they have no right of appeal.'[51]

The language of these interconnected writings—'repopulate', 'annihilate', 'exterminate', 'methodical decimation', 'death of a race'—viscerally connected colonialism, not exempting French colonialism, to genocide, drawing connections between histories of European settlement, ongoing land alienation in eastern and southern Africa, and labour abuses elsewhere on the African continent. One article in *La Race Nègre*, published in 1930, was bracingly explicit on this point. It is worth considering in some detail. Titled (in English) 'To be or not to be', the article began by explaining to regular readers the reasons for recent delays in publication, which included repression from the colonial authorities in Africa.

But the newspaper would not be deterred. 'Our *goal* is clear: independence, pure and simple'.[52] The alternative was not only enduring oppression, but something far worse:

> [T]his struggle for independence and the complete return of our old, well-tested, forms of organising, is, for *nègres*, a question *of life or death*. *To be or not to be,* that is the only question that presents itself. For the European, the *nègre* countries are above all territories intended for repopulation [repeuplement.] The native is part of the current, picturesque fauna, destined to rapidly disappear. In the European's evocations of the future of our countries there is no more place for us than for lions, gazelles or scorpions.
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> According to a journalist who recently conducted a major investigation of the French possessions in the Pacific, an island where

[50] S.B. "Cinquante ans de colonisation en A.E.F.: Les misères et les souffrances de tout un peuple nègre," *LRN*, September 1930.
[51] "Le sort des nègres à travers le monde," *LRN*, November-December 1930.
[52] Emphasis in original. In the archive copy held in Aix-en-Provence, this sentence has been underlined by a French official.

> only natives live is, for the European, a *deserted* island. As he explains: 'The arrogance of white men is so great that an island peopled exclusively by blacks *cannot* be considered by them to be an inhabited island.'
>
> … The destruction of the *nègres* is taking place at an accelerated pace. We won't invoke the astronomical figures revealed by the statistics: each one of us carries the memory of a populous region where today not a single person remains; some race of which not a single representative has survived; a once-great city today in ruins and uninhabited.
>
> It won't be long, if we persist in our passivity, before Africans become—like the Red-Skins and the Australian Kanaks— a mere memory.
>
> The struggle to save ourselves is only a question of years. It is now that we must react.

Among the means being used to destroy Africans, *La Race Nègre* pointed to forced labour and famine, and even suggested that the European health service in Africa was responsible for plague. '*But the principal factor behind the extinction of our race*,' explained the newspaper, '*is the systematic destruction of all forms of* nègre *organisation*. The action of conquering Europeans resembles the effect of dynamite or six Lebel bullets to the head. Its objective is always to destroy local organisation and to disperse the community, by aiming for the head.'[53]

This view of European colonialism in Africa as inevitably genocidal, drawing no fundamental difference between Africans and fauna, and premised upon the same white 'arrogance' that rendered Indigenous life in the Pacific invisible, was severe and bleak even for *La Race Nègre*; and its rhetorical impact was compounded by newspaper's paraliptic refusal to cite the 'astronomical figures' available, instead evoking the memory of its readers of deserted regions and emptied cities. But such conclusions were by no means confined to *La Race Nègre*. As the decade continued, Italy's invasion of Ethiopia elicited enormous protest across the African continent and diaspora (as we shall see in more detail in Chapter 6).

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[53] "To be or not to be," *LRN*, February 1923. Emphasis in original.

In December 1935, Garan Kouyaté wrote in his newspaper *Africa* about Mussolini's propaganda surrounding his invasion of Ethiopia. While Mussolini complained of the 'suffocation' of the Italians in their supposedly overpopulated native land, Kouyaté pointed out that a convention of September 19, 1919, had authorised Italian emigration to swathes of East and Central Africa, but had actually been resisted by the Fascist government:

> This obtuse refusal is explained by the fascist leaders' imperialist wish to hold political power in the abovementioned countries in order to exterminate at their leisure the Blacks and to substitute them for Italians. Has not the general Graziani, of sinister reputation, entirely destroyed the inhabitants of the Green Mountain in Libya? Were not 80,000 Arabs of Tripolitana deported in 1931, contrary to their rights to the soil of their ancestors? And then, who is the Italian worker who would content themselves with a monthly salary of 10 shillings—that is, 30 italian lire—as for example the poor Black of Kenya? Has Mussolini the capital to finance a massive immigration of his subjects into Africa? … Does Mussolini dream of exterminating them [Ethiopians], if he is victorious, and replacing them with Italians? One shudders in indignation at the very idea of this criminal calculation … This continent will never be "white" despite the Mussolinis.[54]

The rise of Nazism and the apparent threat of renewed German control over its formerly-held territories in Africa did little to assuage fears of European settlement. In 1936, *Le Colonisé* remarked upon the language of appeasement issuing from some quarters in France (including 'erstwhile friends') with a sense of amazement and betrayal, while another article in the same issue remarked that Hitlerian theory would reduce all colonised peoples—Jews and non-Jews alike—to the rank of slaves.[55]

Like the body of writing I have previously examined in the *Negro World* and across British-controlled West Africa, this black francophone writing on colonialism engaged in radical acts of comparison in order to highlight colonialism's inherently extirpatory

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[54] Tiemoko G. Kouyaté, "Politique Africaine," *Africa*. December 1, 1935.
[55] I. Béton, "Les revendications coloniales d'Allemagne," *Le Colonisé*, December 20, 1936.

potential. As I have suggested with regard to the West African writing, in suggesting that colonial subjection always carried an implicit threat of elimination, such comparativism drew attention to the unifying globality of race. It was race that connected the 'subject peoples' of European imperialism, creating for them an uncertain and fractured relationship with space, time, and land, and threatening to overwrite their spatio-temporal existence with a 'settler sovereignty'.[56] This was also a means by which many black writers connected the rise of European fascism to the history of European colonial expansion.

What is especially revealing in all the texts I have cited above is the particular role played by historical analogy. In each text, a case study of populations who have historically endured the consequences of European settlerism ('red' people, 'the Red-Skins and the Australian Kanaks', 'the inhabitants of the Green Mountain in Libya') is imaginatively connected to the contemporary political situation facing peoples of African descent ('[t]he destruction of the *nègres*', the invasion of Ethiopia). In each case, a constitutive feature of colonialism from outside the French context is imported within it. Clearly, not all of these writers accepted the position of *La Race Nègre* in 1930 that French colonialism in Africa would necessarily require the extirpation of Africans. But all did accept that historical examples of settlement elsewhere in the world carried particular relevance to black people in the French context and deserved to be a focus for contemplation.

This was the desolate inverse of the anticolonial future of *La Race Nègre* that I have previously discussed. If the political project of francophone black (trans-)nationalists was the self-conscious projection of black and African racial community into the future, the undergirding threat was not simply temporal deferral (*pace* Wilder) or temporal suspension (*pace* Camiscioli), but a marching forward of extirpatory time, informed by the historical experience of European settler colonialism. Those fears only seemed to be

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[56] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 2010, 54.

confirmed by the renewal of settler discourses in fascist Europe during the 1930s. Hitler's promise during Generalplan Ost that 'the Volga must be our Mississippi'[57] signalled the enduring strength of the American example as a means of transforming the global balance of power and creating a new, enduring and hegemonic empire. So too did the longstanding Nazi interest in Madagascar as an outlet for the 'Final Solution' point to the continued presence of Africa as a 'virgin land' in the European imagination.[58]

Such writing on settlement can be contextualised within historical studies of French imperial policy. Tracing the emergence of a politics of association, Raymond Betts has explained how, at the end of the nineteenth century, '*colonies de peuplement*' were considered by French policy-makers neither 'necessary or desirable. With her static population and her citizens' traditional love of their native soil, France was spared the problem of searching for outlets for emigration. Moreover, her newly acquired possessions were largely unsuited to white populations. Located in the tropics for the most part, these regions, with their profuse vegetation and hostile climate, were not the sort to induce colonization.'[59] By the interwar period, however, substantial French settler communities in Africa sought to have their voices heard in metropolitan debates. As Dominic Thomas has highlighted, these settlers experienced a sense of embattlement and isolation during this period, as the direction of colonial policy towards forms of indirect rule seemed to go against their interests. And yet in the rise of the right-wing organisations—most prominently, Action Française—they also found a voice and a source of support. Charles Maurras was just one high-profile intellectual who 'praised settler communities as the embodiment of a lost patriotic virtue based on powerful masculinity, ardent Catholicism,

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[57] Etkind, *Internal Colonization*, 133.
[58] See Jennings, 'Writing Madagascar Back into the Madagascar Plan'.
[59] Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914*, 112.

and attachment to the soil.' And by 1939 over twenty percent of the French colonial service was recruited from these settler populations.[60]

In Chapter 2, I described West African discussions of these issues as an early instance of 'comparative settlement studies', prefiguring the later work of figures like Fanon. We might also read these francophone texts, I think, as foreshadowing some of the arguments of the contemporary academic literature on settler colonialism.[61] Caroline Elkins and Susan Pedersen have recently argued, for example, that 'settler "frontiers" were not 'closed' at the turn of the twentieth century': a central point made by *La Race Nègre*. And the late Patrick Wolfe, a leading theorist of settler colonialism, has explained how 'colonised peoples could be assimilated to nature, placing them on the receiving end of Cartesian dualism and, accordingly, as in need of control' because they had 'failed to disembed themselves from nature.' The resemblance between this language and the argument of *La Race Nègre* that for the European the 'native is part of the current, picturesque fauna, destined to rapidly disappear',[62] is striking.

Loneliness and Labour in Négritude

In this final section, I move beyond the newspapers that have provided the central primary source material for these two chapters in order to examine a range of literary texts written by black writers in French during the interwar period. Many, but not all, of these texts can be grouped into the early works of the Nègritude movement. Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor and Léon Damas (from Martinique, Senegal, and French Guiana respectively), close friends who had met in Paris, became famous in the mid-1930s for their concept of

[60] Thomas, *The French Empire Between the Wars*, 4–11, 35.
[61] Lorenzo Veracini has demonstrated how the very idea of settler colonialism as a distinct formation emerged from the South. Veracini, '"Settler Colonialism"', 1 June 2013.
[62] "To be or not to be," *LRN*, February 1923

Négritude. Following in the footsteps of those like Lamine Senghor and Tiemoko Garan Kouyaté—and the Harlem Renaissance and 'New Negro' movement of the United States—Négritude turned the derogatory term *nègre* into a badge of pride. It was, for Césaire, 'the awareness of being black … a taking charge of one's destiny as a black man, of one's history and culture.'[63] Senghor was more inclined to argue for a notion of Négritude as betokening specific kinds of African cognition. In his 1939 collection *What the Black Man Contributes*, he famously wrote that 'emotion is *nègre* and reason is Hellenic'.[64]

Those distinctions need not detain us here. What I want to draw out of some of these texts, published before and during the Second World War, is not a comprehensive literary analysis, but an exploration of the sometimes surprising commonalities they could share with the newspapers I have been discussing. The texts I examine here were positioned within bodies of literary writing (French poetry, French literature, Haitian poetry, Négritude poetry) to which they responded and by which they were shaped. They employed a number of textual and narrative strategies in which form and content are not necessarily separable.[65] A reading of them in the context of other writings nevertheless opens up a range of interesting insights. What kinds of political images become visible when we read these literary works alongside their non-literary counterparts and precursors?

'A Lonely Man Imprisoned in Whiteness'

Writing in the radical Martinican student journal *Légitime Défense*, which ran for a single issue on June 1, 1932, René Mésil condemned what he saw as the imitative style of black writers in French. In contrast to African Americans like Langston Hughes and Claude

[63] Kesteloot, *Black Writers in French*, xvii.
[64] See Wilder, *Freedom Time*, 61.
[65] For a discussion of Negritude as an 'experimental, text-based poetic movement', see Noland, *Voices of Negritude in Modernist Print*, 1.

McKay, he argued, black writers in French had disowned their race. In the process, they had avoided important themes, like 'the loneliness of the black man all over the world [solitude du noir à travers le monde]' and the expression of 'revolt against the injustices he suffers'.[66]

Mésil's use of the term 'loneliness' here is striking. It prefigures a prominent scene in Richard Wright's novel *Lawd Today!*, written three years later in 1935 but only published in 1963, in which a humiliated black man, Jake, wonders to himself if 'there was something he could do to pay the white folks back for all they had ever done! … He felt the loneliness of his black skin. Yeah, *some foreign country ought to whip this Gawddamn country!*' In a Garveyist reverie, Jake goes on to imagine a 'black battleship surrounded by black generals'.[67] Four years later, in 1939,[68] Aimé Césaire would write in *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (Notebook of a Return to my Native Land):

> What is mine
> a lonely man [un homme seul] imprisoned in
> whiteness
> a lonely man defying the white
> screams of white death
> (TOUSSAINT, TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE)[69]

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[66] René Mésil, "Généralités sur l'écrivain de couleur antillais," *Légitime Défense*, June 1, 1932, p8. See also Kesteloot, *Black Writers in French*, 20.
[67] Wright, *Lawd Today!*, 143–44. (emphasis in original.) For a discussion of this passage, see Dawahare, *Nationalism, Marxism, and African American Literature Between the Wars*, 126. For a political perspective on this novel, see especially Costello, 'Richard Wright's "Lawd Today!" and the Political Uses of Modernism'.
[68] The *Cahier* was revised multiple times, most prominently in 1956, but these lines are part of the original 1939 text, which was published in the Paris-based Surrealist journal *Volontés*. See Césaire, *The Original 1939 Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*.
[69] Césaire, *The Collected Poetry*. My translations of Césaire adapt those provided by Eshleman and Smith in this volume.

Later still, in 1945, Léopold Sédar Senghor's poem 'Neige sur Paris' was published in his collection *Chants d'ombre*.[70] The poem reflected upon the end of political turmoil in Europe as the 'snow of peace' now descended, and is framed as a prayer for godly forgiveness of France, exploring the narrator's feelings towards those he wants to forgive even though they will again 'barter black bodies [troqueront la chair noire]'. Among the images of injustice invoked that are connected to the hatred the narrator is trying to overcome are:

> The hands that whipped the slaves who whipped you
> The powdery white hands that slapped you, the painted powdered hands that slapped me
> The sure hands that have delivered me to loneliness [solitude] to hatred.
> … of my Mesopotamia, the Congo, they have made
> a vast cemetery beneath the white sun.[71]

What had led each of these figures, writing between 1932 and 1945, to connect loneliness, a condition normally understood as deeply personal, to the *collective* black experience?[72] As an instance of politically-oriented literary criticism, Mésil's article, which was titled 'Généralités sur « l'écrivain » de couleur antillais' (Comments on the Antillean "Writer" of Colour), is formally distinct from the other texts. But its concerns about the possibility of producing authentic forms of culture under imperialism, and about the potentially vitiating impact of colonialism on culture, were also central to the literary texts of Négritude. Mésil argued that French colonial conquest in the Caribbean had made ample use of ideas—among which Christianity had been prominent—as a tool of asserting

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[70] Senghor had enlisted in the French army in 1939 and was made a prisoner of war in 1940; he spent two years in prison camps before being released on medical grounds. See Constant and Mabana, *Negritude*.
[71] Senghor, *Selected Poems of Léopold Sédar Senghor*, 45. This translation makes use of those by Ellen Conroy Kennedy in Kesteloot, *Black Writers in French*, 110.
[72] This was a transatlantic image: Wright did not move to Paris until 1946.

control. It was extremely useful for the French authorities, he suggested, that Antilleans absorbed French culture and rejected what he called the 'génie propre de l'Antillais de couleur' (the particular genius of Antilleans of colour). Progressively, the Antillean of colour 'disowns his race, his body, his fundamental and particular passions'; he becomes, then, a tragic figure, neither truly himself nor truly accepted by the French. As a poet who is alienated from his own forms of cultural expression, the landscapes he paints can only invoke ennui.[73]

Mésil's argument here, which recalls the cultural protectionism of Kobina Sekyi that I have discussed in Chapter 2, shows one sense in which the 'assimilated' Antillean might discover a type of loneliness. But Mésil employment of the term specifically traverses the boundaries of France. He is concerned with 'the loneliness of the black man all *over the world*' and 'the injustices he suffers'.[74] I want to suggest here that it is precisely in that traversal that we can locate the commonalities between these texts, all of which touch upon the notion of loneliness an intrinsically *global* condition inherent to racialisation. Césaire is determined to lay claim to an image of Toussaint L'Ouverture buried, surrounded, and submerged in whiteness: a direct reference to Toussaint's snowy imprisonment in Fort-de-Joux at the end of his life, but also a celebration and assertion of what Césaire described elsewhere as the Haitian general's ability to see assimilation as a 'mask of subjection'.[75] For the character Jake in Wright's novel, loneliness is an emotional state resulting from racial humiliation, for which redress might be found in a shifting of loyalties to a 'foreign' black nation, complete with troops and battleships. For Senghor's narrator, too, loneliness is a condition born of racial oppression, which connects spatially disparate black experiences. All these literary texts settle, to varying extents, upon

[73] René Mésil, 'Généralités sur l'écrivain de couleur antillais', *Légitime Défense*, June 1, 1932, p8.
[74] Ibid. Emphasis added.
[75] Walsh, *Free and French in the Caribbean*, 117.

loneliness as a metaphor for the powerlessness of racialisation as a condition of specifically global origin.

