Decolonial Dovetailing: Potential Encounters and Archival Elisions in Thorold Dickinson's Archive

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Decolonising Archives

Decolonising Archives is a programme developed by UAL Decolonising Arts Institute in partnership with UAL Library, Archives and Special Collections. It sets out to explore institutional histories, memories and what it means to decolonise the university from within. We welcomed our first 4 researchers in residence in January 2020: **Dr Elisa Adami, Dr Khairani Barokka, Dr Mohammad Namazi and Dr Ana González Rueda**. They shared their research projects in an online symposium on 2 December 2020. Each of the researchers focus on a specific collection, aspect of a collection, or particular materials within the UAL Archives and Special Collections Centre and London College of Communication library; the Central Saint Martins Museum and Study Collection and the Special Collections at Chelsea College of Arts library.

Introduction

Warplanes brushing the sky / strewn with corpses the land
Skirt white clouds / exhales billows of mustard gas

In December 1937, at the London Film Society, Thorold Dickinson and Ivor Montagu presented a programme that *dovetailed* alternate reels from Italian and Russian propaganda films showing the Fascist invasion of Abyssinia (as Ethiopia was then called).[1] *The Path of the Heroes*, 1936, the bombastic official account commissioned by the Fascist regime, was juxtaposed with *Abyssinia*, 1936, a Soviet counter-propaganda film documenting the war from the opposite side. The crass glorification of Italian military and technological prowess was placed side by side with its murderous consequences on the ground; the use of poison gas, atrocities and mass murder that were conveniently removed in the sanitised Fascist version. The horror undercut the pomp. SHOT/COUNTER-SHOT

The programme was titled 'Record of War'. Although the accompanying notes shied away from any compromising political reference, its intention was clear. Fascinated by the aesthetic and political principle of montage, Dickinson and Montagu applied a spatialised version of cinematic montage by bringing together the reels of two documentary films. In doing so, the propaganda of Mussolini's regime was turned against itself and the brutality of the Italian imperial aggression was put on display.

The verb *to dovetail* denotes the act of skilfully fitting together two different pieces to form a whole. As every carpenter knows, a dovetail joint consists of two interlocking pieces of wood—a flaring tenon and a mortise—which, when fitted together, resist being pulled apart in all directions except one. History is also comprised of a series of interlocking joints. This act of joining and the historical edifice that it serves to build is neither stable nor settled but consists of an endless and multi-directional process of deconstruction and reconstruction. History, as Edward Said writes, is "an agonistic process still being made".[2] Yet, so many pieces and fragments of the past remain

occluded by or missing from the archive, which endeavours to construct its image of history out of partial and one-sided hegemonic narratives.

A record is always missing. Misplaced. Mislabelled. Redacted. Embargoed. Classified. Lost. Damaged. Segregated. History breaks down into specialisms; the connections between adjacent events are severed in their separate cataloguing.3
In the Thorold Dickinson Archive at UAL's Archives and Special Collections Centre (ASCC), I look for traces of a micro-event and its potential political links with the individuals and communities involved in the Pan-African Movement and anti-colonial struggle during the same period. I am in an archive of presence. 30 grey boxes and approximately 3,000 books and periodicals are arranged on 43 shelves.4 The boxes contain scripts, screenplays and treatments, notes, press cuttings, reports, letters, film programmes, teaching notes and conference papers. This is an archive about British film history and British film studies. It is unlikely I will find here anything related to the history of Pan-Africanism or anti-colonial resistance movements, but I search nonetheless.5 I am looking for the traces of lives and ideas which are archived elsewhere (in the archives of radical, self-funded organisations or in the classified shelves of state surveillance apparatuses). Sometimes they are not archived at all.6

And yet, the history and legacy of empire seeps through and stains many of these documents. It is discernible in the choice of shooting locations, the subject matter of films (realised or unrealised), and the titles of commissioning bodies. What if I was to dovetail these documents with the words and deeds of Pan-African and anti-colonial intellectuals? What new meanings would this unforeseen proximity between Dickinson and his contemporaries generate? What would it tell us about the still distorted and disavowed legacy of the British empire?

This act of dovetailing does not intend to restore a unity that never was, but to bring together disparate and contrasting experiences and memories in jarring juxtapositions. This critical-historical montage method draws on Edward Said's notion of "contrapuntal reading". In *Culture and Imperialism*, 1993, Said invites us to look back at the cultural

archive of empire not univocally as a symphonic harmony, but contrapuntally as an atonal ensemble of historical processes and experiences connected by colonial violence. A contrapuntal approach to history, for instance, must take account of how a certain lifestyle in nineteenth-century Europe was made possible by overseas colonial exploitation, as well as the way in which dominant narratives work to forcibly exclude and repress other histories and experiences. Following Said, my research attempts to trace the networks of intertwined and overlapping cultural and political events, as well as what these connections might tell us about the enduring historical legacies of empire and colonialism.

File 1: Pan-African voices:
Potential encounters and archival elisions

About the 1937 screening, Dickinson would later recall: "our fashionable Sunday audience with their broad brims and capes and capacity for chatter drifted out into Regent Street in dead, awed silence".7 What was that 'uneasy silence' made of? Were they shocked by the brutal violence they saw? Were they ashamed by the British government's complicit inaction? Were they thinking of the crimes that had been and continued to be committed by the British colonial empire too?

And were there any Ethiopian, African, Caribbean spectators amongst this 'fashionable Sunday crowd'? Did any member of the International African Friends of Ethiopia (IAFE) attend the event? For those who knew on their skin 'the wickedness of colonialism', the pain of those images would have not been something easy to dispel in the murk of the December evening. Those images were likely to awaken sore wounds and half-buried rages.

'Walking down a London street in May 1935, the young student Francis Nkrumah was feeling dispirited and pondering returning home rather than continuing his onward journey to study in the United States when he 'heard an excited newspaper boy shouting something unintelligible'. As the boy grabbed a bundle of

the latest editions, Nkrumah caught sight of the headline on a placard: 'MUSSOLINI INVADES ETHIOPIA'. He would note famously in his autobiography that this shocking piece of news was all that he needed to overcome his malaise: 'At that moment, it was almost as if the whole of London had declared war on me personally. For the next few minutes I could do nothing but glare at each impassive face wondering if those people could possibly realise the wickedness of colonialism.'8

The Italian invasion of Ethiopia was arguably the single event in the period that most powerfully inflamed the imagination of black people and colonised subjects around the world, serving as the rallying call for an emergent anti-colonial movement. In the 1930s, Ethiopia was the only sovereign black state to be recognised as a member of the League of Nations. Liberia, the other notionally independent black nation, had become an American protectorate and "mortgaged to the Firestone Rubber Company, thanks to the machinations of Yankee dollar diplomacy", as George Padmore eloquently put it.9 An attack on the very principle of black sovereignty at a time when the great majority of Africans and people of African descent lived under colonial domination or racial segregation, the reverberations of the Italian aggression were felt across continents, reaching as far as China.10 The global and largely spontaneous character of the black response, Cedric Robinson explained, was due to the symbolic value of "Ethiopia", a country confluent with the notion of Africa in the mind of diasporic communities, and an "ancient point of reference, a term signifying historicity and racial dignity".11 The mobilisation spread like wild fire.

In the US as the crisis emerged from late 1934, Black-led

aid organisations proliferated.

Elsewhere a hundred Liberian, Ovambo and Karro dockworkers in

Southwest Africa refused to work on Italian ships.

In Kenya, the Kikuyu Central Association enlisted

volunteers for the campaign in Ethiopia.

