

CLASSICAL PRESENCE

The texts, ideas, images, and material culture of ancient Greece and Rome have always been crucial to attempts to appropriate the past in order to authenticate the present. They underlie the mapping of change and the assertion and challenging of values and identities, old and new. *Classical Presences* brings the latest scholarship to bear on the contexts, theory, and practice of such use, and abuse, of the classical past.

African Athena

New Agendas

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'Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto God'

Garveyism, Rastafari, and Antiquity

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Out of cold old Europe these white men came,
From caves, dens and holes, without any fame,
Eating their dead's flesh and sucking their blood,
Relics of the Mediterranean flood;
Literature, science and art they stole,
After Africa had measured each pole,
Asia taught them what great learning was,
Now they frown upon what the Coolie does.

If in the land we happen to tarry,
Most of us then become sad and sorry,
For a white man's country they say it is,
And with shot, gas and shell, they prove it his:
What can we do who love the Gracious Lord,
But fight, pray, watch and wait His Holy word:
His second coming we know to be true,
Then, He will greet the white man with his due.

(Garvey 1978: 5-16)

Marcus Garvey was not a particularly gifted poet, but he was a master pamphleteer, orator, and organizer. In the aftermath of the First World War, his Universal Negro Improvement Association accomplished what no other political organization or individual had by galvanizing the African American population along a mass line

(Cronon 1969: 37; Redkey 1974: 395). Although strongest in the USA, the UNIA nevertheless held offices in forty countries on four continents serving approximately one million members with up to three times as many active participants (Vincent 1971: 13; James 1999: 136). To these masses Garvey offered a subversive timeline of human civilization that would support and legitimate their self-determination in a racist colonial world. Garvey proselytized that the classical European world had entered late into an existing complex of African and Asian civilizations, and its junior status and indebtedness to older Afroasiatic civilizations had to be whitewashed from historical memory in order to justify European slaving, colonialism, and imperialism. In the late 1980s, Bernal's *Black Athena* attempted to recover a multicultural ownership of antiquity from a mono-cultural Aryan Model developed in academia. In the early twentieth century, Garvey's Pan-Africanism sought to blacken antiquity in the service of an immense and unparalleled global social movement. The later project suggests that there have always been multiple strategies, contexts, audiences, and politics involved in decolonizing antiquity.

Barbara Goff (2005a) has drawn attention to the intimate relationship of Classical Studies to European imperial rule by virtue of its centrality to the education of European elites. However, Goff also notes the possibility that subordinate groups and intellectuals might appropriate antiquity for their own purposes.¹ In this respect, we should note that such reclamations of antiquity in the black thought of the Americas pre-date and post-date Garvey's contribution. As other chapters in this volume show, they were being written in the nineteenth century at the same time as Bernal's Ancient Model of Afroasiatic civilization was being overthrown by European scholars (see, e.g., Delany 1991, originally published in 1879). In fact, with Garvey's integration into the Rastafari cosmology of 'Babylon versus Zion', and transmitted through much Reggae music, this tradition exercises an influence over the imaginary of antiquity's relation to the present far broader than that enjoyed by European Classical Studies. For these reasons alone, it is important to recover this complex and intricate tradition in black thought that, while evolving in different directions, remains influential in the contemporary world.

¹ Within Caribbean thought it is perhaps the oeuvre of C. L. R. James that confesses to the most torturous engagement with Greek antiquity and black freedom.

Yet there is another reason as to why the tradition in black thought of appropriating antiquity is important for revisiting Bernal's *Black Athena*. This lies in the intimate use of Christianity and the Bible as the touchstone for subversively connecting antiquity to the colonial present. It is important to remember that the Christian Bible was easily one of the most contentious pieces of literature to be disseminated, appropriated, and translated in the colonial world (see, e.g., Sugirtharajah 2001). The Providence of progress, narrated time and time again in the literatures of the European Enlightenment, was always a conveniently profane (and thus universalist) version of messianic Christianity. However, the processes that appeared so providential for elite European men were injurious in the extreme to others, particularly the enslaved Africans who worked the plantations of the New World. Among this African diaspora developed what has been termed a 'Black biblical hermeneutic' that made the slave, and not the slave-holder, the subject of the Bible, so that its narratives and prophecies could be considered a guide and promise for her or his redemption (see especially West 1982; Murrell and Williams 1998; Bogues 2003).

In this chapter I follow this hermeneutic as it guides the writings of Garvey and the Rastafari movement, especially that of a seminally influential Rasta (a member of Rastafari), Mortimo Planno. I explore how they reconfigure 'antiquity' as African (sometimes Afroasiatic) through the material and spiritual prominence they give to Ethiopia in contradistinction to putatively European powers, especially Greece and 'Rome'. I also show how Garveyism and Rastafari differ in the redemptive register of their black biblical hermeneutic. And I finish by suggesting that Garveyism and Rastafari, and the shift made by the later towards a cosmological understanding of antiquity, deserve serious and critical consideration in the ongoing project to decolonize the classical world.