Césaire's insistent repetition of 'white' ('a lonely man defying the white/ screams of white death'), as well as Senghor's repetition of the same word, meanwhile represents an instance of what I have described in the previous chapter as a practice of power in relation to French imperialism. By deliberately invoking the image and idea of whiteness in contradistinction to metropolitan claims to be unguided by such 'Anglo-Saxon' considerations, both of these figures, but especially Césaire, suggested an imaginative connection between French imperialism and a global structure of race. Elsewhere in the *Cahier*, Césaire's narrator counsels the reader to:

> Listen to the white world
> horribly weary from its immense efforts
> its stiff joints crack under the hard stars
> hear its blue steel rigidity pierce the mystic flesh
> its deceptive victories tout it defeats
> hear the grandiose alibis of its pitiful stumblings [76]

Césaire's formulation here acts if to underline the globality of whiteness through the evocative image of a lumbering 'white world' whose superficial power is close to being exhausted.

This view of a near-spent 'white world' sounds remarkably similar to that which was put forward by Lothrop Stoddard in *The Rising Tide of Color*. In that book, Stoddard had argued that '[t]he frightful weakening of the white World during the war' had 'opened up revolutionary, even cataclysmic, possibilities.'[77] *The Rising Tide of Color* had been issued in French in July 1925, translated by Abel Doysié under the title: *Le Flot montant des peuples de couleur: Contre la suprématie mondiale des blancs.* Later, in his 1940

[76] Césaire, *The Collected Poetry*, 69.
[77] Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy*, vi.

biography *Dusk of Dawn* (subtitled: *An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept*) Du Bois would title a chapter 'The White World'. Writing in 1939, then, Césaire came between these two texts. It seems likely that he was familiar with Stoddard's book.[78]

Césaire's invocation—to 'listen' to that world—might also be read as encapsulating a key element of the project of the interwar Black Atlantic, which I have been describing throughout this study as an attentive reading and heuristic theorisation of whiteness as an ideational structure which bore a relationship to the global core-periphery order. Césaire's advice here reflects the advice given to UNIA audiences in New York to read Stoddard, or Hubert Harrison's recommendation that *The Rising Tide of Color* 'should be widely read by intelligent men of color from Tokio to Tallahasse.'[79]

There are many other resonances between this poetry and the overarching themes I have been discussing in these chapters, including intriguing references to settler colonialism and genocide, which I do not have the space to expand upon here.[80] But I think the concordances I have discussed—references to whiteness, explorations of racialised 'loneliness'—reveal strong affinities between these different works. All of them, I have

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[78] Not only due to this line in the *Cahier* and Césaire's general reading of the black and white Francophone press of the period, in which Stoddard's book was well-known, but also because of Césaire's particular interest in the Haitian Revolution, which culminated in his 1963 play *La Tragédie du roi Christophe*. Stoddard was keenly interested in the Haitian Revolution: his 1914 book on the topic, *The French Revolution in San Domingo,* was a reference (and bugbear) for students of Haiti for some time. C. L. R. James's seminal *The Black Jacobins*, published in 1938, was indeed partly a response to Stoddard, who, argued James, had simply made clear 'his vendetta against the Negro race' by attributing the Haitian Revolution to the idea that 'the white race destroyed itself'. This was a 'typical example of the cloud of lies which obscure the true history of imperialism in colonial countries,' wrote James. 'The only place where Negroes did not revolt,' he added dryly, 'is in the pages of capitalist historians.' See Renault, "Toward a Counter-Genealogy of Race."

[79] Harrison and Perry, *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, 306–9.

[80] See, for example, Damas' poem *S.O.S.*, in which the situation of black people globally is explicitly connected that of Jews in Europe: 'soon they will get the idea/ to want to swallow up [bouffer] *nègres*/ like Hitler/ swallowing up Jews.' Miller, *Rethinking Négritude through Léon-Gontran Damas*, 94–96. Vegetative imagery in Césaire, traditionally discussed in terms of the influence of Frobenius, might also be discussed of in light of the settlement gaze that we have explored above. See Césaire, *The Collected Poetry*, 4.

been suggesting, were marked by the radical traversal of the boundaries of the French empire-state, a process through which a description of the experience of race and racialised oppression was imbued with a constitutively global quality. In one final area, these literary works reflected upon the globality of race. That was in the connections they drew between race, labour, and global order.

'We Are Nothing But Bodies to Be Taxed'

The first issue of *La Voix des Nègres*, the short-lived newspaper published by Comité de Défense de la Race Nègre that had been founded out of Lamine Senghor's split with the French Communists, had included a forceful reclamation of the term 'Nègre'. In the article 'Le mot nègre' ('The Word Nègre'), Senghor argued that the imperialists were trying to divide black racial unity by allowing those who had adopted Western customs to call themselves 'noir'. Men with European university degrees could even become 'men of colour.' Meanwhile, 'nègre', 'the dirty word of today', was applied to the underpriviledged blacks: 'those who are exploited in the cotton fields of the Niger valley' and 'the sugarcane cutters in the plantation fields of Martinique and Guadeloupe'. It was with them that Senghor and his organisation wanted to express their solidarity and their common blackness. 'We bring ourselves honour and glory by calling ourselves Nègres, with a capital N,' Senghor wrote.[81]

David Murphy has pointed out that 'Le mot nègre' was a re-working of an article Lamine Senghor had published in *Le Paria*, the Communist colonial newspaper, in April

[81] "Le mot 'Nègre'," *La Voix des Nègres*, January 1927. This article has been widely discussed. See Murphy, 'Defending the "Negro Race"'; Dewitte, *Mouvements Nègres*, 144–45; Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, 33. See also M. Younis, "N is For Muslim," *London Review of Books Blog*. 1 April, 2016. https://www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2016/04/01/musab-younis/n-is-for-muslim/.

1926, which was titled 'Le Réveil des nègres'.[82] Murphy also explains that both articles express 'a racial identity that is based not on shared racial characteristics but … on a shared sense of oppression.' What is particularly interesting about them is the mode through which they explicate this shared oppression: exploitative labour in Africa and the Caribbean. It is that labour which creates, Senghor argues, a collective black experience and which should demand solidarity from 'men of colour' in the metropole with those working in sugarcane fields.

In another article, *La Voix des Nègres* argued it was becoming clear to black people that 'when we are needed, to get killed or to be put to work, we are French; but when it comes to giving us rights, we are no longer French, we are negroes.'[83] And in 1930, an article in *La Race Nègre* stated that while the colonialists 'exalt the work of French imperialism in black Africa', it was clear what 'this glorification has cost. To work the *nègre* to death, to make super-profits at his expense, to plunder the riches of his country—this is what the colonial project comes down to.'[84] This view of race as intrinsically connected to the ordering of the global economy was, we have seen, a significant feature of interwar West African writing under British rule. Here, it crossed into the black (trans-)nationalism of Lamine Senghor. Throughout a range of francophone literary texts, sometimes surprising resonances with this way of thinking can be found.

Nowhere are these themes more apparent than in the novel *Batouala*, which was published in 1921 by the Martinican René Maran. Subtitled 'a real *nègre* novel', it was the first by a black person to win the prestigious Prix Goncourt; its success catapulted Maran out of government employment—he worked for the colonial service in French Equatorial

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[82] Murphy, 'Defending the "Negro Race"', 168.
[83] *La Voix des Nègres*. Jan 1927. 'Ce qu'est notre Comité de Défense de la Race Nègre.'
[84] LRN Sept 1930. 'Cinquante ans de colonisation en A.E.F.: Les misères et les souffrances de tout un peuple nègre' by S.B.

Africa (AEF), an experience upon which he drew heavily for the novel—and into public life.[85] Breaking with the exoticism of the colonial novel, *Batouala* portrays Europeans in Africa as violent intruders through the eyes of its eponymous protagonist. For 'in the language of the whites,' thinks Batouala to himself early in the novel, 'work took on a very strange meaning. It meant getting tired without achieving immediate or tangible results, it meant trouble, annoyance, suffering, the squandering of health, the pursuit of imaginary ends.'[86]

These musings come to a head later in the novel when, during a fiery speech, Batouala denounces 'the whites', exclaiming: 'We are nothing but bodies to be taxed [des chairs à impôt.] We are nothing but beasts of burden. Beasts? Not even. A dog? They feed dogs, and take care of their horses. Us? We are less than these animals, we are the lowest of the low. They are slowly killing us.'[87] These themes were underlined by Maran's preface to the novel, in which the author bitterly ironised the civilising mission: 'After all, if they [the natives] die of hunger by the thousands, like flies, it is because their country is being developed [met en valeur]. Only those who do not adapt themselves to civilisation disappear. Civilisation, civilisation, pride of Europeans, and their charnel-house of innocents … You build your kingdom on corpses.'[88]

Maran was pressured to resign from his post in Chad in April 1923 and became a central figure among the black intelligentsia of Paris. *Batouala* became deeply influential

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[85] Maran was born in Martinique to Guyanese parents and completed his baccalaureate in Bordeaux. For a discussion of the critical reception of his novel, see Allen, *René Maran's Batouala Jazz-Text*. For my translations I have adapted the 1922 English edition, translated by Adele Szold Selzer. See Maran, *Batouala*, 1922. I have also drawn upon Ellen Conroy Kennedy's translation of Lilyan Kesteloot's book *Black Writers in French*, in which she translates some extracts of *Batouala*.

[86] Maran, *Batouala*, 1921, 21.

[87] Ibid., 77.

[88] Ibid., 11. It has been suggested that this preface represents the first extant example in print of a black Frenchman attacking the hypocrisy of official French discourse. Dewitte, *Mouvements Nègres*, 69–70.

for a generation of black writers—including the key proponents of Négritude. Continuing to criticise French colonial practices in the pages of *Les Continents*, Maran was visited at home regularly by Léopold Sédar Senghor, Léon Damas and Aimé Césaire, the founders of Négritude; Senghor famously identified him as the precursor to the movement.[89] Maran's fame spread across the Black Atlantic. As Wilder highlights, debates about *Batouala* appeared in the *Negro World* in 1922, while both Du Bois and Locke wrote about Maran in their contributions to Locke's seminal *New Negro* anthology.[90] Given such influence, it is not surprising that Maran's characterisation of racialised embodiment as transforming Africans into mere taxable bodies and 'beasts of burden'—strongly reminiscent of *La Race Nègre*'s formulation 'working the *nègre* to death'—echoed across the early works of Négritude.

I want to discuss here some of the resonances of this idea in the work of Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, and the Haitian poet Jacques Roumain, in and before 1945. We have already discussed the poem 'Neige sur Paris' in Senghor's 1945 collection *Chants d'ombre*. Another poem in that collection, 'Prière de paix', also reflected upon the question of race and labour. Dedicated to Georges Pompidou, with whom Senghor had studied in Paris, and his wife Claude, the poem constitutes a self-examination of the narrator's conflicting feelings towards France. It sees the narrator invoking godly forgiveness for France at the same time as being forced to acknowledge that:

> she too like some northern cattle
> rustler raped my children to swell the cane and cotton
> fields, for negro sweat is like manure.[91]

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[89] See his essay "René Maran, precurseur de la Négritude" in Senghor, 'Liberté 1: Negritude et Humanisme'. The point about home visits is made in Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 165.
[90] Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 163–66. See also Malela, Buata B., *Les écrivains afro-antillais à Paris (1920-1960)*.
[91] Kesteloot, *Black Writers in French*, 210–11.

In Aimé Césaire's *Cahier*, published in 1939, a series of images successively suggest a relationship between blackness and labour. The narrator of the *Cahier* finds 'not an inch of this world devoid of my fingerprint/ and my calcaneum on the spines of skyscrapers and my filth in the glitter of gems!'[92] Later he invokes 'a hundred years of whip/ lashes'.[93] In a stark parenthetical passage, he ventriloquizes a racist: 'the smell of *nègres*, that's-what-makes-cane-grow/ remember-the-old-saying:/ beat-a-*nègre*, and you feed him'.[94] And in a section during which 'childish fantasies' about Africa are vehemently rejected, he exclaims that 'the only unquestionable record we broke was that of endurance under the whip'.[95]

Finally, consider the poem by the Haitian poet and Communist militant Jacques Roumain,[96] 'Bois d'ébène' ('Ebony Wood'), published in 1944:

> Here for your voice is an echo of flesh and blood
> black messenger of hope
> for you know all the songs of the world
> ever since those of the Nile's immemorial workpits.
>
> Each word reminds you of the weight of Egyptian stones
> and the muscle of your misery erected columns of temples
> The way a sob of sap raises the stalks of reeds.[97]

What becomes visible when we assess these three poems, published between 1939 and 1945, in the context of the representation of labour and colonialism in *Batouala* and

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[92] Césaire, *The Collected Poetry*, 47.
[93] Ibid., 55.
[94] Ibid., 59.
[95] Ibid., 60.
[96] Roumain was an influential critic of the US occupation of Haiti who, in July 1927, had co-founded *La Revue Indigène* in Port-au-Prince. See Shannon, *Jean-Price Mars, the Haitian Elite and the American Occupation,1915-35*, 66. For a discussion of Roumain in relation to Négritude, see Joseph, *Thinking in Public*.
[97] Jacques Roumain, *When the Tom-Tom Beats*, 72–73.

La Race Nègre? Each text operates in a formally distinctive way, of course: Césaire's surrealist text differs from Senghor's prayerful poetry and Roumain's Communist-inspired intonations. But allowing for those differences, what is striking is the way in which each text follows Maran's *Batouala* in invoking a relationship between the black body—explicitly characterised either as a 'body' (corps) or as 'flesh' (chair)—and labour. Both Senghor and Césaire present a dramatically similar image: that of the sweat of black people physically fertilising crops. Roumain's 'sob of sap' which erects 'the stalks of reeds' meanwhile places together images of crop-growing and column-raising, the tall reeds being especially suggestive of sugar cane. Roumain's columns of temples and Césaire's skyscrapers bearing the heel-bone of the narrator both remind the reader of the contribution of those of African descent to civilisation, ancient and modern.

Across these texts, the body as a political and social site of racial signification is not simply understood within the French imperial structure but at a level above and beyond that structure: in the logic and hierarchies of the imperial global order itself. Racialisation is envisaged, in relation to that order, in part as a structure that enforced upon African-descended subjects the embodiment of particular positions within global hierarchies of labour.

The common emphasis of all these writers on the embodiment of labour demonstrates a key mechanism through which the employment of racialisation by an imperial and capitalist global order was understood. Needless to say, these images did not simply translate into political positions. It would be incorrect and obviously reductive to imply that, by invoking a sense of race as the embodiment of historically- and politically-constituted hierarchies of labour, these poets were simply co-signing the black (trans-)nationalism of Lamine Senghor. Instead, I suggest that we read these evocative images—of black sweat fertilising crops, and of and black bodies being taxed, worked and

exploited—as important imaginative traversals of the boundaries of the French empire-state, conducted in order to express a sense black racialised subjecthood. All represented a grappling with the question of embodied racialisation and its embeddedness in the productive exigencies of colonial capitalism. This did not necessarily generate a political position, but it did shape an understanding of race as productive and global force.