Egyptian doctors reported to Addis Ababa.

And hundreds of West Indians from British Guiana, Cuba

and Trinidad the Bahamas requested permission from their

colonial authorities to enlist in the armies of Ethiopia.

In London, African and West Indian intellectuals,

workers and students, despite reservations about the Emperor's rule

and his racial misconceptions, organised public demonstrations in

order to pressure the British government into support of Ethiopia.12

In this constellation of nodes of anti-colonial insurgency, London was, as per Minkah Makalani's effective characterisation, "a unique incubator for radical black internationalist discourse".13

Figure 1: Crowds at a meeting addressed by Prince Monolulo for the International African Friends of Ethiopia in Trafalgar Square, London. 25 August 1935 © Daily Herald Archive/SSPL/Getty Images

This coalesced particularly around the International African Friends of Abyssinia, promptly renamed International African Friends of Ethiopia (IAFE), an organisation formed in London in July 1935 by C. L. R. James, Amy Ashwood Garvey, Chris Braithwaite, Jomo Kenyatta, George Padmore and others, to support Ethiopia's struggle to maintain its independence.14 After the defeat of the Ethiopians with the fall of the capital city Addis Ababa in May 1936, the organisation would eventually change its name to the International African Service Bureau (IASB), and increasingly shift its attention from Italy's invasion of Ethiopia to the deplorable conditions in the British colonies throughout West Africa and the Caribbean.

Dickinson's 'Record of War' was screened at the New Gallery Cinema on 121–25 Regent Street, home of the London Film Society. Just down the road, at 50 Carnaby Street, was the Florence Mills Social Parlour, a nightclub and restaurant, run by Amy Ashwood Garvey and her husband singer-comedian Sam Manning, that served as unofficial headquarters of the IAFE.15 Figures whose lives the archive remembers as separate may well have brushed shoulders in Regent Street on a busy Sunday evening. Their geographic proximity in the urban fabric of the colonial metropole stands in stark contrast with their archival segregation. I ask again: was any member of IAFE (by then IASB) in attendance at the screening of 'Record of War'?

As I continue to speculate about potential encounters, I find a newspaper cut-out announcing the screening of two films—a Fascist propaganda film paired with a film shot by Russian operators—at the Phoenix Theatre in Charing Cross Road, on Tuesday 15th February 1938, around two months after Dickinson's programme was shown. Organised by British suffragette, Sylvia Pankhurst, editor of the campaigning newspaper *New Times and Ethiopia News*, the screening was preceded by an address by the Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie, who had fled into exile in England after the Italian victory. Originally Pankhurst had planned to include *The Path of Heroes* in the programme—a telling detail that seems to confirm that she had seen 'Record of War' and probably took from there the idea of repeating the juxtaposition of films without the technical refinement of Dickinson's dovetailing method. However, Istituto Luce, the

Italian state film corporation, complained about the "unauthorised interpolation" of *The Path of Heroes* in the Film Society screening through their lawyer, Filippo del Giudice, and suppressed its use for future, unofficial presentations.16

Henry K. Miller, a film scholar who, in 2017, organised a re-enactment of Dickinson's 1937 programme, speculated about potential encounters between the British director and Pan-Africanist intellectuals and activists too. "It is unclear whether C. L. R. James and his Pan-Africanist confederates in the International African Service Bureau saw 'Record of War'", he wrote, adding (as if to substantiate the hypothesis) that: "The IASB was in contact with Pankhurst's organisation, and James was an admirer of the Russian films in which the Film Society specialised."17

I realise that my obsession to discover traces of encounters that may have not even happened may lead nowhere. Even if I was to find evidence that an encounter took place, what would that prove? Perhaps a more fruitful approach would be to take the radical critiques of colonialism that were elaborated by members of the IASB, and dovetail them with Dickinson's own rather naïve and apologetic representation of the British empire. What the Pan-African intellectuals associated with the IASB brought to the table, as Priyamvada Gopal explains, "was an analysis which insisted on considering the relationship between fascism and colonialism in a global frame rather than, conveniently, depicting them as opposed geopolitical forces".18 George Padmore (1938), in particular, coined the term "colonial fascism" to describe those authoritarian, racist and violent practices of governance that were applied in colonial contexts by the putatively "democratic" nations.19 The implication was that, as Robin D. G. Kelley has observed, Fascism was not "some aberration from the march of progress, an unexpected right-wing turn", but a "blood relative" of European capitalism and imperialism.20 As Alberto Toscano (2020) has written recently, these black radical thinkers went to great lengths to detail "how what could seem, from a European or white vantage point, to be a radically new form of ideology and violence was, in fact, continuous with the history of colonial dispossession and racial slavery".21

I stop and listen to the voices of Pan-African intellectuals and let their lucid analysis and scathing critiques of imperialism and colonialism refract and reverberate across the sealed surfaces of Dickinson's archive.

> British imperialism will not fight Italy either for Abyssinia
>
> or for collective security. It will fight for British Imperialist
>
> interests and nothing else.
>
> C. L. R. James [22]

> But imperialism remains imperialism. … an African in Eritrea is
>
> no worse off under Italian Fascism than an African in Congo
>
> under democratic Belgium, or a Rhodesian copper miner.
>
> C. L. R. James [23]

Figure 2: C. L. R. James giving a speech at a rally for Ethiopia in Trafalgar Square, London, 25th August 1935, © Keystone-France/Gamma-Keystone via Getty Images

Habits once formed are difficult to get rid of. That is why we maintain that Colonies are the breeding ground for the type of fascist mentality which is being let loose in Europe today. Therefore, the working class of England and other defenders of the hard-won democratic rights of the British peoples cannot beat back fascism at home and at the same time continue to be indifferent to the intolerable conditions of the overwhelming majority of the coloured people of the Empire who inhabit colonial lands. The fight against

fascism cannot be separated from the right of all colonial peoples and subject races to Self-Determination. For any people who help to keep another people in slavery are at the same time forging their own chains.

George Padmore 24

Nazism and all other manifestations of Fascism must be destroyed. There can be no compromise with this evil thing. This, however, is no justification for Socialists to apologise for, and even attempt to whitewash, so-called 'democratic' Imperialism which, in its colonial application, is indistinguishable from European Fascism. It is not a question of which is better: Fascism or Imperialism. Both are bad. Both have the same common origin —monopoly capitalism—and can only be eradicated by abolishing the social system which permits the exploitation of man by man, class by class, nation by nation, race by race.

George Padmore 25

No race has been so noble in forgiving but now the hour has struck for our complete emancipation. We will not tolerate the invasion of Abyssinia. Black women are united with their man in this resolve. You said you brought us from Africa to Christianize us, but the only Christianity you gave us was three hundred years of enslavement. You have talked of the "White Man's Burden". Now we are carrying yours and standing between you and fascism.

Amy Ashwood Garvey 26

Figure 3: Representatives of IAFE during a rally for Ethiopia in Trafalgar Square, London, 25th August 1935. Amy Ashwood Garvey is on the left. © Bettman/Bettman/Getty Images.

File 2: Colonial remakes

With Ashwood Garvey, Padmore and James' radical critiques of empire still resounding in my ears, I open a new file and consider the films that Dickinson shot in Africa, which were made with either the support of or directly commissioned by the Colonial Office. Dickinson's directorial debut, *The High Command*, released in 1937 (the same year as 'Record of War') was set and partly shot in Ghana and Nigeria, then under British rule.