Conclusion

The literature on black movements in interwar France has often emphasised the factional infighting that troubled relations between the many sectors of black communities—African, Antillean, student, worker—and the wide range of political positions, from conservative to communist.[98] But that emphasis can occlude the ways in which there were also, at times, remarkable convergences. While agreement on political strategy and purpose always remained elusive, the 'racial turn' of the late 1920s and 1930s among black groups in France was pronounced—and by no means limited to those who are usually considered 'anti-assimilationists'.

The First World War decisively shaped the attitude towards France of its colonial subjects. The treatment of colonial soldiers in the metropole —their elevation to 'real Frenchmen' during the war, their relegation to 'natives' after it—seemed to encapsulate, to many, the whole problem with colonialism, its antinomical desire to both use its subjects and sweep them away entirely. One key element of this new relationship between France and its imperial subjects was the transformation of France into a global centre of immigration and, concomitantly, a world leader in immigration control and surveillance.

[98] Wilder, for example, writes: 'The history of radical Panafricanism in Paris between the wars reveals an overdetermined tendency toward organization implosion. The combination of internal and external pressures made anticolonial alliance politics around racial identity difficult to sustain.' Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*, 184.

French immigration policy came to fixate on the idealised (white) person who could be relied upon to embody Frenchness and maintain for France an elevated position in global civilisational hierarchies.

Many French-speaking Africans and Antilleans came to discover during this period a material oppression that connected their own racialisation to the labour that fuelled the global economy. This imbued the experience of blackness with a constitutive globality. Later work continued to carry this structure of feeling, which was perhaps nowhere expressed better than by the Congolese poet Tchicaya U' Tamsi, who wrote in his *Épitome* (1962): 'I forget to be Black so that I can forgive the world for this.'[99] The politics of colonial comparison, of connecting French imperialism to a broader imperial and capitalist order, was a classic strategy of the Left: as *Le Paria* put it succinctly, 'our imperialism isn't alone in the world'.[100] But what we see in the texts I have cited above might be better understood an early form of *postcolonial* argument about the importance of the imperial encounter for the constitution of both global power and forms of resistance to such power.

Just as the racially-imbued communism we find here interrupts traditional Marxism, so do the arguments for political community made by *La Race Nègre* and others destabilise traditional nationalist theory. With many of the key conditions posited by Benedict Anderson—not least the emergence of an influential press, connecting people across borders and time—we do not find a modular nationalism reflecting prior European forms, but a contingent political project that attempts to harness the power of nationalism in a performative sense, in opposition to a dominant discourse, and with little hope of sovereign control over territory. Similarly, Duara's conceptualisation of nationalist time sits uneasily with the experience of time conveyed in these texts: its interpenetration of

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[99] Taylor, *Paths to Contemporary French Literature*, 108. See Gérard, *European-Language Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 510–11.
[100] "Faillite Parlementaire et Colonies," *Le Paria*, March–April 1924.

temporalities, its radical ambivalence over the subject which travels through time, its uncertainty about the future. More than anywhere else in the world, interwar Paris saw anticolonial nationalisms and forms of transnationalism—especially Communism—interacting. Asian, African, Caribbean and Arab expatriates worked together in the Union Intercoloniale. It was out of that specifically transnational vision that many colonial nationalist organisations grew.[101]

After the Second World War, the political situation in France and its Caribbean and West African empire changed. France, emerging from the Vichy occupation, seemed to have been reforged. The hope emerged that it might accommodate Africans and Antilleans peoples as equal citizens in a federal structure. Calls for independence diminished, or were marginalised; for a time, the political project became the French Union. Robust critiques of French imperialism did not go away, of course. Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* and Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* were both published in the fifteen years following the Second World War. Yet a view of the world emphasising race and imperialism, such as had flourished in the interwar black press, seemed, to many, less relevant. Politics now became territorial, if not yet actually national. The dominance of expatriates in the metropole was weakened as new centres of power emerged in West Africa and the Caribbean. And in the fast-paced political atmosphere of the postwar world, grand visions gave way to pragmatism against a backdrop of Cold War bipolarity.

As we know, attempts to form a French Union failed, ejecting French-controlled West and Central Africa into a formal independence leavened with close postcolonial (and neocolonial) ties with the metropole—the infamous *Françafrique*—which was, arguably, the worst of both worlds. A recent body of work has attempted to overcome what it sees as

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[101] One small instance is Ho Chi Minh's interest in pan-Africanism. See his translation of an article on the Third Pan-African Congress in *Le Paria*: "Home rule pour l'Afrique," December 1923.

a stalled juncture by resurrecting the federalist thinking of the early postwar period, arguing that political forms continued to be possible before they were foreclosed by decolonisation and its attendant ills.[102] There has been less interest in the supposed stridency of the interwar period. The 'black nationalist' writing in *La Race Nègre* has typically been seen to contrast unfavourably with those who hoped for 'new types of transcontinental political association' with France.[103]

But I have tried to suggest here that such nationalism, alongside the identification of race as a structure and force with global valence, the comparativist approach to French imperialist power, and the insistency of diasporic connection and organising, were all powerful political tools. Meanwhile, the submerging of race as an optic of understanding the world may not have been an entirely positive development in a still-interconnected global order in which race continues to play a role. The scepticism of *La Race Nègre* towards the possibility of real colonial representation could be read, for example, as a remarkable foreshadowing of the failures of imperial federalism in the postwar period.

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[102] Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*; Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization*; Wilder, *Freedom Time*.

[103] Wilder, *Freedom Time*, 1. Wilder does not directly contrast Léopold and Lamine Senghor. But a reading of *Freedom Time*, which champions Léopold Senghor's hopes for imperial federation, alongside *The French Imperial Nation-State*, in which Lamine Senghor is discussed far more equivocally, is indicative. So too is Wilder's persistent mischaracterisation of anticolonial nationalism. See Younis, 'Against Independence'.

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Haiti, Ethiopia, Liberia: Black Sovereignty in a White World

On Valentine's Day in 1931, E. N. Jones, writing in the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, explained to his readers that 'Abyssinia and Liberia are the only independent States of Africa. The white man, hawk-like watches over them and is ready to pounce upon them if needs be. The Negro, wherever he may be, is interested in them; for their rise or fall is a test of his capacity for self-government.'[1] Four years earlier, the radical black journal *Le Courrier des Noirs*, published in Paris, had run an article under the headline 'Haïti aux Haïtiens' which argued that the 'Haitian cause' was 'among the most urgent causes that we have to defend' because 'this small black state' had 'symbolised independence for the black

[1] E. N. Jones, "Liberia," *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, February 14, 1931.

peoples of the Antilles' before the occupation of the island by the United States had 'established an arbitrary regime of terror.'[2]

Haiti, Liberia, and Ethiopia existed during the interwar period at the very edges of the Western-dominated international society. Until 1957, they were the only spaces of juridical sovereignty for African-descended peoples in the world: that is, the only locations where people of African descent could legally live as neither colonised populations nor disenfranchised minorities. Each had its sovereignty severely curtailed and even effectively extinguished during this period, whether through occupation (Haiti), formal investigation by the League of Nations alongside US-led financial receivership (Liberia), or invasion (Ethiopia). Yet the apparent marginality of these states was not reflected in the enormous level of interest they generated across both the Black Atlantic and what I have called the 'White Atlantic'. This chapter explores interwar writing on Haiti, Liberia, and Ethiopia, which gave rise to a dominant narrative, about the relationship between race and sovereignty, and 'a surreptitious counter-narrative'[3] about the machinery of world politics. Both narratives can help us, I suggest, to think differently about interwar global order.

In centring Black Atlantic writing on these three states, I am deliberately challenging two traditionally dominant tendencies in international theory: towards powerful states—the so-called 'great powers'—and towards explicitly self-conscious theory produced in those states. How does the world look when we take a much-studied period, but reverse those two tendencies? My reading of the Black Atlantic writing on this topic reveals that in the same way that racialised peoples endured enforced embodiment within sites of ostensibly abstracted universalism, so were Haiti, Liberia, and Ethiopia understood to experience embodied forms of sovereignty within a Western-dominated

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[2] "Haïti aux Haïtiens," *Le Courrier des Noirs* 1, November 1927.
[3] The term is taken from Said, *Culture And Imperialism*, 283.

international society. For them, the generalising proclamations of interwar global governance collapsed into a racialised particularity. One consequence of this view was the positioning of these states as 'an analog for the acquisition of black autonomy in general,' as Paul Gilroy has put it in another context.[4]

My argument, then, is that the interwar experiences of Haiti, Liberia, and Ethiopia show how the production of difference under imperial capitalism, which had created a racial order that spanned the world, persistently undermined in both theory and fact the idea of sovereign states organised by Africans and African-descended peoples. In the concluding section to this chapter, I suggest some ways in which racialised conceptions of sovereignty have echoed far beyond the interwar period.

Invasion, Occupation, Investigation

My aim in this section is to briefly outline the interwar experiences of the three states with which I am concerned in this chapter as a whole, with the aim of providing relevant background for the subsequent analysis. Alongside the specific contraventions of sovereignty involving, in each case, different external powers, I will also make some general points about the global framework within which these contraventions took place.

Haiti effectively ceased to be a sovereign state for much of the interwar period. Woodrow Wilson's invasion on July 28, 1915, inaugurated a nineteen-year occupation of the island that endured until 1934, running through five successive US administrations.[5] It

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[4] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 123.

[5] On the occupation, see especially the landmark study by Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*. Other relevant studies include Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*; Dash, *Haiti and the United States*; Renda, *Taking Haiti*; Castor, *L'occupation américaine d'Haïti*. On specific aspects of Haitian life, intellectual activity, and resistance under the occupation, see Pamphile, *L'éducation en Haiti sous l'occupation américaine 1915-1934*; Pamphile, *La Croix et Le Glaive*; Millet, *Les paysans haïtiens et l'occupation américaine d'Haïti, 1915-1930*; Shannon, *Jean Price-Mars, the Haitian Elite and the American Occupation, 1915-1935*.

came towards the end of a long period of postbellum American overseas activity, during which Hawaii, the Philippines, Guam, and over fifty smaller Pacific islands had been occupied or annexed.[6] Yet while the occupation of Haiti was in this sense part of a familiar pattern, coming six years after the occupation of Nicaragua and one year before the occupation of the Dominican Republic, it was also unique. Haiti's existence as a *black* republic—one that had, moreover, come into existence through an armed revolt of enslaved people—shaped the occupation from the beginning and, as shall be seen, also shaped responses to it.

The occupation of Haiti was, as Brenda Gayle Plummer has written, 'unprecedented in its duration, the racism that characterised U.S. behaviour in the black republic, and the brutality associated with pacification efforts.'[7] The initial intervention was legally entrenched by means of a treaty, passed by the US Senate in February 1916, whose stipulations included the financial oversight of Haiti by US officials and the settlement of all foreign claims. A brief peasant insurgency was defeated by late 1915. Meanwhile, the Haitian legislature was disbanded for twelve years, and a new constitution—for the first time permitting foreigners to own land in Haiti—was approved through a Marine-sponsored plebiscite in which it is likely that less than five percent of Haiti's population was permitted to vote.[8] In order to carry out road-building, the occupation reinstituted a *corvée* system that forced peasants to perform labour under military supervision.

North American officials in Haiti were paid far higher salaries than their Haitian counterparts, and they imported US-style racial segregation to the hotels and clubs they

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[6] See Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*.
[7] Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*, 101.
[8] Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, 99.

frequented.[9] Curfews, press restrictions and surveillance were imposed through martial law. The severity of these measures augmented elite and popular discontent with the occupation, leading to another armed rebellion—the *caco* war of 1919–20—which was supressed through a counter-insurgency campaign that included aerial bombing. Attempts to 'rationalise' the Haitian economy and import plantation-style agribusiness, attacking the system of peasant freeholding, met with scant success even on their own terms. In 1929, an economic crisis intersected with widespread discontent over the occupation and precipitated militant student and worker strikes. Demonstrations culminated in the Cayes (or Aux Cayes) massacre of December 6, during which twenty US marines fired upon a large crowd of Haitian civilians, killing twenty-four and wounding fifty-one.

Ethiopia, too, found itself under imperial occupation between the two World Wars.[10] It had joined the League of Nations in October 1923, a year after the Mussolini's seizure of power in Italy. Surrounded on all sides by territories controlled by either Britain, France or Italy and undertaking its own attempted modernisation, the kingdom's sovereignty was evidently fragile, notwithstanding its seminal victory against Italy at Adwa in 1896.[11] Border skirmishes, provoked by Italy, erupted at Wal Wal in December 1934. That month, Mussolini issued a secret military directive ordering 'no other than the destruction of the Abyssinian armed forces and the total conquest of Ethiopia'.[12] Ethiopia

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[9] On segregation, see Schmidt, 137-153.

[10] There is a significant literature on the Italo-Ethiopian War and its international ramifications. For an overview, see Steiner, *The Triumph of the Dark*, chap. 2; the excellent volume by Strang, *Collision of Empires*; Mallett, *Mussolini in Ethiopia, 1919-1935*; Bahru Zewde, *History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855-1991*, chap. 4. For a comparative view of Ethiopia in light of Italian colonialism, see the comprehensive recent volume edited by Ben-Ghiat and Fuller, *Italian Colonialism*. On the role of the US, see Harris, *The United States and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis*. A slightly dated but nevertheless very good evaluation of historiography on the invasion can be found in Triulzi, 'Italian Colonialism and Ethiopia'. On the role of the Catholic Church, see Ceci, *Il papa non deve parlare*. Mack Smith's biography of the Duce, *Mussolini*, is another essential source.

[11] For a summary of Ethiopia's position in the early 1900s, see Keefer, 'Great Britain, France, and the Ethiopian Tripartite Treaty of 1906'.

[12] Steiner, *The Triumph of the Dark*, 101.

appealed to the League of Nations for assistance. But Britain and France, then concerned with the threat of German rearmament, showed little interest. A secret British report in June 1935, which was procured by the Italian government, found scant reason for Britain to defend Ethiopian sovereignty;[13] meanwhile, the agreements signed between Mussolini and the French foreign minister, Pierre Laval, in January 1935, included a surreptitious recognition of Italian primacy in Ethiopia.[14] President Roosevelt expressed sympathy with Ethiopia but did not invoke the Kellogg–Briand Pact of 1928, to which both Italy and Ethiopia were signatories. The long-planned Italian invasion finally came on October 3, 1935, without a declaration of war, and was marked by advanced methods of violence that included the use of aerial bombing (as in Haiti) as well as mustard gas. Ethiopia was incorporated into the short-lived Africa Orientale Italiana, or Italian East Africa.

Italy was declared in violation of Article 12 of the League of Nations Covenant as a result of the invasion. An embargo on loans and arms was agreed alongside limited economic sanctions, which did not include exports of iron, steel, coal, cotton, or oil to Italy.[15] The US invoked its own 'neutrality' legislation, which prohibited the sale of arms to both Italy—though Italy, of course, possessed its own arms industries—and Ethiopia, but allowed other exports to continue. The USSR meanwhile took no action to block Italy's aggression: Litvinov even for a time supported Italy's claims against Ethiopia in the League of Nations, before agreeing to sanctions on Italy that did not include the export of raw materials to the country.[16] Widespread hopes in the colonial world that Japan would come to the assistance of Ethiopia were dashed: the country came down firmly on the Italian side, rejecting Ethiopian pleas for assistance and sending assurances to Rome that it was willing

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[13] Harris, *The United States and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis*, 10.
[14] Mallett, *Mussolini in Ethiopia, 1919-1935*, 27. See Watt, 'Document: The Secret Laval-Mussolini Agreement of 1935 on Ethiopia'.
[15] For a discussion of the impact of sanctions, see Ristuccia, *1935 Sanctions against Italy*.
[16] Strang, *Collision of Empires*, 7.

to obstruct sanctions and improve mutual trade between Japan and Italy. Subsequently, Japan refused to recognise Ethiopia's government-in-exile.[17]

Unlike Haiti or Ethiopia, Liberia did not experience direct occupation during the interwar period. But its sovereignty came under severe strain in other ways.[18] By 1919, it had existed as an independent state for seventy-two years. The only republic on the African continent, Liberia's governing class, mostly descended from African American settlers, had for many decades engaged in hostilities with the indigenous African groups of the country's 'interior', who formed a large majority of the country's population. It was only in the 1920s that the central government—after quelling revolts in 1910, 1915, 1918, and 1920—achieved a clear demarcation of the country's borders and established (virtually) complete control over the hinterland. Such control had been exerted, since 1911, through a system of Indirect Rule, in which the hinterland districts were administered by centrally-appointed district commissioners, who were responsible for collecting hut, poll, and education taxes and overseeing *corvée* labour. The Liberian Frontier Force, which had been set up partly as a response to persistent and costly British and French territorial incursions, was central to the enforcement of this legal system.[19]

Liberia's government had endured constant financial pressure since the country's independence in 1847. In November 1926, the country granted the Firestone Corporation a ninety-nine year lease of up to one million acres of land for the purpose of rubber

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[17] See Clarke III, 'An Alliance of the "Colored" Peoples: Ethiopia and Japan'. On the relationship between Japan and Italy, see Hedinger, 'Universal Fascism and Its Global Legacy. Italy's and Japan's Entangled History in the Early 1930s'.

[18] On interwar Liberia, see the contemporaneous but detailed and accurate account by Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa*, as well as the excellent study by Sundiata, *Black Scandal*. See also Gershoni, *Black Colonialism*; Cassell, *Liberia*. For a political economy view see Kraaij, *The Open Door Policy of Liberia*; Brown, *The Economic History of Liberia*. Brown's book, along with other Black Atlantic studies of Liberia, is given detailed treatment later in this chapter.

[19] On the revolts, Indirect Rule, and the Frontier Force, see Sundiata, *Black Scandal*, 5–9. From 1912 to 1927, the Frontier Force was staffed with African American Army officers in an official agreement with the US government. See Rainey, 'Buffalo Soldiers in Africa'.

cultivation, after having rejected attempts by Garvey's UNIA to purchase large tracts of land.[20] Liberia's rulers also turned to the export of indigenous, mostly Kru, labour, agreeing to supply contract workers to the Spanish cacao plantations on the island of Fernando Po. The poor treatment of these labourers made this agreement increasingly unpopular with Liberians during the 1920s and it was terminated in 1927 (though workers continued to be supplied privately to the island.) That year, the Liberian politician Thomas Faulkner accused the President-elect, Charles King, of facilitating practices of slavery both within Liberia and on Fernando Po, using the Liberian Frontier Force to effectively enslave labourers, all to the financial benefit of a network of government officials.[21]

The ensuing scandal received widespread international attention. Since Liberia was a member of the League of Nations, a Committee of the League of Nations—known as the Christy Commission—was convened to investigate the allegations. Its report found that slavery as classically understood did not exist in Liberia, but that the shipment of workers to Fernando Po, as well as to Gabon, was carried out 'under conditions of criminal compulsion scarcely distinguishable from slave-raiding and slave-trading.'[22] The misuse of the Liberian Frontier Force for labour recruitment was also found to have taken place. Liberia was already subject to an American financial receivership; the League investigation involved serious consideration of turning the country into a territory administered under the League of Nations mandatory system. In 1929, after an outbreak of yellow fever and a plague scare, the US threatened Liberia that outside intervention was practically inevitable due to 'the continual disorders, social disintegration and health menace provided by Liberia

[20] See M'bayo, 'W. E. B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, and Pan-Africanism in Liberia, 1919–1924'.
[21] Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa*, 819–52; Brown, *The Economic History of Liberia*, 174–208; Sundiata, *Black Scandal*.
[22] Christy, 'Pawning of Human Beings in Liberia'. For the House of Lords debate on the matter following the publication of the Christy report, see *Hansard* HL Deb 16 March 1932 vol 83 c913.

in its present condition'.[23] Over the next six years, Liberia faced severe financial pressure, repeated requests from Firestone for US military intervention, and attempts to expel it from the League of Nations. It was only in 1935, when President Barclay signed a new agreement with American financial interests, that the crisis was finally averted.

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The remainder of this chapter will examine diverse reactions to the precarious interwar sovereignty of these states. I want to close this section by observing briefly how these capsule histories give an indication of the lineaments of the interwar order with regard to the weakest of its 'quasi-states'. These states were confronted with overwhelming pressure to 'modernise' in order to be seen to be exerting effective internal sovereignty; they had all instigated, as a result, the violent internal conflicts typical of 'state-making' processes. But these desperate attempts at modernisation had not preserved sovereignty for any of them. In fact, the most advanced in terms of state modernisation—Ethiopia—was also the state that had its sovereignty most effectively extinguished through a nineteenth-century-style colonial occupation which did not even arrive with the developmentalist rhetoric that had accompanied the US occupation of Haiti.

A strategy of financial receivership, through which European powers had generated customs revenues from indebted foreign powers, was adopted by the US in both Haiti and Liberia. This was, as Emily Rosenberg points out, legitimised 'in terms of rationality and benevolence'; receiverships were, it was argued, 'an ordering that was the antithesis of imperialism, arising from markets and morality rather than from an imperial

[23] Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers*, 157.

state's designs for territorial aggrandizement.'[24] Yet while intervention in Liberia took the form of a financial receivership, Haiti experienced both receivership *and* occupation; meanwhile, Italy's invasion of Ethiopia, owed everything to 'designs for territorial aggrandizement.' The League of Nations was unable to prevent Italian aggression in Ethiopia but became heavily involved in Liberia's internal affairs, thus paradoxically making membership for Liberia a liability rather than an asset. In this way, the interwar order displayed a marked hybridity, defined at once by *realpolitik* and 'liberal internationalism', both of which were mediated through new international institutions and shaped by the ascendancy of the US.

Anthony Anghie has shown that the League's Mandates system, while claiming to offer a route to sovereignty for colonial territories, can in fact be seen to have prolonged their subordination.[25] For Anghie, the mandate system inaugurated the expunging of explicitly racist criteria for statehood, but it did so in favour of a temporal (backward/advanced) metric that drew upon ostensibly scientific language to argue for continued external control. Arguably the interwar system's weakest states and those whose sovereignty was most persistently undermined and questioned, Haiti, Liberia, and Ethiopia were also, at the same time, the states that were most commonly understood in racialised terms. Black Atlantic writers, as we shall see, did not see these two facts as unconnected, and suggested that treatment of these states revealed much about the world order at whose periphery they found themselves. As I explore in the next section, a closer look at the dominant imperial discourses in relation to Haiti, Liberia and Ethiopia reveals how this apparently hybrid order—defined at once by force and utopianism—was, in important ways, integrated through a racial imaginary.

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[24] Rosenberg, 'Ordering Others: US Financial Advisers in the Early Twentieth Century', 406.
[25] Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law*. See also Keene, *Beyond the Anarchical Society*.

The White Atlantic on the 'Impossibility' of Black Sovereignty

Before examining the writing of the Black Atlantic on Haiti, Liberia, and Ethiopia, it is necessary to say something about the writing of what I have called the 'White Atlantic' on these states. Black Atlantic writers used the experiences of these three interwar sites of black sovereignty to develop heuristic theories of global order. But they did so in the context of a singular, uneven and hierarchical modern world in which an engagement with dominant discourses was essential. This was especially important in the context of the political power carried by such discourses. We have already seen, in the introduction and prologue to this study, how the aggressive expansionism of the US in the 1880s and 1890s was underwritten by a vivid racial imaginary, in which the 'Anglo-Saxon' makeup of the US was seen to provide the basis for an American *mission civilisatrice*; and, in Chapter 1, how the First World War did not eliminate this way of thinking but in a sense heightened it, with the flourishing of the form that Patrick Brantlinger has called the 'proleptic elegy'[26]—most prominently represented in this study through the writing of Lothrop Stoddard—in which the 'end' of Europe, Anglo-Saxon dominance, the 'white race', or white supremacy, was depicted in terms of apocalyptic foreboding.

While the relationship between sovereignty and 'civilisation' had long animated scholars of international law,[27] this section will focus on the prominent and quotidian discourses in Europe and the US that contained and framed sites of black sovereignty in the White Atlantic. Haiti, Liberia, and Ethiopia were all the subjects of a discourse fixing upon the 'impossibility' of black sovereignty, a set of tropes and organised forms of

[26] Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings*, 3.
[27] See Koskenniemi, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations: the Rise and Fall of International Law, 1870-1960*.

language that posited and reinforced an imagined relationship between race, temporality and non-sovereignty. I want to suggest that a reading of that discourse, alongside assessments of the severe difficulties faced by the states in question, helped Black Atlantic writers to illuminate the features of the global racial order, producing a body of international theory with relevance for the study of the interwar period and beyond.

Haiti—an 'inexhaustible symbol'[28] of otherness in American discourse—had long found itself the subject of both fascination and fear in its preponderant neighbour. Haiti's location in the Americas, its juridical sovereignty, and its 'blackness', all combined to give the country a specially liminal temporal status in this writing, at once modern and impossibly backward: 'the halfway point between what we call the jungle and what we call civilization', as William Faulkner's *Absalom! Absalom!* (1938) put it.[29]

Lothrop Stoddard's first book, *The French Revolution in San Domingo* (1914), which was based on his Harvard dissertation, used the example of Haiti both to warn about the threat of weakening white hegemony and to insist on the impossibility of black sovereign government.[30] As Shannon Riley has pointed out, Stoddard's vision of racialised temporality saw 'black' and 'white' histories as mutually incompatible, with 'White San Domingo' becoming 'only a memory' when 'the black state of Haiti' made 'its appearance in the world's history': the one blotted out the other.[31] In *The Rising Tide of Color* (1920), Stoddard again argued that Haiti represented the 'first real shock between the ideals of white supremacy and race-equality; a prologue to the mighty drama of our own day. It also shows what real race-war means.'[32] Haiti, along with Liberia, were examples, he wrote, of

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[28] Dash, *Haiti and the United States*, 1.
[29] Quoted in Godden, "Absalom, Absalom!, Haiti and Labor History," 686. See also Balthaser, *Anti-Imperialist Modernism*, 118–46.
[30] Stoddard, *The French Revolution in San Domingo*.
[31] Riley, *Performing Race and Erasure*, 109.
[32] Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy*, 227.

how the 'black race has never shown real constructive power', because the black 'man', 'when left to himself, as in Haiti and Liberia, rapidly reverts to his ancestral ways.'[33] The racial makeup of Haiti was therefore seen to have propelled the island backwards in time, notwithstanding its evident modernity as a New World republic.

This way of thinking and writing about Haiti had a long history in Anglo-American thought. The British historian James Anthony Froude had written an influential work in 1896 that had argued: 'The Negro never rose of himself out of barbarism … when left free, as in Liberia and Hayti, he reverts to his original barbarism.'[34] Madison Grant, the popular and influential American eugenicist and mentor of Stoddard, had also invoked Haiti as a case of where the collapse of white rule had seen the country's black inhabitants 'revert almost to barbarism'.[35] These tropes were extremely common among Americans involved in occupation of the island. For Robert Lansing, a chief architect of American Haiti policy and the US Secretary of State from 1915 to 1920: 'The experience of Liberia and Haiti show that the African race are devoid of any capacity for political organization and lack genius for government. Unquestionably there is in them an inherent tendency to revert to savagery and to cast aside the shackles of civilization which are irksome to their physical nature.'[36] For Josephus Daniels, Secretary of the US Navy, 'the Haitiens [*sic*] are like negroes in the South', who should not be given free food even in times of famine.[37] For Littleton Waller, an officer in the United States Marine Corps: 'Thes [*sic*] people are niggers in spite of the thin varnish of education and refinement. Down in their hearts they are just the same happy, idle irresponsible people we know of.'[38] For Eli Kelley Cole, a US

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[33] Ibid., 100–101.
[34] Quoted in Sherwood, *Origins of Pan-Africanism*, 28.
[35] Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 242.
[36] Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, 62–63.
[37] Ibid., 69.
[38] Ibid., 79. He added: 'What the people of Norfolk and Portsmouth would say if they saw me bowing and scraping to these coons—I do not know'. Ibid.

Brigade Commander: 'No matter how much veneer and polish a Haitian may have, he is absolutely savage under the skin and under strain reverts to type.'[39]

Liberia and Ethiopia were also the subjects of discursive delegitimation. In the case of Liberia this was focused almost obsessively on the idea that the republic was parodying sovereignty: acting it out without achieving it, and thus making a mockery of the institution itself. For Henry Fenwick Reeve, who published *The Black Republic* in 1923, Liberia's rulers had failed 'to keep in line with the great civilizing efforts of other Governments on the west coast of Africa';[40] meanwhile, 'the spirit of pomposity runs through the entire warp and woof of their civic life'; they were simply 'incapable of civilized government'.[41] 'The Great Powers,' he warned, 'have no use for a second "Haiti," or San Domingo on the Continent of Africa, however pure its aspirations may be in theory'.[42] Liberia's 'detractors' believed that as a 'Negro Republic', it 'could be nothing but a caricature of self-government', as the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* pointed out in 1928.[43]

In the mid-nineteenth century, the pan-African pioneer Martin Delaney had also described the country in these terms, as 'a poor miserable mockery—a burlesque on a government'.[44] But during the interwar period, as we shall see, most black writers engaged with Liberia in a more complex fashion. White writers, however, generally continued to

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[39] C. L. R. James's masterpiece *The Black Jacobins* (1938), following his play *Toussaint L'Ouverture* (1934), arose partly out of an engagement with White Atlantic writing on Haiti. Critiquing the 'racial theories' then dominant in the literature on Haiti, James argued that Stoddard's book was illustrative of a 'vendetta against the Negro' and 'a typical example of the cloud of lies which obscure the true history of imperialism in colonial countries … The only place where Negroes did not revolt,' he added dryly, 'is in the pages of capitalist historians.' Quoted in Renault, "Toward a Counter-Genealogy of Race." Other important works about Haiti at this time, such as those by Aimé Césaire, were also forced to grapple with the dominant historiography.
[40] Reeve, *The Black Republic*, 9.
[41] Ibid., 46.
[42] Ibid., 178.
[43] "The Rising Star of Liberia," *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, June 9, 1928.
[44] Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925*, 35. Delaney reversed his position by 1859, 'making friendly overtures towards the Liberians.' Ibid.

use the language of parody and ersatz.[45] Sidney de la Rue, an American financial administrator who was posted to Liberia, wrote that while there existed there 'a semblance of the form of government brought from America, … [i]t is probable that there never was a plan of government less suited to the psychology of the tribesmen than the one under which Liberia has laboured.'[46] The examples of Liberia and Haiti were cited by British colonial administrators, both during the interwar period and after the Second World War, to warn against the consequences of decolonisation in West Africa.[47]

If Haiti was positioned in atavistic terms, as having 'regressed' after the end of white rule, and Liberia in terms of contemporaneity, as parodying forms of 'white' rule that existed properly elsewhere, then Ethiopia during the Italian invasion was the subject of a temporal discourse in which its subjugation under Italian colonisation was represented as catapulting the country into the modern world. Though this was distinctly Fascist in its focus on modernisation, speed, power, and will, it also drew heavily upon a lineage of the 'extinction discourse' that was linked to European (especially 'Anglo-Saxon') settler colonialism.[48] By no means limited to Italian framings of the conflict, a deep sympathy for the future Italy wished to build in Ethiopia was expressed in books and articles written by others across the 'White Atlantic'.