Figure 4: Thorold Dickinson, The High Command, 1937, film still © BFI. Reproduced under Fair Use

West Africa provides a mere exotic backdrop, a 'general atmosphere' or setting on which a battle over British identity plays out. If the plot of *The High Command* may appear to approach, metaphorically, a reckoning of some kind with British military and colonial rule, ultimately the film, as Peter Swaab argues, "gives us only a partial and forgiving version of colonial wrongdoing. There may be patriarchal skeletons in the closet, the story suggests, but they are not matter for real moral disgrace; and the ruling classes can be left to police themselves".27

In Dickinson's second film set in Africa, *Men of Two Worlds*, 1946, I am struck by a particular scene. A makeshift screen is set up in a clearing in the forest. The tribe is gathered around it, their faces lit up in the blue glare of the projected images. A woman's voice, at once rigid, didactic and authoritarian, explains to the audience the meaning of what they see. In *The Path of Heroes*, the Fascist propaganda film that Dickinson had undercut by juxtaposing it with the Soviet counter-propaganda documentary, we find an almost identical scene. The white screen is stretched, the crowd summoned.

Figure 5a: Thorold Dickinson, Men of Two Worlds, 1946, film still, © BFI Reproduced under Fair Dealing.
Fig 5b: The Path of Heroes, 1936, film still, © IWM (COI 36) 5a Reproduced under IWM non-commercial licence

The projected images are surely different: in the latter, military parades sweep across the streets of Rome, the Fascist propaganda machine in full display. In Dickinson's screen within-a-screen, an educational film about sleeping sickness and the importance of evacuating the tzetze fly infested bush is shown. Yet, both embody the same colonial attitude and media strategy, using the medium of film as a tool for instruction and inculcation.

During the war and in the post-war period, British state and non-state actors increasingly harnessed film for instructional and didactic purposes in an effort to shape the attitudes and conduct of colonial subjects. As Lee Grieveson observes, the British government's considerable investment in "colonial film" was then "the most sustained and extensive use of film for governmental purposes by a liberal state".[28] A series of

recognisable tropes and formal techniques started emerging across diverse filmic forms—newsreels, state-produced or corporate-financed 'documentaries', and narrative fiction films. "Time and time again in these films", Grieveson details, "we see white characters central to the frame educating and guiding the marginal colonial subjects in learning about and using modern technology. Frequently the sound of an English, upper-class voice embodies authority and directs our attention." Present in *Men of Two Worlds*, these tropes are associated with an innovative addition: the character of a Western educated African acting as an intermediary between colonial officers and colonised subjects. The plot of the film centres around Kisenga, a talented composer and pianist who, after spending fifteen years in London, returns to his home village to assist the English district commissioner with combating an outburst of sleeping sickness. A 'man of two worlds', Kisenga is opposed by the village witchdoctor, who turns the community, including Kisenga's family, against the former. A stranger in his own home country, Kisenga suffers a nervous breakdown.

Commissioned by the Ministry of Information at the behest of the Colonial Office in 1942, *Men of Two Worlds* was conceived as a wartime propaganda project. Set in Tanganyika Territory, a former German East African colony now ruled by the British, its aim was to depict the British colonial presence in Africa in a favourable light as well as to justify, for audiences in the colonial metropole, the increased expenditure on development schemes in the colonies, laid out in the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940. The film embodies and visualises the ideological shift that took place in British imperial strategy, which replaced the old model of indirect rule through native chiefs with a new form of technocratic management by experts and 'partnership' with educated Africans.[29] Empire was here rebranded as a project of 'development': a powerful label that would be carried over in the developmentalist narratives of neocolonial discourse. In the new international framework engendered by the Second World War, the film was also propagandistically meant to distinguish a benevolent British colonialism from Nazism, and thus justify the discrepancy between the rhetoric of a struggle for democracy and freedom in Europe and the reality of colonial governance in the imperial dominions.

Hailing from the 1930s experience of left anti-Fascism, but with a rather ambivalent attitude towards Africans' preparedness for self-governance, Dickinson was particularly well-placed for the task of representing a reformed and progressive form of colonialism. Dickinson hired the like-minded Anglo-Irish writer Joyce Cary to write the script. Cary had served as a colonial official in northern Nigeria and had written four novels based on his experiences in Africa, including *The African Witch*, 1936, and *Mister Johnson*, 1939. The latter was famously and unfavourably credited by Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe as the novel that drove him to want to write about Africa from his own perspective, and to dispel the old stereotypes under which the continent had been cloaked.

> If anyone had asked me in 1952 what I thought of
>
> Joyce Cary I probably would have been quite satisfied
>
> to call him the generic pet name, imperialist!
>
> What his book *Mister Johnson* did for me though was to
>
> call into question my childhood assumption of the innocence
>
> of stories. It began to dawn on me that although fiction was
>
> undoubtedly fictitious it could also be true or false, not with
>
> the truth or falsehood of a news item but as to its
>
> disinterestedness, its intention, its integrity.[30]

Cary was also the author of the 1941 pamphlet *The Case for African Freedom*, which, in many ways, anticipated British post-war attitudes towards empire. While sympathetic with Africans' demands for self-governance, Cary believed that real freedom required development first. He shared with Dickinson the "imperial faith that meaningful change could only come from European civilization", as well as a paternalist understanding of self-rule as something whose endowment was forever delayed under the pretext of gradualist caution.[31]

In a 1945 article, Dickinson described *Men of Two Worlds* as representing the conflict between Allied progressivism and Fascism; yet this conflict was not, for Dickinson, between

democratic freedoms and colonial occupation, but between a reactionary Africa and a progressive one which, with the aid of the colonial British rule, could change for its own good.[32] "Away in the bush", Dickinson writes, "there still survives, amongst the slow development of tribal society, the false racial pride, terrorism and opposition to innovation which we in Europe recognise in Nazism." In Cary's and Dickinson's hands, the film depicted "enlightened colonial administration" as "the ultimate form of antifascism, simultaneously battling Nazism in Europe and superstition in the colonies".[33] The distance from Padmore's and other black radical intellectuals' notion of "colonial fascism" could not be overstated. Rather than addressing the fascistic tendencies inherent in European colonialism—including British colonialism—Dickinson directs his indictment towards traditional African culture and society, which is depicted as backward, reactionary, unreasonable and refractory to the changes and innovations introduced by the putatively benign British colonial presence.

The Western African Student's Union (WASU), which had agreed to help with the film's production, was not blind to its flaws and limitations. As their protracted negotiations with the Colonial Office show, they protested against various aspects of the script, claiming that the story misrepresented African customs and demeaned African figures. The Litu tribe is portrayed as "torpid and infantile", lazy and superstitious, held in sway by a host of foreign authority figures.[34] But WASU objected in particular to the characterisation of the figure of the witchdoctor, Magole, as an "entirely European invention" and a distortion of African healing practices.[35] They also offered substantial suggestions for revising the script, mostly aimed at recasting Magole and Kisenga (at that point named Kijana) as representatives of opposed political factions in the then flourishing debate on African independence.

Figure 6a/6b: Thorold Dickinson, Men of Two Worlds, 1946, film stills, © BFI. Reproduced under Fair Dealing

In a scrapped version of the script that was produced in response to the WASU's suggestions, a much franker picture of the kind of freedom offered by the colonial powers was presented.

> MAGOLE: You don't belong here. You belong to the whites.
>
> KIJANA: That's a lie. You know I came here to help my people.
>
> I want my people to learn all that the whites can teach.
>
> MAGOLE: How to kill people? How to make war with guns?
>
> KIJANA: They stopped our wars.
>
> MAGOLE: And made us into slaves.
>
> KIJANA: They stopped slavery. They made us free.
>
> MAGOLE: What is freedom? If we must live to suit them,
> and give up our old ways.
>
> Cary et al.[36]

The demonisation of witchdoctors as representatives of indigenous knowledge and tradition often goes hand in hand, as it does in the film, with programmes of forced resettlement of local populations and land expropriation. As Silvia Federici details in her study of the witch in a colonial context:

W itch-hunting was *a deliberate strategy used by*

the authorities to instil terror, destroy collective

resistance, silence entire communities, and turn their

members against each other. *It was also a strategy of*

enclosure which, depending on the context, could be

enclosure of land, bodies or social relations 37

In *Men of Two Worlds*, the transfer of the population to a new settlement on higher ground is justified by the need to set fire to the bush and thus destroy the tsetse fly which is causing the sleeping sickness. Yet, such a humanitarian aim hides other, less altruistic reasons. These other motivations sometimes slip out into the open, as when district commissioner Randall reveals that the resettlement will increase the population density and make it easier to marshal and control. Dickinson illustrates the resettlement by showing a population that is actively mobilised, not forcibly deported. Set to an encouraging soundtrack, montage sequences show them as they build a road, erect a bridge, clear the land, construct houses. In this vision, the colonial rule appears to benignly facilitate the cultivation of both land and people. According to Randall: "The land is worn out" and the Litu "lack initiative". Part of his task is to get them working.38 Yet, as an African reviewer of the film, James EneEwa, has suggested, the Litu's reluctance to move can also be read as a form of resistance in itself, a reaction informed by their previous experiences of colonialism and forced labour.39 The utopian ending of the film, showing natives in trucks happily crossing the bridge towards new lands, obscures and falsifies the real conditions under which such population resettlements took place.

Figure 7a: Thorold Dickinson, Men of Two Worlds, 1946, film stills, © BFI. Reproduced under Fair Dealing

Figure 7b: Thorold Dickinson, Men of Two Worlds, 1946, film stills, © BFI. Reproduced under Fair Dealing

Men of Two Worlds received a mixed but largely negative reception from black intellectuals in London and, as Marc Matera explains, "became part of a much broader political discussion… over the choice between partnership and independence".40 While, ten years later, Bermudian actor Earl Cameron would command Dickinson's "skilful" and "courageous" representation of African subjects, in the immediate aftermath of the film's release, the discussion tended to revolve around more pressing political questions.41 *New African*, the monthly journal of the West African National Secretariat (WANS), edited by Kwame Nkrumah, ran two particularly unfavourable pieces on *Men of Two Worlds*. The first article (anonymous and presumably authored by Nkrumah himself) denounced the representation of Africans as untrue and racist, and merely an attempt "to support their [British imperialists'] contention that the African people are still incapable to administer their own affairs". Further, he characterised the film as representing a catalogue of the failures of the colonial administration:

> If after over two centuries of the so-called 'civilising mission'
>
> in Africa, the African remains as 'Men of Two Worlds' depicts
>
> him [sic] then both the imperialists and their cohorts the missionary,
>
> the British anthropologist and educationalists might very well
>
> pack their things… and leave Africa to the Africans. 42

As the unnamed author of the second article in the *New African* elaborated: "The fact is that social, economic, indeed, all progress, comes to a standstill once a country is occupied by a foreign invader."43 Referring to the outbreak of sleeping sickness at the centre of the film's plot, the article continues: "when one looks at those flies,… no African would hesitate to demand, as Indians are now rightly demanding, that Britain must quit Africa."

As I have abandoned my attempt to find a connection between Thorold Dickinson and Pan-African intellectuals, a new link unexpectedly emerges. The two main actors cast in *Men of Two Worlds*—Robert Adams in the role of Kisenga and Orlando Martins in the
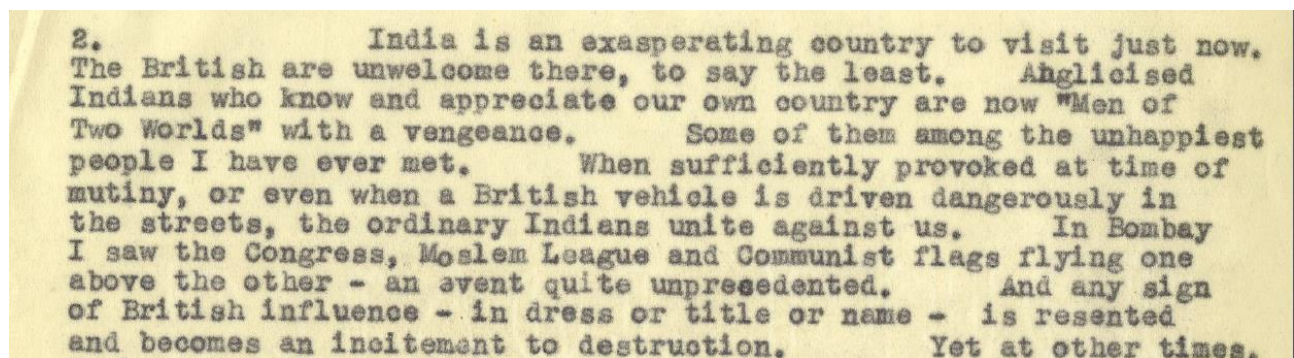
role of Magole—played the parts of Jean Jacques Dessalines and Dutty Boukman respectively in C. L. R. James' 1934 *Toussaint Louverture*: *The Story of the Only Successful Slave Revolt in History*.[44] The three-act play about Toussaint L'Ouverture, the leader of the Haitian revolution, is an indispensable companion to James' much more famous history of the revolution, *The Black Jacobins*, published in 1938. Staged in March 1936 at the Westminster Theatre in London's West End, the production (which ran for two performances) was not only a vital antidote to the dominant imperial propaganda of the time.[45] In the context of the Second Italo-Ethiopian War then under way, it also came to symbolically represent the Ethiopian resistance to Mussolini. Moreover, for the first time on the British stage, black actors performed in a play written by a black playwright: *Toussaint Louverture* famously starred the African-American actor and singer Paul Robeson in the title role.[46] What clearly distinguishes James' play from Dickinson's later film is a representation of colonial subjects not as mere victims of imperial history or passive beneficiaries of the coloniser's crisis of conscience, but rather as active agents of their own liberation who, through their struggles, put pressure on and reshaped European ideas of freedom and, in doing so, revealed the limits of their supposed universalism. The play forcefully countered the British government's line of "self- government when fit for it"—later championed by Dickinson's and Cary's *Men of Two Worlds*—by showing subjects who did not wait for freedom to be granted to them, but actively fought for it.