Consider, for example, the work of William Watts Chaplin. A white American war correspondent who arrived in Ethiopia on a ship carrying Blackshirts and the Italian general Pietro Badoglio, Chaplin's reporting began with a paean to Italian modernisation in Eritrea

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[45] The most prominent exception is Raymond Leslie Buell, the early IR scholar, whose book *The Native Problem in Africa* included a sensitive and extended treatment of Liberia.
[46] De La Rue, *The Land of the Pepper Bird*, 209.
[47] 'Citing the spectre of "independent" Liberia, the "progressive" Governor of the Gold Coast, Sir Alan Burns, warned of the potential "chaos" that would result from white withdrawal without a "long and careful preparation".' Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance*, 265. 'Apart from his personal prejudices, Lord Lugard was influenced in his views by the exploitative and oligarchical character of Negro self-government in Haiti and Liberia.' Coleman, *Nigeria*, 216.
[48] See Brantlinger's excellent study of this discourse, *Dark Vanishings*.

where ‘the roads grow visibly’, perhaps ‘one of the greatest engineering jobs ever accomplished in so short a time’.[49] Chaplin celebrated ‘the civilizing influence of Mussolini’s men’;[50] ‘[d]etermined whites’ were ‘spreading the gospel of cleanliness and health and justice by peaceful argument where possible, by force of arms where that is considered necessary’. Ethiopians were ‘savage blacks’[51] and ‘wild creatures’,[52] while Italian colonizers ‘remind one of America’s early settlers who went about their daily tasks with a rifle ever at hand lest the redskins suddenly descend on them’.[53] Ethiopian music, meanwhile, was reminiscent of ‘the swan song of savagery, the death rattle of barbarism’ in the face of ‘the white man’s civilization’.[54]

Chaplin was scarcely alone in imagining that Italy’s invasion, genocidal ambitions and attempted settlement of Ethiopia (as well as of Libya) heralded an alternative future of renewed settlerism, in which ‘lesser races’ would be swept aside by more powerful ones. Recent scholarship has shown how Italian colonisation in Africa became an explicit and important model for the policy of the Third Reich in Eastern Europe, with high-ranking Nazi officials seeing ‘great promise in the Italian example, particularly with regard to the colonization of Libya’ and speaking ‘about Mussolini’s expansionism as the quintessence of fascist modernity.’[55] Neither was Chaplin alone in seeing similarities between Italy’s occupation of Ethiopia and the history of the US. The New York correspondent of *Il Corriere della Sera* wrote that the US was likely to support Italy, given its experience with ‘the primitive psychology of the colored race’, and compared Ethiopia’s admission to the League of Nations with the emancipation of enslaved African Americans, which, he wrote,

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[49] Chaplin, *Blood and Ink*, 29.
[50] Ibid., 39.
[51] Ibid., 47.
[52] Ibid., 51.
[53] Ibid., 35.
[54] Ibid., 106.
[55] Bernhard, ‘Hitler’s Africa in the East’, 2–3.

had not been enough in seventy years to change the 'semi-barbarism' and 'incurable immaturity' of that community. Segregation in the US showed that 'America knows the Negro well and understands how to treat him … Now,' he added, 'many Americans are curious to know if, as would be logical, one could institute a Jim Crow diplomatic car on the international train which leads to Geneva.'[56]

Black Atlantic writing confronted, then, not only the material subjugation of each site of interwar black sovereignty, but also a set of interconnected and powerful discourses that actively legitimised the contravention of the sovereign status of these countries through the positing of a series of relationships between race, temporality, and sovereign impossibility. Haiti, Liberia, and Ethiopia were unavoidably modern forms of statehood—respectively a revolutionary republic, a settler colony, and a constitutional monarchy—but their similarity and relationship to the system's dominant political forms was persistently denied through a racialising discourse that saw them in terms of parody, impossibility, ersatz. In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss Black Atlantic responses to these states, which included a set of responses or counter-narratives to the discursive legitimation of their invasion, occupation, or financial control.

The Embodiment of Sovereignty

In this section, I explore reactions across the vectors of the Black Atlantic that I have been examining—West Africa, France, the US, and Britain—to the interwar experiences of Haiti, Liberia, and Ethiopia. My aim is to draw out some of the ways in which assessments of those experiences contributed to the development of theoretical positions on a global racial order. In important ways, I suggest, the political project of the Black Atlantic and its

[56] Quoted in Harris, *The United States and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis*, 45.

conceptualisation of the world depended vitally upon interpreting the inability of the three black states to achieve interwar sovereignty in a hostile world.

'Freedom for our Brothers in Haiti'

Reactions in much of the African American press to the initial occupation of Haiti were initially muted, even supportive. The *Chicago Defender* celebrated the invasion as 'a splendid day' in September 1915,[57] though it soon tempered this view with an article expressing the fears of Haitians that 'American Whites Will Bring Race Prejudice'.[58] The *Philadelphia Tribune* expressed cautious hopes in 1916 that the occupation would not last too long,[59] but the *Baltimore Afro-American* ran an article optimistically titled: 'Little Haiti and Her People: Conditions Are Such That The Country Could Be Made A Paradise—American Occupation Will Help.'[60] The exception to this trend was the *Negro World*, in which Hubert Harrison wrote in 1920 a searing condemnation of the invasion as 'the bloody rape of the republics of Hayti and Santo Domingo', which was 'being perpetrated by the bayonets of American sailors and marines, with the silent and shameful acquiescence of 12,000,000 American Negroes too cowardly to lift a voice in effective protest or too ignorant of political affairs to know what is taking place'. Harrison asked how 'we Africans of the dispersion can let the land of L'Ouverture lie like a fallen flower beneath the feet of swine?'[61]

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[57] "Speaking of Haiti," *The Chicago Defender*, September 4, 1915, 8.
[58] "U. S. Declares War on Haiti: Haitian People Fear Invasion of American Whites Will Bring Race Prejudice and Hatred," *The Chicago* Defender, 9 October, 1915, 5.
[59] "Haiti Under Control of United States," *Philadelphia Tribune* April 1, 1916.
[60] C. Brown, "Little Haiti and Her People: Conditions Are Such That The Country Could Be Made A Paradise—American Occupation Will Help," *Afro-American*, April 8, 1916, 4.
[61] Quoted in Harrison and Perry, *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, 239.

Though previous studies have emphasised the effect of the Cayes massacre in transforming African American attitudes to the occupation,[62] reporting on Haiti began to shift much earlier, from around 1919. An early and revealing example of this change in reporting came in May 1919, in the Baltimore *Afro-American*. Under the headline 'More Colored Nations than White Ones', the article reported a tirade by the Democratic Senator Reed against the League of Nations, in which Reed had centred the objection that 'colored countries' would be able to outnumber 'white' countries in the League. The newspaper highlighted Reed's criticisms of Liberia as a 'joke nation', and Haiti as a country of 'baby killers and creatures of the forest'.[63] The next year, the newspaper mentioned 'the white southerners who are occupying Haiti',[64] and began to describe some of the atrocities of the occupation.[65] In March 1921, the *Crisis* published an open letter to President Warren G. Harding, which allied three domestic demands for African Americans (the right to vote, to 'travel without insult', and an end to lynching) with 'freedom for our brothers in Haiti.'

Two months later, the *Chicago Defender*, which had previously supported the occupation, published an article sympathetic to the Haitian delegates in Chicago who had come 'with a report of the atrocities and outrages committed by the American forces.'[66] Such reports continued, culminating in a statement by M. Pierre Hudicourt, Haiti's delegate to the Second Hague Conference, which was released by the NAACP and related in the black newspaper *New Journal and Guide* in 1922. 'I consider as odious hypocrisy the pretexts of humanity and interest in the Haitian people invoked by the United States government in perpetrating upon Haiti a reign of terror and extortion, continued since

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[62] Putnam, *The Insistent Call*, 59–61.
[63] "More Colored Nations Than White Ones," *Afro-American*, May 30, 1919, 1.
[64] "30,000 Blacks Occupy Rhineland: Americans Criticise French For Sending Colored Troops Into White Country; Frenchman Replies, Asks America Why Uncle Sam Sent White Troops Into The Black Republic Of Haiti," *Afro-American*, May 7, 1920, 1.
[65] "Airplanes Used To Kill Haitians," *Afro-American,* October 22, 1920, 2.
[66] "Haitians Say U. S. Made Them Suffer," *The Chicago Defender*, May 14, 1921.

1915,' said Hudicourt, adding: 'If an individual had done to another's hurt what the United States government has done to the Haitian people, the only punishment adequate would be life imprisonment or the scaffold.'[67]

When the Cayes Massacre of 1929 occurred, the black radical press in Paris was spurred into providing urgent commentary and reflection on 'the deplorable situation' to which Haiti was subjected 'under the oppression of the Yankee colossus'. Here, the focus was often on Haiti's economic devastation.[68] The US was seeking no less than the 'total industrial ruin' of Haiti, argued the Haitian activist Jean Barau in *La Race Nègre*. 'The Haitian people have suffered too much; for too long they have been violated and robbed,' he wrote in another article, pointing to a 'series of fiscal measures, each of which is more deplorable than the next', and which had 'sent shockwaves across trade and industry. A crisis of the utmost acuteness is paralysing the economic life of the country.'[69] Another article, a report of a Paris meeting on the Cayes massacre, condemned the 'economic slavery' to which Haiti had been subjected, drew attention to 'the flagrant contradiction which exists between the politics of peace of the United States and their imperialism', and asked '*nègres* of all nationalities, [and] workers of France, to support Haiti in its struggle for national emancipation'.[70] Elsewhere, the newspaper addressed the question of land ownership[71] and the *trahison des clercs* in relation to Haiti.[72]

I have provided this range of Black Atlantic reactions to the occupation of Haiti in order to draw out some of the theoretical positions that were being held by these various

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[67] "Haitian Denounces American Invasion," *New Journal and Guide*, Feb 4, 1922, 3.
[68] Recent studies of US imperialism in the Caribbean offer much to support this view. See especially Hudson, *Bankers and Empire*.
[69] Jean Babau, "L'impérialisme yankee en action," *La Race Nègre*, Feb-March 1930.
[70] "Un meeting pour la libération d'Haïti," *La Race Nègre*, Feb-March 1930.
[71] S. B. "Cinquante ans de colonisation en A.E.F.: Les misères et les souffrances de tout un peuple nègre," *La Race Nègre*, September 1930.
[72] Ludovic Morin-Lacombe, "Haiti: l'opportunisme du clergé française," *La Race Nègre*, Nov-Dec 1930. See also: "Haiti," *Le Cri Des Nègres*, December 1934, for a condemnation of the persecution of Haitian writers including Jacques Roumain.

writers. A strong defence of Haitian sovereignty, in which the 'pretexts' of the US occupation were denounced and the incomparability of personal with international conduct described, was put forward. So too was there the idea that the treatment of Haiti was mere plunder, in no significant sense different from the international politics of earlier periods. Writers in *La Race Nègre* robustly challenged the 'humanitarian' basis for the US occupation, arguing instead that 'it is truly a question of power',[73] and adopting an occasional rhetorical strategy of insisting that Haiti carry out state-like functions on behalf of black peoples—such as suggesting that Haiti come to the assistance of Ethiopia in 1935,[74] or administer a mandate over Cameroun instead of the League of Nations.[75]

Yet what is significant about this defence is the way it relied upon a repositioning of Haiti within a global order in which the American occupation, in both its material and discursive aspects, was understood to relate to the broader operation of global racial hierarchies. For Senator Reed, whose derisory statements about Haiti and Liberia were pointedly reprinted in the Baltimore *Afro-American*, the Africanness of Haiti was tied to the idea that it could not possibly stand alongside truly sovereign 'white' states in international society, just as, he believed, in domestic society black and white people could not expect equal citizenship.

The idea of a sovereign hierarchy *among* states had clear implications for the position of racialised populations *within* states, as the *Crisis* incorporation of the demand for Haitian freedom within a civil rights agenda recognised. Haiti in this sense was seen to be experiencing an embodied sovereignty, in which its racialisation undermined the universalising precepts of statehood. It was also for this reason that black writers began to

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[73] Ludovic Lacombe, "L'expropriation des paysans haïtiens," *La Race Nègre*, September 1930.
[74] Ludovic-Morin Lacombe." Haiti: Son Devoir Envers L'Ethiopie," *La Race Nègre*. Jan-Feb 1936.
[75] Spiegler, 'Aspects of Nationalist Thought Among French-Speaking West Africans, 1921-1939', 237.

emphasise the 'Southern' and 'white' aspects of the American occupation, taking their analysis beyond a straightforward focus on power. Hubert Harrison's pithy representation of American marines in Haiti as 'The Cracker in the Caribbean' in 1920 became a far less unusual position following the Cayes massacre in 1929.[76] Under the headline 'Get Out of Haiti', for example, the *Afro-American* stated in July 1930 that atrocities were being committed in Haiti 'with characteristic American thoroughness', and were 'accompanied also by the characteristic injection of white supremacy in liberal doses. The ancient U.S. theory that a Negro has no rights which a white man is bound to respect,' the article continued, 'is revived in the U.S. occupation of Haiti. Nothing else could explain how our financiers have established themselves in a strange land, exploited the people, and not only hope to remain indefinitely, but employ a large part of their time and energy working for permanent occupation.'[77]

'Hands off Abyssinia'

No single event was more significant for the interwar Black Atlantic than Italy's invasion of Ethiopia on October 3, 1935. The invasion was met with unparalleled mobilisation: in Paris, black, colonial and left-wing organisations set aside their differences and created what J. S. Spiegler has called a 'Negro Popular Front';[78] in London, the George Padmore and C. L. R. James-led International African Friends of Abyssinia was formed, the League of Coloured Peoples entered a newly radical phase, and Sylvia Pankhurst's influential *New Times and Ethiopian News* was set up;[79] across West Africa, 'Hands off Abyssinia'

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[76] The US Army was not desegregated until the 1940s, and the occupying marine force in Haiti was all white. For a perceptive discussion of the composition of this force in the context of the construction of American whiteness, see Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 53–56.
[77] "Get Out of Haiti," *Afro-American,* July 26, 1930, 6.
[78] Spiegler, 'Aspects of Nationalist Thought Among French-Speaking West Africans, 1921-1939', 265.
[79] Asante, *Pan-African Protest*, 45; Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance*, 222–26.

committees were set up, relief funds were collected, and mass demonstrations held;[80] in Cape Town and Durban, black dockworkers refused to handle Italian goods;[81] in the Caribbean, there were mass petitions, vocal public meetings, and riots;[82] in the United States, the Pan-African Reconstruction Association began trying to raise volunteers for Ethiopia, while African American groups in Harlem organised the Provisional Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia, drawing thousands to their rallies.[83] '[A]lmost overnight,' wrote one prominent historian, 'even the most provincial among the American Negroes became international-minded.'[84] Kwame Nkrumah, recalling the moment he heard of the invasion as a young student in London, wrote that '[a]t that moment it was almost as if the whole of London had suddenly declared war on me personally.'[85] For W. E. B. Du Bois, writing at the time: 'Black men and brown men have indeed been aroused as seldom before.'[86]

Across the Black Atlantic, the destruction of Ethiopia's sovereignty elicited outrage. The *Sierra Leone Weekly News* denounced 'The League of Cowards',[87] while the *African Morning Post* wrote that 'the League Members in common are suffering from the aggressor-complex which holds Europe now in its frightful tentacles'.[88] Nnamdi Azikiwe's *West African Pilot* lamented in August 1938 that 'if Abyssinia had not believed every declaration in the covenant of the League of Nations, Italy would assuredly not have met her unprepared. She believed in every enactment, and the declaration of the body of Nations

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[80] Asante, *Pan-African Protest*.
[81] Featherstone, 'Black Internationalism, Subaltern Cosmopolitanism, and the Spatial Politics of Antifascism', 1412.
[82] Ewing, 'Caribbean Labour Politics in the Age of Garvey, 1918–1938', 36.
[83] Harris, *African-American Reactions to War in Ethiopia, 1936-1941*.
[84] John Hope Franklin, quoted in Weisbord, *Ebony Kinship*, 97.
[85] Nkrumah, *The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah*, 22.
[86] Du Bois, "Inter-Racial Implications of the Ethiopian Crisis," 88.
[87] "The League of Cowards," *SLWN*, July 11, 1936.
[88] "Ethiopia and the League," *African Morning Post*, July 1, 1938.

and hoped that on whatever latitude, her progress might continue, she was at least sure of protection from foreign aggression.'[89]

This view declaimed interwar collective security as not only ineffective but actively damaging for the weak. It bred a deep cynicism about the prospects of solidarity between Europe and Africa. During the crisis in Czechoslovakia, for example, the *Pilot* wrote that 'Africans and peoples of African descent should not pity the Austrians or the Czechs because when the Ethiopians were attacked unprovoked, these peoples … favoured the annexation of Ethiopia so as to safeguard the peace of Europe … Why didn't they collaborate in order to preserve the sovereignty of Ethiopia?'[90]

In November, the *Pilot* wrote that the British prime minster had decided 'to shake hands with gangsters and international criminals of the type of Mussolini and Hitler'; 'the most authentic declaration of that determination on his part' being 'his statement in relation to the "de jure" recognition of the Italian conquest of Abyssinia by the British Government of which he is the head. From now,' the newspaper wrote, 'Abyssinia will disappear from the map of the world as an independent State … Thus it is made plain to the world that brigandage is a paying business if backed by the bayonets and machine-guns and bombs of a determined gangster … small nations have no right to existence except the big powers have an interest in their status.'[91] In a similar vein, the prominent pan-Africanist Ras Makonnen opposed black participation in the Spanish Civil War, which was, he argued, 'the old story of blacks fighting for somebody else's cause'.[92] On the question of Ethiopia's defence, he wrote later, 'I was a blatant nationalist.'[93] Many across the Black Atlantic were

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[89] "Negroes and Black Liberia," *West African Pilot*, August 2, 1938.
[90] "Selassie Told Them So," *West African Pilot*, September 20, 1938.
[91] "Nemesis Shall Come," *West African Pilot*, November 9, 1938.
[92] Featherstone, 'Black Internationalism, Subaltern Cosmopolitanism, and the Spatial Politics of Antifascism', 1413.
[93] Makonnen, *Ras Makonnen*, 114.

similarly 'nationalist' in their attempts to form military organisations and actively participate in Ethiopia's defence.