> BOUKMAN (Orlando Martins): Throw away the symbol of the god of the whites who have so often caused us to weep, and listen to the voice of liberty, which speaks to us through our hearts.
>
> DESSALINES (Robert Adams): Haiti no colony, but free and independent. Haiti, the first free and independent Negro state in the new world. Toussaint died for it. We shall live and fight for it!
>
> James [47]
>
> ***

From January 3 until mid-April 1946, Dickinson, his wife and Joyce Cary travelled to India for an exploratory mission on behalf of the Rank Organisation, a British film company. Their aim was to examine the conditions for filming in the country as well as a suitable subject matter for a film that could appeal to Western audiences. Like in *Men of Two Worlds*, Dickinson's attention was particularly seized by grand developmental projects, such as the construction of dams and irrigation schemes, financed through foreign, mostly American, capital—plans which often required population resettlements and the exploitation of local labour. Caught in the midst of the Royal Indian Navy mutiny (otherwise known as the Bombay mutiny), which took place on 18 February 1946, and rapidly spread throughout British India from Karachi to Calcutta, Dickinson also reflected on the social and political unrest in the country.[48] In his report, he wrote: "India is an exasperating country to visit just now. The British are unwelcome there, to say the least. Anglicised Indians who know and appreciate our own country are now "Men of Two Worlds" with a vengeance. Some of them among the unhappiest people I have ever met. [sic] When sufficiently provoked at a time of mutiny, or even when a British vehicle is driven dangerously in the streets, the ordinary Indians unite against us. In Bombay I saw the Congress, Moslem League and Communist flags flying one above the other—an event quite unprecedented. And any sign of British influence—in dress or title or name—is resented and becomes an incitement to destruction."[49]

2.   India is an exasperating country to visit just now. The British are unwelcome there, to say the least.   Anglicised Indians who know and appreciate our own country are now "Men of Two Worlds" with a vengeance.   Some of them among the unhappiest people I have ever met.   When sufficiently provoked at time of mutiny, or even when a British vehicle is driven dangerously in the streets, the ordinary Indians unite against us.   In Bombay I saw the Congress, Moslem League and Communist flags flying one above the other - an event quite unprecedented.   And any sign of British influence - in dress or title or name - is resented and becomes an incitement to destruction.   Yet at other times,

Figure 8: Thorold Dickinson, Report on a Trip to India: Introduction, extract, © UAL's Archive and Special Collection Centre, TD/8/2, London.

File 3: A post-colonial world order?

In 1956 Dickinson was appointed Chief of Film for the United Nations' (UN) Department of Public Information, a position he would occupy until 1960, when his four-year contract expired. Dickinson's ambition for his new role was to change the direction of UN films by conferring a decidedly more clear-cut perspective on current events than the previous informative films had done. "These films", he noted, "are all characterised by a scrupulous avoidance of idea, and the scrupulous promotion of the obvious and generally acceptable aspects of the UN ideal", in a way that has undermined their cinematographic quality.[50] In this period, Dickinson supervised the production of a number of films, covering various social issues and international crises that spanned across the globe. *Out*, 1956-57, told the story of Hungarian refugees stranded in an Austrian refugee camp, Traiskirchen, due to the fact that many countries had reached their quota for refugees; *Blue Vanguard*, 1957, reported on the creation of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in response to the Suez Crisis; *Ouverture*, 1958, showed the suffering caused by famine and war, as well as the international relief work and efforts to combat such afflictions.[51] *Power Among Men*, the first feature-length film produced by the UN, premiered at the Museum of Modern Art in 1959, where it was introduced by Ralph J. Bunche, then UN Under-Secretary. Dealing with the philosophy and purpose of the UN, the film is composed of four sections, each set in a particular location, and loosely connected by the theme of humankind's constructive and destructive powers. In Italy, the village of Sant'Ambrogio, devastated during the war, is re-built with the help of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA); in Haiti, the villagers of Fermathe, under the guide of a UN agricultural expert, learn new farming techniques that, we are assured, will improve their living standards; in Canada, an international community of workers serves the vast aluminium plant at Kitimat, a city specifically planned and built by the Aluminum Company of Canada (Alcan) during the 1950s in the mountains of British Columbia; in a Norwegian atomic research centre, the film's concluding segment, we are introduced to the potentially obliterating force of atomic power.[52]

Founded in 1945, the UN was established to replace the League of Nations, the former, ineffective intergovernmental organisation which had failed in its function to maintain international peace and security. As historian and future collaborator of Dickinson, A. J. P. Taylor put it, the Ethiopian crisis in the 1930s had delivered "the deathblow to the League" and would later trigger the Second World War.[53] The League's inability to protect one of its member states from the illicit aggression of another made strikingly apparent how the organisation was structured by asymmetrical power dynamics and an explicitly racialised international hierarchy. When in 1923, Haile Selassie, then regent of Ethiopia, applied for membership in the League of Nations, his request initiated a process of unequal integration, by which the country was subjected to a programme of international oversight (or a 'mandation' by other means). As Adom Getachew explains in her excellent *Worldmaking After Empire*:

> Unequal integration produced a burdened and racialized
>
> membership for Ethiopia and Liberia. By "burdened membership,"
>
> I mean a form of inclusion in international society where
>
> responsibilities and obligations were onerous and rights
>
> and entitlements limited and conditional. It is akin to what Saidiya
>
> Hartman has called "burdened individuality" in the context of
>
> emancipation in the United States, where the granting of freedom
>
> and equality to African Americans came laden with new forms
>
> of responsibility and indebtedness. [54]

Rather perversely, Italy could use the conditions of Ethiopia's burdened membership in the League of Nations to justify not just its invasion, but also the disproportionate use of violence, which included the use of illegal mustard gas, the indiscriminate killings of civilians and the perpetration of torture and other war crimes.[55] An ever-acute observer of the crisis, C. L. R. James, penned his own fierce critique of the League's hypocrisy:

Let us fight against not only Italian imperialism, but the

other robbers and oppressors, French and British imperialism.

Do not let them drag you in. To come within the orbit of imperialist

politics is to be debilitated by the stench, to be drowned in the morass

of lies and hypocrisy. … keep far from the imperialists and their Leagues

and covenants and sanctions. Do not play the fly to their spider.

Now, as always, let us stand for independent organisation and

independent action. We have to break our own chains.

Who is the fool that expects our gaolers to break them? 56

With the entry of anti-colonial nationalists as representative of newly independent post-colonial states, the successor to the League, the UN, held, however briefly, the potential for a reordering of the world along post-imperial lines that would secure non-hierarchical relations of non-domination. Once again it is instructive to dovetail Dickinson's time at the UN with the simultaneous political action conducted by the representatives of post-colonial states within the General Assembly. Precisely between 1956 and 1960, the latter not only redefined "self-determination', which was previously only a non-legally binding, secondary principle in the UN Charter, as a human right, but positioned it as a prerequisite to other human rights, and argued that such a right entailed an immediate end to colonial rule. This was in sharp contrast with previous interpretations, as demonstrated, for instance, by Winston Churchill's insistence that the Atlantic Charter he signed in 1941 did not apply to the territories of the British empire. Anti-colonial nationalists introduced in the halls of the UN a radically new articulation of the right to self-determination; an articulation that was forged in the context of the Fifth Pan-African Congress, which took place in Manchester in 1945, and was later refined at the 1955 Afro-Asian conference in Bandung.57 This process culminated in 1960 with the passing, with an overwhelming majority, of Resolution 1514. The resolution conceived of 'self-determination' as a right of all people and declared that: "The subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation

constitues a denial of fundamental human rights."

In September 1960, Kwame Nkrumah addressed the General Assembly
as president of independent Ghana and used his new platform to refashion
the United Nations as the international forum for decolonization. Declaring
the dawn of a new era, Nkrumah argued that the UN should lead the fight
against imperialism by protecting all peoples' right to self-determination and by
excluding obstinate imperial powers from membership in the international body.
As if in confirmation of Nkrumah's vision of the UN, the assembly passed the
historic resolution 1514, Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial
Countries and Peoples, three months later.[58]

Figure 8: Kwame Nkrumah speaking at United Nation General Assembly, New York, 23rd September 1960 © Ralph Crane/The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty

Resolution 1514 firmly rejected the gradualism and paternalistic premises of the trusteeship model enshrined in the Charter of the UN. In contrast to conventional accounts of decolonisation that frame the end of empire as a universalisation of the Western principle of sovereignty resulting from the progressive expansion of international institutions like the UN, as Getachew explains, such a principle was thoroughly reinvented by anti-colonial

nationalists in an attempt to "mobilize the nascent and still malleable discourse of international human rights in service of a critique of imperialism and racism".59 Far from being the end goal, the right of self-determination was envisioned "as the first step in their project of worldmaking", and the prerequisite to "more radical demands around economic self-determination" and international justice.

While an undeniable victory that secured the legal foundations for an anti-imperial world, the right to self-determination was not without its limits. The commitment to territorial integrity and the oversight of the problem of dispossession, central to the history of settler colonial formations, made it inadequate to address such contexts, as well as the secessions that took place in new post-colonial states. Further, as Getachew adds, "the anti-colonial view that human rights were to be secured in self-government and statehood offered no adequate response to instances where the state itself violated the rights of citizens."60 Finally, more radical demands for an egalitarian restructuring of the global economy, such as the introduction of permanent sovereignty over natural resources, were dropped as a compromise to get self-determination included in the human rights covenants. Later attempts to articulate a new political economy of self-determination as a way to resist the neo-colonial relations of dependency and external encroachments of powerful states, international organisations, and private actors on domestic self-governance, were sadly aborted and displaced by the rise of neoliberalism in the 1970s.61

In the documents related to Dickinson's time at the UN housed at the ASCC, I do not find any evidence as to what he may have thought about the developments that were then taking place in the General Assembly. I do not know if he was now sympathetic to the cause of self-determination or still sceptical as to the "fitness" of former colonies for self-governance. I do not know what opinion he had of the anti-colonial nationalists and Pan-Africanists who had radically transformed the General Assembly into an international forum for decolonisation.

Almost ten years later, in 1969, Dickinson, in his new role of Professor of Film at the Slade School of Fine Art, returned to his 1937 screening 'Record of War' and restaged it on two

occasions. The first time, it was included in a programme on documentary cinema, scheduled between the collectively authored *Far from Vietnam*, 1967, and Peter Watkins's *The War Game,* 1965; the second time it was shown as part of a lecture series around Britain's involvement in Europe in the twentieth century given at UCL by the historian A. J. P. Taylor. Assisted by his student Lisa Pontecorvo (niece of Gillo Pontecorvo, director of the unabashedly anti-colonial film *The Battle of Algiers*), Dickinson made changes to the original reel by inserting new materials, such as a clip of Haile Selassie in Geneva. Screened at the height of the phase of historical decolonisation, the programme surely reverberated with new meanings and poignant associations.

Conclusions

In this text I have attempted to bring together documents from Thorold Dickinson's archive in jarring juxtaposition with the experiences and ideas of anti-colonial and Pan-Africanist intellectuals. Inspired by Dickinson's own use of the principle of dovetailing, my aim was to irradiate and refract the British director's archive by contrasting it with other perspectives and voices: either by foregrounding the critical reception of his films by black reviewers or collaborators, or by exploring potential encounters with the leading characters of the Pan-African Movement in the UK. Carried out as part of the Decolonising the Archives: Research Residency Programme 2020, it was important that my research worked against the intellectual segregation of stories and the elision of black agency that the space of the archive often performs. Haitian anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot defines the "elision of black agency" as the point at which "archival power" appears "at its strongest, the power to define what is and what is not a serious object of research and, therefore, of mention".62 At every turn, I have sought to shine a light on the centrality and active agency of the individuals involved in anti-colonial struggles, paying close attention to how they articulated their own fight for liberation and emancipation. As both Gopal and Getachew cogently demonstrate in their respective studies, decolonisation, in its historical-political form, was not the product of a process of assimilation, in which "Western" ideals of "freedom", "liberation", "emancipation" and "self-determination" were handed over by colonisers or, as most liberal accounts like to argue, passively absorbed by the colonised and placed in the service of anti-colonial struggle. Rather, these ideals were critically appropriated and creatively reconfigured beyond the narrow and racialised frames into which they had been first conceived, revealing their contradictions and limitations.63

The process of decolonisation, as Gopal points out, is not just about the inclusion of diversity in the curricula, but, crucially, it must concern itself with the understanding and undoing of ever-lasting imperial mythologies.64 The historical obliteration of anti-colonial resistance and insurgencies that were commonplace throughout the age of empire is one such mythology; the effacing of colonial violence under the most respectable mask of a "humanitarian colonialism" is another. One of the mythologies that this text has attempted

to undo is the sharp dichotomy between fascist and liberal colonialism that saw its ascendency during the Second World War and has become part of the common historical imaginary in the UK. Dickinson's film *Men of Two Worlds*, I argue, was partially implicated in such a fabrication. While fascist and liberal colonialism are certainly distinct formations with their own specificities and particular histories, it is however important to identify and bear in mind, as anti-colonial intellectuals did, their continuities, similarities and relations. This task of challenging apologetic accounts of empire is even more urgent given the current emboldening of far-right groups and the mainstreaming of far-right rhetoric.

While the horizon of possibilities that the anti-colonial and Pan-Africanist thinkers and activists once inhabited has largely vanished, and, although many of their hopes were forcefully shattered, new demands for decolonisation continue unabated in the Black Lives Matter Movement, the South African born campaign Rhodes Must Fall, and the growing demands for reparations for slavery and genocide, for land restitution in settler colonialist states, and the returning of looted heritage. Like those thinkers and activists who came before them—and whose diverse and diffused networks this study has tried to sketch—these new transnational political movements and actions of solidarity represent, in different ways, the attempt to move beyond a politics premised on the narrow confines of the nation-state. They are instances of a resurgent international and emancipatory project struggling to achieve a truly post-colonial and post-imperial world.

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Endnotes

1 Starting as a minor border dispute in Wal Wal in 1934, the Second Italo-Ethiopian War (also known as the Second Italo-Abyssinian War) was a war of colonial aggression officially initiated with the Fascist invasion in October 1935. The war was meant to meet the expansionist and imperial ambitions of Mussolini's regime, and was conceived as a showpiece for the Fascist Italian state. During the war, the Italian army committed a number of war crimes, such as the use of mustard gas (in violation of the Geneva Convention) and the deliberate targeting of ambulances and Red Cross hospitals. While the capital city of Addis Ababa was taken by Italian troops in May 1936, many regions resisted and the guerrilla warfare against the Italians continued until 1941 when Ethiopia fell to the British in the course of the Second World War. A global event with international repercussions, Neelam Srivastava, in *Italian Colonialism and Resistances to Empire, 1930–1970*, has helpfully characterised the Fascist invasion of Ethiopia as a marked instance of "heteroglossia": an event whose interpretations have been multiple and often irreconcilable, representing different national and political groups and competing interests.
Neelam Srivastava, *Italian Colonialism and Resistances to Empire, 1930–1970* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), 66.

2 E. W. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2004), 25.

3 The idea of "intellectual segregation" is elaborated by Michael O. West and William G. Martin, in "Contours of the Black International", to characterise the nationally bounded narratives produced in American post-war and Cold War historiography that have "generally precluded investigations of shared black or African experiences". In the following, I expand this concept of intellectual segregation to consider the disciplinary partitions and ethno-nationalist constructions of British history, which have tended to exclude the experiences of colonial subjects.