But what I want to emphasise here is that the Italian invasion of Ethiopia was consistently understood across the Black Atlantic in the context of a narrative of a global power struggle defined by race and the desire of the 'white world' to extinguish black sovereignty. The lofty principles of the interwar order were seen, in this context, aa reflecting little more than a façade dissembling an enduringly violent modus operandi. There were few more eloquent expressions of this racially-inflected realism than the 'Rambling Talks' column of the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*. Commenting on indications that Italy's invasion would receive tacit legitimacy in the international order, the 'Rambler' wrote:

> The cat is out of the bag. All the tiresome speeches and eloquent inanities, with which a waiting world was drugged while poor defenceless blacks were being mown down by European savagery, were apparently staged for the specific purpose of giving Italy a chance to take as much of the black man's land as she could, on the tacit understanding that she should have to keep it all, peace or no peace.[94]

Across West Africa, as S. K. B. Asante's exceptional study *Pan-African Protest* has shown, the invasion was pivotal in the shaping of political loyalties and affinities, 'among the main influences in the awakening of racial and political consciousness in West Africa'. It was only at this point that 'unequivocal demands for self-determination began to be made and signs of militancy began to appear'.[95] Criticisms of the colonial regime concomitantly 'assumed a tone of marked harshness and hostility', while the West African press 'underwent a great transformation, becoming less parochial and more pan-African in

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[94] "Rambling Talks," *SLWN*, January 11, 1936.
[95] Asante, *Pan-African Protest*, 172.

content'.[96] Asante shows convincingly that the Ethiopian crisis formed a 'period of political incubation'[97] which had a decisive impact on the political views of post-1945 African leaders. This is not because of what Ethiopia *was*, but because of what it represented to many other Africans: 'the shrine enclosing the last sacred spark of African political freedom, the impregnable rock of black resistance against white invasion, a living symbol, an incarnation of African independence'.[98]

The interwar order had not only failed to protect Ethiopia because it was weak, argued Black Atlantic writers, but because it was black, because it was African, because it was non-European, and because these features of its existence forced it to embody an anomalous sovereignty that the 'white world' had no desire to protect. As George Padmore wrote later, the incident irrefutably convinced many that 'black men had no rights which white men felt bound to respect.'[99] The *Sierra Leone Weekly News* derided 'The League of European Brotherhood, miscalled "League of Nations," … let it die! Its seventeen years of existence have been seventeen years of stagnation and insincerity, such as a sickly world has never seen before and never cares to see again'.[100]

Two weeks later, the same column asked 'Was Marcus Garvey Right?' It noted that 'twenty years' after Garvey's warnings 'one finds an unprovoked war being waged on an ancient African Empire by a white nation, while the white world looks on with a dead conscience and even approves of the capacity of the aggressor.'[101] Elsewhere, the newspaper interpreted the League's inactivity as effectively stating that 'Italy had a perfect right to murder black people and seize their country', and warned: 'Let the white races be

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[96] Ibid., 53.
[97] Ibid., 190.
[98] Ibid., 17.
[99] Magubane, *The Ties That Bind*, 175.
[100] "Rambling Talks," *SLWN*, May 9, 1936.
[101] "Was Marcus Garvey Right?" *SLWN*, May 23, 1936.

given to understand that the black race will not take this injustice lying down.'[102] In general, West African newspaper-writing on Ethiopia represented the highest ever point of anticolonial militancy in the region, especially with respect to the explicit threats it made of anti-European uprising and violence.

For W. E. B. Du Bois, who wrote an essay on the crisis titled 'The Inter-Racial Implications of the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis: A Negro View', '[t]he black world' knew that the invasion was 'the last great effort of white Europe to secure the subjection of black men.' But Italy's victory, he warned, would be 'costly … both for Italy and the white world', because 'the whole colored world'—'all that vast mass of men who have felt the oppression and insults, the slavery and exploitation of white folk, will say: "I told you so!"'[103] Joel Augustus Rogers, the prominent Jamaican historian, expressed a very similar view in his influential pamphlet *The Real Facts About Ethiopia* (1936). In words very similar to those of Stoddard, whom he cited as a 'far-seeing thinker',[104] Rogers framed the Ethiopian crisis as the latest instance in a long saga of European or 'white' domination over the rest of the world.

'For the past four centuries,' wrote Rogers, 'the European, or white race, has been colonizing in all the lands of the darker races'—which, since it was 'happening in the very lands of the colored peoples', had 'wounded their pride, aroused their deepest hate, and created in the hearts of darker people, totally unknown to one another a common hostility to white peoples.'[105] Challenging the view that Ethiopia was not really 'black', and thus of no concern to African-descended peoples in the Americas, Rogers insisted that there were 'only two varieties of mankind, the black and the white',[106] a political reading of race that

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[102] "The League of Cowards," *SLWN*, July 11, 1936.
[103] Du Bois, "Inter-Racial Implications of the Ethiopian Crisis," 88.
[104] J. A. Rogers, *The Real Facts About Ethiopia*, 2.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid., 7.

grouped all colonised peoples, including, for example, the 'dark-skinned people of India',[107] together.

'The avalanche is on its way,' warned Rogers, 'and it will not stop until the last vestiges of the brutal and debasing color-line imposed on the world by the white race shall have been shattered into irretrievable fragments.'[108] A letter in the *New York Tribune* concurred: 'This is a war of black against white.'[109] So did I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson, the Sierra Leonean Communist militant. He gave a speech in Sekondi in which he argued that: '[t]he Negro masses of the world have long been in subserviency under the white nations. The present war (Italo-Ethiopian) is designed to open the eyes of the whole Negrodom and lead the Negroes through the path of emancipation from European serfdom.'[110] And the *West African Pilot* wrote that 'the coloured world will exhibit no sympathy' for white countries 'when the time comes', given their disregard for Ethiopia.[111]

One of the most significant discursive outcomes of the Ethiopia crisis across the Black Atlantic, perhaps especially in Britain's West African and Caribbean colonies and in the US, was therefore a weakening of pro-imperial or nationalist identities that had imagined a future for black people in white imperial structures, and a strengthening of both pan-African, African nationalist, black nationalist, and pan-'coloured' or Third Worldist loyalties and affinities. The British Governor of St. Vincent, who was frustrated that people on the island were ignoring 'geography and ethnology'[112] in their determination to support the Ethiopians as a nationalist cause, obliquely pointed to the expansion of an imaginative geography that, in reaching out to Ethiopia, detached itself from Britain. As Sir

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[107] Ibid., 2.
[108] Ibid., 3.
[109] Putnam, *The Insistent Call*, 108.
[110] Asante, *Pan-African Protest*, 124.
[111] "Nemesis Shall Come," *West African Pilot*, November 9, 1938.
[112] Ewing, "Caribbean Labour Politics in the Age of Garvey, 1918–1938," 36.

William Arthur Lewis, the St Lucian economist, wrote, 'West Indians felt that in that issue the British Government had betrayed a nation because it was black, and this has tended to destroy their faith in white government, and to make them more willing to take their fate in their own hands.'[113] For H. O. Davies, the Secretary of the Nigerian Youth Movement: 'we became convinced, after the Italian annexation of Ethiopia, that our liberty lies in "self-determination".'[114]

Black Atlantic reactions to the occupation of Ethiopia rejected the Fascist future that Italy envisaged for the country. African American poets—from Langston Hughes and Owen Dodson to Marcus B. Christian and J. Harvey L. Baxter—wrote poems dedicated to Ethiopia at this time. Some of those poems, as Jon Woodson has found in a study of this work, presented the conflict 'as a war between two competing modes of time'.[115] Such writing, which often involved ironising the idea of the invasion as a modernising and civilising mission, had parallels across the Black Atlantic. In 1936, an article in the *African Morning Post* by I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson—which became the subject of a famous trial for sedition—imagined the god of the European beseeching his subjects: 'Ye 'civilised' Europeans, you must 'civilise' the 'barbarous' Africans with machine guns. Ye Christian Europeans, you must 'Christianise' the pagan Africans with bombs, poison gases…!'[116]

The Paris-based black journal *Africa* meanwhile published a stirring address to the League of Nations by a Haitian general, Alfred Auguste Nemours, whose discursive focus was on defending, for the colonised victims of a global racial order, an alternative temporality to Italy's vision of Fascist future. Insisting that that '[t]he era of colonial wars is over, in Africa just as in America, just as the period of the exploitation of one race by

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[113] Quoted in Derrick, *Africa's Agitators*, 334.
[114] Asante, *Pan-African Protest*, 179.
[115] Woodson, *Anthems, Sonnets, and Chants*, 167.
[116] Cited in Rahman, *The Regime Change of Kwame Nkrumah*, 43.

another is also over,'[117] Nemours lambasted the widespread acquiescence to Italy's invasion as evidence of systemic racism. In place of Fascist time, he invoked an alternative temporal vision, oriented around the Haitian and French Revolutions. And he described a powerful sense of simultaneity, enabled by communicative technologies, which brought together the dispersed victims of the racial order in solidarity with Haiti. '[S]peaking in the name of the Blacks of Haiti,' he said, 'I know that all the millions of Blacks and men of colour, scattered throughout the world, are observing a minute's silence to listen to me attentively.'[118]

The Tragedy of Liberia

I want to discuss, finally, Black Atlantic reactions to the interwar situation in Liberia. A keen interest in Liberia had long been apparent in pan-African thinking.[119] While there had been early criticisms of the state from the many African Americans who were opposed to emigrationism and were suspicious of the intentions of the white-run American Colonization Society, the dominant diasporic tendency by the twentieth century was to see in Liberia a hope for the future of African and African-descended peoples. The desire to see Liberia 'succeed' as a settler colony even produced significant rhetorical support for the same violent colonising processes that were being condemned with respect to European powers. Henry Sylvester Williams, for example, the pioneering pan-Africanist, wrote in 1907 that 'there are 1,500,000 primitive natives' in Liberia 'waiting to be brought under the hand of a more improved state of existence.'[120]

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[117] "Aprés 35 ans de luttes contre l'oppression coloniale," *Africa*, December 1, 1935.
[118] Ibid.
[119] On Liberia's role in pan-Africanism, see Harris, *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*; Zachernuk and Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers*; Hickey, 'Positive Perspectives on Independent Africa'; Geiss, *Pan-African Movement*; Saha, 'The Romance of Nationhood'.
[120] Sherwood, *Origins of Pan-Africanism*, 208.

The strenuous defences of Liberian sovereignty from W. E. B. Du Bois, who had been directly involved in American diplomacy relating to Liberia,[121] echoed this 'civilising' idea. Du Bois occasionally wrote of Liberia in Orientalist terms, depicting 'a compound of endless native servants and cows under the palm thatches', while remarking to the US secretary of state that Liberia 'never had a revolution or internal disturbance save in comparatively few cases, with the war-like Liberia tribes'.[122] He also directly intervened to prevent the success of Garvey's mission to the country, hoped for black capitalists to invest in Liberia, wrote to Harvey Firestone to ask for the employment of African Americans on their Liberian rubber plantations, and strongly defended Liberia during the labour crisis.[123] (These were positions from which Du Bois later retreated.)[124]

West African newspapers expressed similar views. Liberia 'must hew and hack her way forward' to realise herself as a state.[125] This meant dealing with its 'native' problem. 'Picture yourself as living in a tropical wilderness where by the sweat of your brown you attempt to survive the struggle for existence,' the *West African Pilot* advised its readers. 'Consider yourself living under the shadow of death in fear of surprise raids and attacks by martial-minded tribesmen who are determined to exterminate you and your family and other pioneers from the face of the earth … And then you will appreciate the dilemma which faced the Founders of the Republic of Liberia, ninety-one years ago.'[126] The *Sierra Leone Weekly News* also identified with Liberia's coastal settler elite, fuming against 'the

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[121] He served in a US diplomatic role during the January 1924 inauguration of President Charles D. B. King,

[122] Robinson, "DuBois and Black Sovereignty," 44. Robinson's article represents a well-known attack on Du Bois for these positions. It argues that, 'blinded by the elitism characteristic of his class's prerogative', he 'fell prey to American colonialism.' Ibid., 39.

[123] Robinson, "DuBois and Black Sovereignty."

[124] He later explained: 'I know what European imperialism has done to Asia and Africa; but, nevertheless, I had not then lost faith in the capitalist system, and I believed that it was possible for a great corporation, headed by a man of vision, to go into a country with something more than the mere ideal of profit.' Ibid., 46.

[125] "Present Financial Position of the Republic of Liberia," *SLWN*, May 12, 1919.

[126] "Ninety-one Years Ago," *West African Pilot*, July 25, 1938.

savage Cossacks of the border-line'.[127] And Nnamdi Azikiwe, in his book *Liberia in World Politics* (1934), insisted that'[t]he pacification of the bellicose tribes is an achievement that cannot be minimized.'[128] Azikiwe's deep interest in Liberia, which he studied in great detail, demonstrates the power that the idea of Liberia had over West Africans interested in political freedom.

As I have argued with respect to Haiti and Ethiopia, these views in relation to Liberia were embedded within—and cannot be understood apart from—a broader view of the global racial order. George Padmore, who was famously at loggerheads with his superiors in the Comintern over Liberia, explained to Du Bois in 1934 that 'Liberia has her faults, but since white politicians are no better than black ones, it is our duty to save the "black baby from the white wolves".'[129] Du Bois expressed a very similar position, writing in *Foreign Affairs* in 1933 that while 'Liberia is not faultless' its 'chief crime is to be black and poor in a rich, white world; and in precisely that portion of the world where color is ruthlessly exploited as a foundation for American and European wealth.'[130] In August 1931, responding to an *Elders West African Review* symposium 'Must Liberia be Mandated?', the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* castigated the:

> cold, deliberate and almost unblushing attempt, as if on a stage-farce, the white civilised nations of the world are making—repeating history, the history of land-grabbing, of depriving a Black people of Africa of their lands, their liberties, and independence under the guise of, in the sacred name of justice.[131]

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[127] "Colony and Protectorate: Can Annexation Be Avoided?" *SLWN*, December 3, 1932.
[128] Azikiwe, *Liberia in World Politics.*, 221.
[129] Derrick, *Africa's Agitators*, 300.
[130] Quoted in Robinson, "DuBois and Black Sovereignty," 43.
[131] "The Black Republic of Liberia and the White Civilised Nations of the World," *SLWN*, August 22, 1931.