M. O. West and W. G. Martin, "Introduction: Contours of the Black International", in M. O. West and W. G. Martin, eds. *From Toussaint to Tupac: The Black International since the Age of Revolution* (Chapel Hill: The Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2009), 1–44.

4 On the online page of the ASCC, I read that: "The collection went to Camberwell College of Arts in two parts in 1979 and in 1984. Camberwell College became a constituent part of the University of the Arts London in 2004, and the Dickinson collection relocated to the University's then newly built Archives and Special Collections Centre in 2008. Part of Dickinson's archive was originally donated to the British Film Institute, which houses 56 boxes of his archive."

5 Emending the usual translation of Jacques Derrida's "*mal d'archive*", So Mayer, in "Already Bedfellows: A Long Interview with So Meyer", powerfully defines "archive ache" as just this: "the perpetual and perpetually impossible search for *the evidence*, or *the object*, or *the moment*: the quality or connection or practice that will justify the time of writing and make the writing work the way you want it to—that is, to repair the world, in however small and immediate a way. (…) The ache is both for the search for that lost archival object that does not, and maybe cannot, exist, and for the reason for that search, which is a deep need for the world to be other than as it is."

So Mayer, "Already Bedfellows: A Long Interview with So Mayer", *Pen Transmissions* (29 October 29, 2020), https://pentransmissions.com/2020/10/29/already-bedfellows-a-long-interview-with-so-mayer/.

6 In a fascinating conversation held between historian Marika Sherwood and artist Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa in 2020, we learn about the fate of the archives of people associated with the anti-colonial and Pan-African Movement. Sherwood has acted as the unofficial archivist of many of these documents all her life, with hardly any institutional or financial support. She explains how all the people associated with anti-colonial activities in the 1930s and 1940s were under state surveillance, but the MI5 files on them have never been released. When they are released (like in the case of Kwame Nkrumah, whose released

files only go up to the beginning of 1953), many pages are removed, and lines and whole paragraphs redacted. In the case of a formidable character such as Amy Ashwood Garvey, whose life and work Wolukau-Wanambwa has attempted to reconstruct as part of her project *Carrying Yours and Standing Between You*, there is lamentably very little material, making evident the processes of marginalisation of women within these circles and their historiographical recuperations.

E. Wolukau-Wanambwa and M. Sherwood, "Amy Ashwood Garvey: Vibratory Spaces" in *Women on Aeroplanes. Inflight Magazine #4* (2020), http://woa.kein.org/node/75. The interview took place at the Showroom, London, in December 2018, as part of the public programme around the exhibition *Women on Aeroplanes*, October 3, 2018–January 26, 2019).

7 H. K. Miller, "Reel History. Pioneering partners in the use of film to reveal the recent past", *Times Literary Supplement* (October 13, 2017), 15.

8 P. Gopal, *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent* (London: Verso, 2019), 319–320. The passage quoted is from K. Nkrumah, *Ghana: Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1957), 27.

9 G. Padmore, "Ethiopia Today: The Making of a Modern State" (1934) in N. Cunard and H. Ford, eds., ed. and abr. Hugh Ford *Negro: An Anthology* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1970), 612.

10 On 21st January 1937, the Isis Theater in Shanghai organised a screening of Abyssinia, the documentary chosen by Dickinson and Montagu for their dovetailing experiment. The projection was proscribed by the Chinese authorities out of fear of provoking a confrontation with Italy. When a month later a heavily censored version of the film was finally screened, more than one hundred Italian soldiers vandalised the theatre, burning the print of the film and injuring dozens of spectators. The incident engendered great popular resentment. As recounted by X. Huang, in "Through the Looking Glass of Spatiality: Spatial Practice,

Contact Relation and the Isis Theater in Shanghai, 1917–1937", more than a hundred Chinese intellectuals signed an open letter, deploring the Italian soldiers' act of violence and exclaiming at the end of the letter: "Viva the Abyssinian war for national independence! Viva China's sovereignty and liberation!" In the Ethiopian predicament, they had probably seen some resonances with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1933.

X. Huang, "Through the Looking Glass of Spatiality: Spatial Practice, Contact Relation and the Isis Theater in Shanghai, 1917–1937", *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, 23(2), (Fall, 2011): 23.

11 C. Robinson, "The African diaspora and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis", *Race & Class*, 27(2), (1985): 60.

12 Robinson, "The African diaspora", *Race & Class,* 61–62.

13 M. Makalani, In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2011), 194.

14 H. Adi, *Pan-Africanism: A History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 109–110.

15 Nydia Swaby, in 2004, highlighted the importance of social spaces such as the Florence Mills Social Parlour and its predecessor, the International Afro Restaurant at 62 New Oxford Street, opened by Ashwood Garvey in 1935, as hubs and catalysts of political activity, headquarters of grassroots organisations and support networks, and a "medium through which African diasporic community marked its presence in London". As Swaby continues: "From the menu, to the décor, to the clientele who frequented both establishments, these social spaces manifested a distinctly African diasporic aesthetic." Unfortunately, as only a few records of both establishments exist, one can only imagine the social and political atmosphere that they created.

N. A. Swaby, "Amy Ashwood Garvey and the Political Aesthetics of Diasporic Social Spaces in London", *Symbolism 14*, (2004), 59–74.

16 Incidentally, Filippo del Giudice would later become a film producer and go on to produce Dickinson's *Man of Two Worlds,* 1946, on which I will focus in File 2.

17 H. K. Miller, "The Fog of War", *Sight & Sound* (June, 2017), 15.

18 Gopal, *Insurgent Empire*, 359.

19 G. Padmore, "Fascism in the Colonies", *Controversy*, 2(17), (February 1938), https://www.marxists.org/archive/padmore/1938/fascism-colonies.htm.

20 R. D. G. Kelley, "A Poetics of Anticolonialism" in A. Césaire *Discourse on Colonialism*, Joan Pinkham trans. (New York: Monthly Review, 2000), 20.

21 As Toscano explains, such an analysis of racial or colonial Fascism as a phenomenon that belies the novelty of intra-European Fascism was shared by African American anti-Fascist intellectuals such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Langston Hughes. Speaking in Paris at the Second International Writers Congress in 1937, the latter declared: "We Negroes in America do not have to be told what fascism is in action. We know. Its theories of Nordic supremacy and economic suppression have long been realities to us." Moreover, Padmore's concept of "colonial fascism" anticipated Aimé Césaire's memorable description of Fascism as the boomerang effect of European imperialist violence. As Césaire writes in *Discourse on Colonialism*, Europeans forget that "before they were its victims, they were its accomplices; that they tolerated that Nazism before it was inflicted on them, that they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because, until then, it had only been applied to non-European peoples; that they have cultivated that Nazism, that they are responsible for it, and that before engulfing the whole edifice of Western, Christian civilization in its reddened waters, it oozes, seeps, and trickles from every crack." A. Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, Joan Pinkham trans. (New York: Monthly Review, 2000), 36.

22 C. L. R. James, "Truth about 'Peace Plan': Britain's Imperialist Game", *The New Leader* (December 20, 1935), https://www.marxists.org/archive/james-clr/works/1935/12/peaceplan.html.

23 C. L. R. James' *A History of Pan-African Revolt*, from which this quote is extracted, was first published in 1938 under the title *A History of Negro Revolt* and was largely inspired by the Ethiopian crisis. C. L. R. James, *A History of Pan-African Revolt* (Oakland: PM Press, [1969]/2012), 68–69.