With regard to allegations of slavery and oppression in Liberia, the newspaper asked, '[b]urning with righteous and impatient indignation', 'which of these so called self-constituted protagonist[s] of justice, liberty and freedom can approach the question wearing a pair of white gloves having regard to their own past records—in that, in the past they had done the same things if not worse, and some of them are still doing it, up to the present?'[132]

The next week, the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* dismissed the claim of the *Elders West African Review* editor to care for the Liberian 'natives'. It asked why, if the humanitarian rhetoric were sincere, a League mandate had not been raised for other 'murderous and persecuting nations'.[133] Could the real reason be linked to how 'the assertion' of Liberia's rights 'as an independent Sovereign State' and 'the maintenance of the final control in the exercise by all within her territories of their rights and liberties must necessarily prove disturbing, if not irritating, to those who claim superiority by virtue of their race and colour'?[134]

> Who can think of what has transpired and is still transpiring in South and East Africa, who can think of the attitude of the white settlers in those African territories, and is not forced to stare in bewildering and "astounding" amazement at the faces of these White Prosecutors of Black Liberia? and if, not dumb-founded and stupefied at such amazing inconsistency be moved to ask "What does it all mean? Why all these angry demonstrations in the name of Righteousness and Justice, against a weak poverty-stricken Black Republic?[135]

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[132] Ibid. Historians have since largely vindicated this view: 'nowhere is it more obvious than in the Liberian crisis,' writes one, 'that disinterested humanitarianism was not the motive force behind intervention'. Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers*, 36.
[133] "The Black Republic of Liberia and the White Civilised Nations of the World," *SLWN*, August 29, 1931. The newspaper also pointed out, in an article of the same title published on September 12, 1931, the 'farce' of European powers claiming to care about the self-determination of Liberian 'natives' when the inhabitants of Britain's West African colonies continued to live under colonial rule.
[134] "The Black Republic of Liberia and the White Civilised Nations of the World," *SLWN*, August 29, 1931.
[135] Ibid.

Virtually every mention of Liberia during these years in the West African newspapers made a point along these lines. The context to Liberia's problems was seen as 'a general agreement among the white races to keep the black races down; the same spirit which, in the Mediaeval times, unified the nations of Europe into one vast brotherhood of Christendom against non-Christian nations' and which 'still exists in these modern days in the new guise of a confederacy of the white races of the world—Whitedom against Blackdom.'[136] Another 'Rambling Talks' column developed this point further, arguing that Liberia's predicament had arisen because the country 'has suffered from a great delusion all these years of her existence. She has put nationhood before racehood. So long as she was humoured and tolerated as a "Sovereign State" by the Great Powers, she felt highly flattered and cared not a rush what befell the rest of the Race.' Liberia, tragically, had tried to escape 'racehood' through statehood, only to realise the impossibility of such a project in the context of race's global reach.[137]

Elsewhere, views on Liberia were expressed that tried to explain, in more detail, the international political structures that encased Liberia and sapped its sovereignty. In one intriguing article, published in August 1931, the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* looked at Liberia, the 'Black Republic', in relation to the 'white civilised nations of the world'.[138] This article went beyond simply condemning the hypocrisy of European powers and the US. It explicitly invoked 'the tragedy of the situation', which meant that Liberia had become part of 'the grand chain of what is known as the Comity of Nations', but that it had

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[136] "Rambling Talks," *SLWN*, September 19, 1931. The most serious white scholarly engagement with Liberia, that of Raymond Buell, evinced a view that was not, in fact, dissimilar. 'Liberians realize that through themselves the negro race is on trial before the world. They feel, with some justification, that the white races have not given them a fair chance to prove their capabilities.' Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa*, 734.
[137] "Rambling Talks," SLWN, September 19, 1931.
[138] "The Black Republic of Liberia and the White Civilised Nations of the World," SLWN, August 29, 1931.

done so, crucially, in a position of structural weakness due to its 'poverty', finding itself 'a link in the chain of international force of world-wide development.' This sounds very much like a kind of proto-*dependencia*. (I have argued previously, particularly in Chapters 2 and 3, that heuristic forms of 'dependency' thinking came to saturate much West African writing on colonialism.)

The most sustained and complex writing on Liberia from this perspective came from George W. Brown, an African American scholar whose book, *The Economic History of Liberia* (1941), was based on his doctoral thesis written at the London School of Economics.[139] Brown's economic history was at once a rigorous account of Liberia's economy in historical perspective—it remains a landmark in the field—and a contemplation of the tragic nature of Liberia's economic relationship with the rest of the world.[140] Brown detailed the history of settlement in Liberia, the recurrent conflicts with pre-existing coastal communities, and the settlers' early attempts to build an economic system of plantation agriculture. 'From its inception,' Brown wrote, 'plantation capitalism began a relentless undermining of Liberian independence by defeating profitable commerce and by devitalizing a people, or class of people … Such an overburdened system was bound to collapse', in the process leading inexorably towards external dependence. 'The story of the inevitable resort to loans and concessions by the Liberian people tells the economic history of that nation.'[141]

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[139] Born in Madrid, Missouri, Brown studied at Howard and Chicago universities before completing his doctorate at the LSE. He later married Elsie Kaye, the daughter of a prominent English industrialist, converted to Islam while in Pakistan, and became director of the King's Mill in Huddersfield. And so by the end of the 1960s he had become an extremely unlikely historical figure: a wealthy African American Muslim industrialist in the North of England. See 'Negro Expatriate Runs 900-Year Old Textile Firm'.

[140] See Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*, 2. The other main work on the political economy of Liberia is Clower, *Growth without Development*. Another important work on Liberia, originally published in 1930 by the African American sociologist Charles S. Johnson, was *Bitter Canaan*. Space considerations preclude a discussion of that book here.

[141] Brown, *The Economic History of Liberia*, 65.

Brown traced the historical trajectory of Liberia's political economy: from independence in 1848 to the use of coffee cultivation as a means of generating revenue; from the turn to loans from European capitals on exceedingly poor terms to the revolts of Liberia's indigenous peoples; and from the abuses of indigenous peoples to the brutal practices used by European countries to conscript Liberian workers, whose country they regarded 'as a reservoir of cheap native labour'.[142] Well before the current 'labour crisis', France had recruited Liberian labourers to work on the Panama Canal and serve in the French Colonial Army, with unfree labour practices being encouraged by high French officials. Men had been flogged, beaten, tied up, and kept in compounds before being shipped abroad; threats of collective punishment, including the burning of entire villages, were used to ensure compliance.

Repeated encroachments on Liberia's territory—at one point, France annexed almost the entirety of its coastline—characterised the latter two decades of the nineteenth century; and even the American declaration of 'special interest' in Liberia (1897) did not end 'the threats of annihilation to Liberia's sovereignty'.[143] At the turn of the century, Liberia began granting concessionary rights to foreign companies, beginning with the Union Mining Company in 1902-4. Threatened with bankruptcy in 1911, it had agreed to a major international loan, with its revenues then being subject to international supervision.

Liberia's interwar predicament was placed within this essential context: its impossible and fragile existence as a Western-style colonial state without the attendant metropolitan resources, a situation which had quickly pushed Liberia to see its indigenous population in the same way as European colonial powers—as a reservoir of labour and tax revenue. By 1924, with the granting of the huge Firestone concession, whose effects for

[142] Ibid., 147.
[143] Ibid., 162.

indigenous Liberians had often been 'disastrous',[144] Brown saw Liberia's rulers as having become, essentially, a *comprador* elite: 'the energies of Liberian administrators are largely devoted to collecting interest for foreign investors'.[145] All the while, the professions of internationalism in the interwar order were, for Liberia, not a strength but a weakness, for 'Liberia felt that she was defending her very existence against the ever-threatening aggressiveness of stronger neighbours now shielded by that nobleness inherent in the League's Covenant.'[146]

Liberian sovereignty was now totally subject to a 'triumvirate of power': the Superintendent of the Firestone Plantations, the Manager of the Bank of Monrovia, and the American Financial Adviser. The economy had become dominated by whites, while an inadequate education system depended heavily on white philanthropists. One had to accept, wrote Brown, that '[i]n the strict letters of political science, Liberian sovereignty is not intact, and to that degree her independence is not absolute'.[147]

Brown argued that there had evolved three distinct economic systems operating in Liberia: the self-sufficient economy of the hinterland; the obsolete agricultural extraction model of the coastal settlers; and the imperialist exploitation of European traders. With its huge Firestone concession in the country, the US continued to 'regard the country as virtually an American economic, if not an American political colony.' What of the Liberian elite? 'Obviously the hopelessness of their economic position has not escaped the Liberian rulers,' he wrote. 'Puppets or pawns in the big game of international finance, they serve as little more than clerks or tellers who pass on to the foreign brokers the contributions from

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[144] Ibid., 205.
[145] Ibid., 195.
[146] Ibid., 199. 'One of the results of the Italian-Abyssinian war', Brown pointed out, 'was to make quite clear to Liberians that their membership in the League of Nations is of little or no value in protecting their political sovereignty', leaving 'Liberia the last of the Black Governments in the Black Country.' Ibid., 225.
[147] Brown, *The Economic History of Liberia*, 214.

the mass of virile Africans, retaining for themselves little more than is adequate and necessary for sustenance.'[148]

Yet Brown's characterisation of the country was not entirely pessimistic. He saw a future for it in the indigenous Liberian peasants whom he thought to represent another form of economy and mode of existence: 'As long as he lives under his communal economy; as long as he resists all efforts to uproot him and develop him into a wage earner, the Western onslaught is powerless to penetrate his culture or to beat down and destroy his economy.'[149] Implicitly, this view was premised upon a critique of the racialised civilised/uncivilised binary. Like the most perceptive editorialising in the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, Brown's book was infused with a sense of tragedy, in some ways similar to what David Scott has called 'the tragic vision in postcolonial time'[150] and what Richard Lebow has called 'the tragic vision of politics'.[151]

That tragedy was characterised by the extreme difficulty of the task of constructing a balanced Liberian economy in a world of predatory capitalism and imperialism. It was, then, something that became common to the postcolonial condition: the difficulty, as Naeem Inayatullah has put it, of realising 'concrete sovereignty in the face of the external authority of the wealth-producing global division of labour'.[152] But for Brown, repeated references in his study suggest that for him, just as for other Black Atlantic writers, it was Liberia's racial composition—its existence as a black state in a hostile white world—that contributed centrally to its tragedy. With the occupation of Ethiopia, he observed, Liberia was now the 'last of the Black Governments in the Black Country.'[153] Surrounded by

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[148] Ibid., 230.
[149] Ibid., 224.
[150] Scott, 'The Tragic Vision in Postcolonial Time'.
[151] Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics*.
[152] Inayatullah, 'Beyond the Sovereignty Dilemma', 52.
[153] Brown, *The Economic History of Liberia*, 225.

hostile 'white powers', it 'could not stand for an hour against the embittered might of the mechanized war machines of any world power.'[154] The tragedy of Liberia, from its inception to the 1940s, was fundamentally a tragedy of the near-impossibility of sustaining a black republic under the relentlessly racialised exigencies of the imperial capitalism that spanned and ordered the world.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the interwar experiences of Haiti, Liberia, and Ethiopia—the world's only sites of juridical sovereignty for African or African-descended peoples until the independence of Ghana in 1957—with a view to interpreting their fragile sovereignty in terms of international theory. I have looked at the dominant discursive framework of the 'White Atlantic' in relation to those states, before assessing a range of Black Atlantic responses: both to the dominant discourse, and to the experiences of the states themselves.

How do the experiences of those states and the respective discourses surrounding them speak to the overall themes of this thesis? First, the contravention of sovereignty for each of these states was not only the result of a material occupation: it was also legitimised and supported by a dominant discourse which claimed a relationship between race or 'blackness', sovereignty, and temporality. Black writers had to confront, as a first step, this discursive legitimation. This dominant discourse brings into question the supposed marginality of Haiti, Liberia, and Ethiopia in the interwar system. While in many ways the system's weakest states, we might also see these three states as having represented, as if ideal types, each form of modern statehood: a monarchy (Ethiopia), a revolutionary

[154] Ibid., 214.

republic (Haiti), and a settler colony (Liberia). It was, then, not their differences or peculiarities but their very similarities to the system's dominant political forms—one might almost see them as mirror images of those forms—that so disturbed this order. Each represented a racialised version of a 'European' state.

Text, information, argument, and analysis were fundamental to this discursive struggle and to the construction of a counter-narrative. Black Atlantic print cultures were, as I have tried to show, therefore essential; the theory I have discussed emerged at a material juncture that had not been previously possible.[155] The bravery of Haitian journalists and editors, who faced severe repression during the US occupation, is a case in point.[156] Just as material conditions allowed for the transmission of information and analysis in ways that would not previously have been possible, they also acted as constraints on such transmission.

Black Atlantic writers did not tend to see the world as divided into functionally undifferentiated states with varying amounts of power and resources. Instead, they understood the world, with reference to the three black states, to be one in which juridical borders existed in relation to the racial, national and pan-national affinities generated by imperialism and its attendant core-periphery order. This was powerfully represented by the spectacle of what Césaire had called the 'white world' seeking incessantly to undermine and destroy black sovereignty. It was, then, a perspective that understood the very existence of black states as a systemic challenge working, as Robbie Shilliam has put it in relation to Haiti, to 'radically undermine the racial and hierarchical organization of the Atlantic world

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[155] Brenda Gayle Plummer has demonstrated the centrality of material and journalistic networks between African Americans and Haitians for the emergence of a critical African American perspective on the occupation. Plummer, *Haiti and the United States*.
[156] Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934*, 195.

order itself'.[157] Having produced racial difference and projected it onto the bifurcation of the world, the interwar global order was seen to be fixed on quelling any potential threats to the European society of states from racially ostracised populations.

For many Black Atlantic writers, this fed into a North-South view of international relations. As pan-African consciousness peaked, so too did forms of proto-Third Worldism. In the colonial metropoles, connections between African, Asian, Arab and Caribbean organisations were forged in solidarity with Ethiopia's plight. Three decades before the rise of 'Third Worldism',[158] those interconnections and their defence of a sovereign state against Western imperialism might be seen as one of the most important precursors to the idea of Tricontinental solidarity. Yet this period also represented, paradoxically, one the first substantive flaws in the 'pan-coloured' idea, with Japan's decision to actively support Italy over Ethiopia.[159]

Engaging with state sovereignty in the interwar Black Atlantic necessarily meant being confronted with a hierarchical but increasingly singular and integrated world, on the one hand, and the question of the 'Westphalian' state model, on the other, as a potential vehicle of subaltern power. This situation was by no means unique to Haiti, Liberia, or Ethiopia. As Charles Tripp has shown in his study of Muslim responses to capitalism and the state, for example, it also animated hundreds of intellectuals across the Muslim world.[160] Could state power be harnessed in the project of constructing a new global order

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[157] Shilliam, 'What the Haitian Revolution Might Tell Us about Development, Security, and the Politics of Race', 791.
[158] Traditionally dated to the Tricontinental in 1966, with a precursor said to be Bandung in 1955. See Prashad, *The Darker Nations*. For a critical discussion of 'Third World' periodisation, see Vitalis, 'The Midnight Ride of Kwame Nkrumah and Other Fables of Bandung (Ban-Doong)'.
[159] Gallicchio, in *The African American Encounter with Japan and China*, makes a strong case for the shifting of African American hopes away from Japan and toward China as a result of Japanese imperialism and rejection of 'pan-coloured' solidarity in the 1930s. Rather than seeing Japan as fundamentally undermining the idea of such solidarity, it looks more likely to have displaced the putative leadership of such solidarity.
[160] Tripp, *Islam and the Moral Economy*.

while evading the numerous pitfalls and traps that the logic of such power inevitably entailed?

These questions would loom over the period of postcolonial independence, where forms of 'subaltern realism'[161] proliferated and encountered their most pressing contradictions. The complex engagement with the question of sovereignty expressed by Black Atlantic writing on the states offers much for a contemporary sensibility. We might also think about the ways in which the West African views of black and African sovereignty, which I have described above, came to be institutionalised in African regional and continental institutions, like the Organization of African Unity and in the African Group in the United Nations. The historical experiences of these three states, and the ways in which that experience was interpreted across West Africa and elsewhere on the African continent, might be seen to have played a major role in the development of contemporary African conceptions of sovereignty.[162]

Finally, racialised conceptions of sovereignty have echoed and reverberated far beyond the interwar period. In 1990, Robert Jackson's book *Quasi-States* argued that Third World states possessed juridical equality but often could not be seen as 'satisfying classical positive criteria of sovereign self-government.' Supported by a 'a kind of international safety net', the proliferation of such 'quasi-states' meant that '[t]he juridical cart is now before the empirical horse'. Decolonisation had overturned the 'traditional assumptions about the right to sovereign statehood', projecting a universalist ideal onto a world in which inequalities between states persisted. Though Jackson admitted that 'it might be inferred

[161] Ayoob, 'Inequality and Theorizing in International Relations'.
[162] On the factors behind the formation of the Organization of African Unity and possible alternatives, see Younis, "The Total Liberation of Africa: Pan-Africanism and Its Competitors, 1957-63"; on the African Group, see Wallerstein, *Africa*, 25–42.

that colonialism or paternalism are the underlying value premises of the study', he argued that his view was that 'independence in itself is neither good nor bad'.[163]

Jackson's argument is just one instantiation of an academic discourse that has examined state failure, weakness, and underperformance in parts of the global South, especially Africa.[164] In one sense, the interwar experiences of Haiti, Liberia, and Ethiopia underline the criticism of Jackson by Carolyn Warner: that his 'criteria of "empirical statehood" were met by a number of African kingdoms and empires', some of which 'were cohesive until deliberately undermined by Europeans.'[165] After all, if the imperial order was seeking 'classical positive criteria of sovereign self-government' why did it virtually extinguish the sovereignty of the three states across the African continent and diaspora that were the closest to meeting such criteria? We could also point out that the discursive delegitimation of states of the South represented by the arguments of Jackson and others has a lineage that stretches back to the undermining of Haiti, Liberia and Ethiopia during the interwar period; and we could argue that the language of race, while not explicitly invoked in that contemporary discourse, is less distant from its surface than may initially appear.

But pointing out these things does not, I think, go far enough. The interwar experiences of Haiti, Liberia, and Ethiopia also show how the production of difference under imperial capitalism, which created a racial order that spanned the world, persistently undermined, in both idea and reality, sovereign states organised by Africans and African-descended peoples. The failures of such states were transposed onto a global racial argument; so too, Black Atlantic writers realised, could their successes be enlarged and

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[163] Jackson, *Quasi-States*, 15, 23–24, 85, 11.
[164] A good example, with reference to many more, is Bates, *When Things Fell Apart*.
[165] Warner, 'The Political Economy of "Quasi-Statehood" and the Demise of 19th Century African Politics'. See also Grovogui, 'Regimes of Sovereignty'.

emblematised. In this context, I think we can understand more fully the discursive interwar battle over nationalism: who was permitted to perform it, who was not, and what racially-infused nationalisms were designed to achieve. For many Black Atlantic nationalisms, what was at stake was not so much narrowly-defined territorial control as it was an alternative global order in which black and African sovereignty became a possibility.

Conclusion

There comes a point in his essay on the Conference of Black Writers and Artists, held in Paris in 1956, when James Baldwin, reflecting upon a speech given by Léopold Sédar Senghor, asks: 'what, beyond the fact that all black men at one time or another left Africa, or have remained there, do they really have in common?' He ventures an explanation: 'What they held in common was their precarious, their unutterably painful relation to the white world.' In the process, he wrote, they had discovered a common project: to 'remake' that world 'in their own image', to 'impose' their image onto that world, to 'refuse control' by that world and its 'vision' of them, and to 'come into the world as men'.[1] Baldwin's words could be read as a summation of the whole political project of the interwar Black Atlantic. They are a revealing indication of how these ideas remained alive in 1956, and how they continued to shape thinking about global order, race and political affinity.

In the conclusion to this thesis I want to sketch some of the implications of the views I have been describing for the ways in which we think about international relations and our contemporary world. Baldwin's words did not signal an isolated recurrence of the themes of the interwar Black Atlantic. As I hope to show, those concerns have continued to resonate long after their historical moment. They continue to offer us richer ways of understanding the world.

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[1] Baldwin, 'Princes and Powers', 51.

The Globalisation of International Society

I have adopted in this study a perspective that reflects some of the concerns and emphases of international society approach within international relations, combined with a critical and postcolonial orientation. If early versions of the 'expansion' narrative of the English school evinced relatively little interest in what Gerritt Gong called the 'standard of civilization' by which the Western 'family of nations' adjudicated new entrants, later work, both inside and outside the school, has done much more to elaborate upon the ways in which the bifurcation of the world was written into the fabric of the global order that expanded out of Europe.[2] This has, at times, pointed to the role of race through a discussion of the 'racialization of law', in which 'cultural difference translated into legal difference' and invested Europe alone with sovereignty, rendering 'Third World sovereignty … uniquely vulnerable and dependent'.[3] Such writing has added detail to our understanding of the construction of the contemporary international order, making an argument for the persistently colonial and racial forms of hierarchy that remain inherent to, and constitutive of, that order.[4]

This study has sought to deepen and expand our understanding of the distinctiveness of this Third World position in international relations through an elaboration of the role of race as a form of international hierarchisation and stratification during a period of significant international transition. I have sought to do so while being attentive of the limited range of sources currently employed by most of those who have

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[2] See especially Keene, *Beyond the Anarchical Society*; Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law*; Anghie, 'Finding the Peripheries'; Koskenniemi, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations the Rise and Fall of International Law, 1870-1960*.
[3] Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law*, 56, 6.
[4] These arguments have been made most strongly by the burgeoning field of Third World Approaches to International Law. See Chimni, 'Third World Approaches to International Law'.

about global order and international society. A richer understanding of the decolonisation period and its precursors has been missing from a body of work that has rightly pointed to the highly selective manner in which international society was universalised, the endurance of civilisational categories in global order and its institutions, and the colonial origins and continuities of international law, the global political economy and international social stratification.

By looking at black interwar writing on race and global order, I have tried to suggest a way to enrich and develop our understanding of the construction of the contemporary world. I have sought to excavate understudied perspectives on global order using a contrapuntal method that accounts for the important interactions of those subaltern perspectives with other bodies of thought and writing that we might consider dominant or hegemonic. As I have tried to show, these forms of theory were indissolubly bound together, the former reading the latter as a 'surreptitious counter-narrative'. The singularity of global order and the potential power of racial and cultural affinity in both imperial centres and colonised territories made political provincialism impossible.

I have also drawn attention to the materiality of these views, trying to emphasise their embeddedness in transnational print circuits and their dependence on travel and migration. The study of international society and its globalisation needs to become much more open, I suggest, to insights from nationalism theory, which has indicated the importance of material changes on conceptions of the world and normative views which emerge in relation to those conceptions.

Finally, I have proposed a view of race that is attuned to its constitutive globality. I have sought to address the ways in which race was fundamental not only to the imperial order and the Europe-dominated international society that emerged by the nineteenth century, but also to the projects for a new world order that were central to the decolonisation

movements of Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean in the twentieth century. In particular, I have addressed the ways in which political affinities framed in terms of race, nation and pan-nation have never been stark ideological alternatives, but have interpenetrated in the service of staking claims to positions within the hierarchies of global order. Such claims have emerged out of specifically enabling material conditions in the context of the global inequalities generated by imperialism.

I have argued that a view of global order can illuminate many of the features of race that have appeared most mysterious when it is examined in specific national or regional contexts. This perspective points to the ways in which race has never functioned hermetically, but always as a method of stratifying, organising and ranking populations and political communities within an international system. It also helps to explain the noteworthy convergence of views on race and the sense of a pan-African racial 'awakening' that took place across the interwar Black Atlantic. Race has functioned as a vehicle, alongside nation and pan-nation, for maintaining global inequality, challenging it, or making claims within its overarching framework. We need to discard, I suggest, views of global order and international society that treat race as an embarrassing but minor episode in that history, rather than as central to its constitution. The connections between race and the world are essential in understanding the enduring power and permutations of race in contemporary politics.

The Third World and North-South Relations

I have been suggesting throughout this study that the critiques of global order by black writers in the 1920s and 1930s continued to resonate long after the Second World War. It is true that the postwar years saw the trend of territorialisation, which had been already evident in West Africa in the 1930s, continue, and that this trend reached an apotheosis

after 1960. But the global view at the heart of black anticolonial writing did not dissipate. We might, for example, trace it through the energetic attempts by Kwame Nkrumah and others to forge a pan-African political unit after Ghana's independence in 1957 and the foundation of the Organisation of African States (which became the African Union) in 1963;[5] or through the panoply of African American projects that continued to wave black nationalism and Third Worldist internationalism together, from Malcolm X's Organisation of Afro-American Unity to the Black Panthers; or through contemporary social movements unaffiliated to state power, like Burkina Faso's Balai Citoyen and the US-based Black Lives Matter.[6]

The emergence of the Third World, the G77, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Tricontinental, and South-South Cooperation have all—to varying degrees—depended upon readings of global order that highlighted the historical injustice of European, or 'Northern', global dominance.[7] Black Atlantic writing on what J. W. de Graft-Johnson called the 'disequilibrium in human destinies' represented an essential precursor to and archive for these projects. The commonality in objectives was captured by Malik Bennabi, the Algerian intellectual, whose book *L'Afro-asiatisme*— published in 1956, the same year as Baldwin's essay—expounded upon the political project of Bandung and its meaning. Bennabi celebrated the 'peoples who are no longer prepared to serve as the pedestal of History, but on the contrary wish to be involved in its design and its inspiration'; but he lamented how, almost as if through 'an internal automatism, an obsessive mechanism, the

[5] See Younis, "The Total Liberation of Africa: Pan-Africanism and Its Competitors, 1957-63."
[6] On Balai Citoyen, see Reza, 'New Broom in Burkina Faso?' On a cultural plane the desire to comprehend and assess 'the white world' has lost none of its urgency: to cite two recent examples, consider Jordan Peele's film satire on whiteness, Get Out (2017), and Raoul Peck's commanding documentary essay on James Baldwin and race, I Am Not Your Negro (2017).
[7] See Prashad, *The Darker Nations*.

human problems are still, in the West, unconsciously but constantly reduced to a relentless racial antagonism.'[8]

This is not to gloss over the many political divisions both within and between such projects, or to bypass the vexed question of intra-Southern exploitation.[9] But it is to say that, regardless of our views on projects like the Non-Aligned Movement, their criticisms of, and projections for, global order possess a lineage that includes the writing of the interwar black print circuits of the Atlantic. So too did African nationalisms share this heritage of global critique, which did not simply disappear into a postcolonial morass, as is sometimes implied.[10] African states continue to experience what James Ferguson has called 'highly selective and spatially encapsulated forms of global connection combined with widespread disconnection and exclusion'. Against expectations of global convergence, their experiences have revealed how 'apparently universal and planetary projects in fact rely on sharp spatial divisions and violently policed zones of exclusion.'[11] Much the same might be said for the Caribbean, currently facing three 'lost decades' of economic growth due to unsustainable debt.[12]

Race and Our Contemporary Order

It is not only in anticolonial or pan-African or Southern politics that the echoes of an earlier period continue to resonate. As Bennabi hinted, the question of cultural and racial identity in the 'West' (the United States and European Union, primarily) was not resolved with the establishment of the juridically-equal state form as a principle of global order, or with the

[8] Quoted in Braillard and Djalili, *The Third World and International Relations*, 35–45.
[9] For a useful discussion, see Muhr, 'Beyond "BRICS"'.
[10] See, for example, Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 8.
[11] Ferguson, *Global Shadows*, 14, 46.
[12] See Sir Ronald Sanders, 'Debt may well strangle a Caribbean generation,' *Jamaica Observer*, May 7, 2017.

eventual granting of civil rights to racialised internal minorities. In the West, expectations of the imminent demise of race have repeatedly crumpled in the face of its virulent recrudescence: the far-right surge of the 2010s;[13] the immigration question, from Fortress Europe to the US-Mexico border;[14] anxieties over demography, culture, and the composition of the 'body politic';[15] the status of racialised Muslim minorities;[16] and the intimate connections between the criminal justice system, police violence, and race across Western societies, most prominently in the US.[17]

A global racial order continues to shape lives in both the South and North. Many decades after the collapse of formal empires, race persists as colonialism's lasting afterlife.[18] In mixed contexts like Latin America, it continues to be one of the most significant determinants of political and economic advancement, with African-descended and Indigenous groups facing the highest levels of disadvantage.[19] In the US, black and other dark-skinned minorities are about three times more likely to be poor than whites and have an eighth of the net worth of whites.[20] The situation is similar in Europe, though with different inflections.[21] Race, it is clear, need not be formally identified to be in operation.

I have suggested in this study that the global thinking of interwar Black Atlantic writing was rooted in a set of interconnected print cultures whose construction facilitated important shifts in ideas of political community, space, and time. African Americans and West Africans used the technologies of imperial modernity to their advantage: not only to construct the idea of a community and a diaspora, but also to theorise global order itself—

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[13] Golder, 'Far Right Parties in Europe'.
[14] Carr, *Fortress Europe*.
[15] Joly, *Scapegoats and Social Actors*.
[16] Garner and Selod, 'The Racialization of Muslims'.
[17] Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*; Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*.
[18] See Wolfe, *Traces of History*.
[19] Telles and Bailey, 'Understanding Latin American Beliefs about Racial Inequality'.
[20] Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists*.
[21] See Salem and Thompson, 'Old Racisms, New Masks'.

what one Sierra Leonean newspaper called the 'grand machinery' of the world[22]—and its attendant structures of power. This process involved a counter-reading of texts from the imperial centres and a discursive assertion of a black future, which countered the racialising temporalities of ossification and delay on the one hand ('developmentalist' colonialism), and extirpation on the other (settler colonialism).

How does this argument relate to our contemporary moment? The moment of 'decolonisation' led, in some ways, to a narrowing of horizons, a result of the twin shockwaves of territorialisation in the form of postcolonial state construction and the end of colonial occupation across much of the colonised world. One way of reading the postcolonial present is in terms of what David Scott has called 'the bankruptcy of postcolonial regimes', defined by '[t]he acute paralysis of will and sheer vacancy of imagination, the rampant corruption and vicious authoritarianism, the instrumental self-interest and showy self-congratulation'—all 'symptoms of a more profound predicament that has, at least in part, to do with the anxiety of exhaustion', and which indicate that '[t]he old languages of moral-political vision and hope are no longer in sync with the world they were meant to describe and normatively criticize.'[23]

As much as Scott's description reflects valid frustration, it also, I think, draws far too firm a dividing line between past and present by mischaracterising the current global order and its hierarchies, divisions and prospects. There are many ways in which we can think in terms of disappointment, even tragedy, today. But there are also cases that suggest a different reading: a continuation of the undermining of the global racial order by those who have been rendered marginal and peripheral by it, and a refusal of its organising and ranking categories. These include the self-organisation against austerity policies by women

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[22] Marillia Van, "Random Jottings: The Pan-African Congress," *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, June 21, 1919.
[23] Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, 1–2.

of colour in Europe;[24] resistance to racialised inequalities in criminal justice and policing by Black Lives Matter alongside other anti-racist organisations in the US, UK, France, and elsewhere;[25] widespread resistance to deportation and anti-immigration policies in the North;[26] an array of youth-led political and social movements in contemporary Africa;[27] the renaissance in Indigenous organising in the Americas and Australasia;[28] among many other possible examples.

These movements have all made use of new communicative abilities for the purposes of constructing an oppositional politics. Many have also adopted forms of transnationalism which embody and project alternative forms of global order. With a wider view of our present postcolonial moment—the endurance of the global racial order, on the one hand; the spread of an oppositional politics adopting modern communication for its own ends, on the other—we might not draw so firm a line between the interwar politics I have explored in this study and the politics of today. Rather than lamenting our present disillusionment and the apparent failures of anticolonial visions, we might look back to those visions in all their complexity, and ask what they can offer us today, at a moment when—despite all that has changed over the past eight decades—residues of an earlier period still linger in the grand machinery of the world.

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[24] Bassel and Emejulu, *Minority Women and Austerity*.
[25] Lowery, *They Can't Kill Us All*.
[26] Marciniak and Tyler, *Immigrant Protest*.
[27] Larmer, 'Social Movement Struggles in Africa'.
[28] Julian Brave NoiseCat, 'Indigenous sovereignty is on the rise. Can it shape the course of history?' *The Guardian*, May 30, 2017. See also, for a critical overview in the Latin American context, Prevost, Campos, and Vanden, *Social Movements and Leftist Governments in Latin America*.

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