24 G. Padmore, *How Britain Rules Africa* (London: Wishart, 1936), 3–4.

25 G. Padmore, "Not Nazism! Not Imperialism! But Socialism!", *The New Leader* (April 27, 1941).

26 These words were spoken at a rally in London's Trafalgar Square organised by IAFA in August 1935 to protest Italian Fascist preparations for war against Ethiopia. Amy Ashwood Garvey, in T. Martin, Amy Ashwood Garvey: *Pan-Africanist, Feminist, and Mrs Marcus Garvey No.1; or, a Tale of Two Amys* (Dover, MA: Majority Press, 2007), 143.

27 P. Swaab, *Men of Two Worlds*, 1946, part of Colonial Film: Moving Images of the British Empire (2010), http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/node/1845.

28 The Colonial Film Unit (CFU) was set up in 1939 under the auspices of the Ministry of Information (MOI). L. Grieveson, "Introduction: Film and the End of Empire" in L. Grieveson and C. MacCabe, eds., *Film and the End of Empire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

29 M. Matera, Black London: *The Imperial Metropolis and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century* (Oakland: Univ. of California Press, 2015), 506.

30 C. Achebe, *Home and Exile* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 34–35.

31 P. Zachernuk, "Who Needs a Witch Doctor? African Activists and the Re-imagining of Africa in the 1940s" in L. Grieveson and C. MacCabe, eds., *Film and the End of Empire (*London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

32 T. Dickinson, "Africa Has a Lesson for Britain", *Cinema London* (January 3, 1945), reprinted in P. Horne and P. Swaab, eds., *Thorold Dickinson: A World of Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 71–72.

33 Matera, *Black London*, 510.

34 Swaab, Men of Two Worlds.

35 WASU, "Memorandum on A Proposed Film Entitled 'The Men of Two Worlds'" (July 27, 1943), The National Archives, CO 875/17/6. London.

36 J. Cary, T. Dickinson, and H. Victor, *Men of Two Worlds Screenplay* (1943), The National Archives, CO 875/17/5, ff 72-261 [dated July 2, 1943]. London, 83–84.

37 S. Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia, 2014), 220.

38 Swaab, Men of Two Worlds.

39 J. EneEwa, "Hollywood and Africa", *The Leader* (June 7, 1947).

40 Matera, *Black London*, 524.

41 E. Cameron, "Negro in Cinema: The colour bar in the studios is being broken" (1957) [Press cutting] UAL's Archive and Special Collection Centre, TD/3/9/2. London.

42 Anon., "Men of Two Worlds", *New African,* 1(6), (1946), 46–47.

43 Anon., "A West African", *New African,* 1(6), (1946), 50.

44 This was not the first time that the Guyanese Adams and the Nigerian Martins had worked together. In 1935, they had both starred in *Stevedore*, a play about a multiracial dock strike in America begun after a black docker was falsely accused of rape. As Marie Seton, an English actress who had become a theatre and art critic, recalled, "*Stevedore* was an important play: for the first time in the theatre Negroes were shown fighting for their rights and their lives, with white workers joining them in their resistance to a racist mob." Amy Ashwood Garvey played a central role helping to assemble the cast for the play. C. L. R. James, "Toussaint Louverture: The Complete Playscript" (1934) in C. Høgsbjerg, ed., *Toussaint Louverture: The Story of the Only Successful Slave Revolt in History. A Play in Three Acts* (Durham and London: Duke Univ. Press, 2013), 18.

45 As exemplary specimens of the imperial imaginary then on display especially in British cinemas, see Alexander Korda's *Sanders of the River,* 1934, and Berthol Viertel's *Rhodes of Africa,* 1936.

46 Paul Robeson represents another point of connection between Thorold Dickinson and the Pan-African Movement in London. Not only was Robeson one of the personalities of African descent on which the character of Kisenga in *Men of Two Worlds* was based. In 1935, Robeson was in contact with the British socialist filmmaker Ivor Montagu—Dickinson's collaborator on the screening of 'Record of War' and the translator of the Soviet documentary *Abyssinia*. Through Montagu, Robeson corresponded with Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein about the prospect of making a film about the Haitian Revolution. I. Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood* (Berlin: Seven Seas, 1968), 345.

47 James, "Toussaint Louverture", *Toussaint Louverture*, (1934), 56; 132.

48 Though relatively unsupported by national leaders (with the exception of the Communist Party of India), the 1946 Royal Indian Navy mutiny had raised fears among the British of another large-scale mutiny along the lines of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and was thus a substantial contributing factor to their decision to leave India.
T. Dickinson, "Report on a Trip to India: Introduction" (1946), UAL's Archive and Special Collection Centre, TD/8/2. London.

49 Dickinson, "Report on a Trip to India".

50 T. Dickinson, "To Find a Villain" (1959), UAL's Archive and Special Collection Centre, TD/3/8/4/2. London.

51 The Suez Crisis was initiated by the invasion of Egypt in late 1956 by Israel, followed by the United Kingdom and France, with the aim to regain Western control of the Suez Canal following its nationalisation by Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser. The distribution of *Blue Vanguard* was abandoned after objections received from France, Israel and Britain, making clear to Dickinson the need of reverting to the Film Department's pre-1956 stance of making information films that avoided expressing too marked a viewpoint.

52 In the archive I find a letter by a certain Henry E. Strub, secretary of Alcan, in reply to a missing missive by Dickinson, in which the director expressed his (unrealised) desire to make a sequel of *Power Among Men* about the current situation in Africa.

53 A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1961)

54 A. Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2019), 54.

55 The two conditional obligations under which Ethiopia was admitted into the League of Nations were the abolition of slavery and the regulation of its arms trade. That the charge of slavery became the means through which black sovereignty was undermined is, of course, deeply perverse given Europe's role in the transatlantic slave trade and the practices of forced labour that characterised colonial presence in Africa throughout the twentieth century. Moreover, by invoking Ethiopia's backwardness and unfitness to be part of the League, Italy stripped the country of the protections afforded by its membership of the international community.

56 C. L. R. James, "Is This Worth a War? The League's Scheme to Rob Abyssinia of its Independence", *The New Leader* (October 4, 1935), https://www.marxists.org/archive/james-clr/works/1935/new-leader.htm.

57 While my research has focused mostly on Pan-African formations and Black Atlantic networks, it is important to remember the crucial role of broader political formations such as the Bandung Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement, organised under the more expansive rubrics of Afro-Asian solidarity and the Third World. It was at the Bandung Conference that self-determination was conceived as a collective right of "peoples and nations" and a necessary condition for individual human rights. It is thus perversely ironic that Indonesia, where the conference took place, continues to deny West Papuans their right to self-determination.

58 Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*, 73.

59 Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*, 78.

60 Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*, 74.

61 From the standpoint of today, the anti-colonial nationalists' ambitions of post-imperial worldmaking remain largely unfulfilled. The incomplete decolonisation that culminated in a world of unequal nation-states, the entrenchment of nationalist politics to the detriment of

regional or international alliances, and the opportunism of local elites are all contributing factors to such a failure. In a perverse circular logic, these failures, largely due to international economic and political relations, have been construed as matters of internal capacity, justifying the return in the UN of such hierarchical categories as "failed" and "rogue" state to justify unequal standing, military intervention and reintroduction of trusteeship—Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*, 189.

62 Trouillot is specifically referring here to the turning of the Haitian Revolution into a non-event.

M. R. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1995), 99.

63 Gopal has termed this process a form of "reverse tutelage", by which metropolitan dissidents learned from their anti-colonial interlocutors.

64 P. Gopal, in conversation with Verso on Insurgent Empire (2020), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKccB6rOadg&ab_channel=VersoBooks.

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