GARVEY'S ETHIOPIA

Although many plantation systems kept Christianity from their slaves, sometimes proselytization was used as moral justification for enslaving the African heathens so that they might come to know the civilized God. Over time, and with the advent of the age of emancipation, slaves were impelled by their overseers to emulate, as best they could, the civilized

mores and values of God's (white) people for spiritual and social improvement (in general, see Davis 1966: pt II). However, New World slaves and ex-slaves (often tied to the same land through indentured servitude) also held to a counter-belief that half the biblical story had never been told to them by their white overseers—namely, that *they* were the authentic subjects whose redemption was prophesied in the holy book. In this respect, Psalm 68 held special resonance in its reference to Africa: 'Princes shall come out of Egypt. Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto God.' Abyssinia, after all, had remained an independent kingdom during the high age of European imperialism, and by the twentieth century had come to represent the Promised Land for diasporic Africans (see, e.g., James 1999).

The regional post-slavery division of labour in the Americas further facilitated this politicization of Ethiopianism, and especially among black Caribbean migrants. The demise of plantation agriculture coupled with poor land redistribution made peasant migration a regular feature in early twentieth-century Jamaica. Many Jamaicans sojourned in Panama, Costa Rica, the USA, and Cuba in pursuit of work, and, along the way, experienced a racist segregation unbuffered by the predominantly black institutions of rural Jamaican life. This was nowhere as evident as in the migrant worker settlements along the Panama Canal, which, under US trusteeship, were governed on the 'deep south' model (LaFeber 1978: 62–5). Before focusing his attentions on the northern cities of the United States, Garvey himself travelled widely through the pre-war Americas as well as in Europe. Back in Jamaica, Garvey founded the Universal Negro Improvement and Conservation Association and African Communities League in 1914; he left for the United States in 1916, and by 1920 had firmly established the UNIA as a mass organization of, especially, African Americans.

The period 1916–20 is, of course, significant in that it covers the end of the First World War and the setting-up of the League of Nations. Returning African American soldiers were often radicalized in the fight against discrimination in northern cities, which themselves had seen marked migration of African Americans from the South (Rosenberg 1999). Galvanized by this context, Garvey's UNIA peaked in August 1920 with its first International Convention in Harlem, which was purported to have attracted at least 25,000 participants (Redkey 1974: 395). The banners bore striking slogans for the time, such as 'We want an African Civilization', for, as Edmund David Cronon (1969: 62) puts it: 'While whites had their attention

fixed on Geneva, Switzerland, and the newly born League of Nations, the eyes of Negroes focused on Liberty Hall in New York City, where thousands of black delegates from each of the United States, the West Indies, Central and South America, and even Africa began to arrive for meetings.

Two years later, Garvey (1967: i. 31) himself criticized the efforts of post-war Europeans to resurrect their civilization through political and industrial conferences only: 'if we are to have a world peace it will only come when a great inter-racial conference is called.' It is no surprise, then, that, at the height of his popularity, Garvey's political philosophy centred upon the causes and consequences of the war and used the seeming collapse of European civilization to reclaim antiquity for the African.

But it is also no exaggeration to say that Garvey deeply imbibed the Social Darwinism so prevalent in European thought of the time. 'Power', he proclaimed, 'is the only argument that satisfies man' and the Negro had to acquire it in all areas (Garvey 1967: i. 19). But, unlike his contemporary Herbert Spencer, Garvey used Social Darwinism specifically to describe the collapse into and the possibility of escape out of the condition of slavery as experienced by the African diaspora. 'Take away industry from a race,' noted Garvey (1967: i. 7), 'take away political freedom from a race, and you have a group of slaves'. Quite simply, weakness invited a race of people to be reduced to slavery (Garvey 1967, i. 14). The importance of this statement lies in its effective endowing of the African diaspora with agency in its own affairs and therefore command over its fate, as opposed to the biological fatalism proffered by most political commentary in the United States at the time. 'That the Negro race became a race of slaves was not the fault of God Almighty, the Divine Master,' opined Garvey (1967: i. 29); 'it was the fault of the race. Sloth, neglect, indifference caused us to be slaves'. Furthermore, Garvey (1967: i. 14) utilized the history of antiquity to prove that slavery was not a condition confined to blacks: 'the great British nation was once a race of slaves. In their own country they were not respected because the Romans went there, brutalized and captured them, took them over to Rome and kept them in slavery' (see also 1967: ii. 8). The choice Garvey offered to the African diaspora was therefore a starkly developmentalist one: allow the white race to increase its mastery over the material world and experience race extinction, or arise to meet the challenge (Garvey 1967: i. 46).

Yet, despite caricatures of Garvey, his political philosophy was neither nihilist nor fascist. It had a moral centre that charged political action to accord to the example of Christ. To Garvey (1967: i. 17), Jesus was the 'greatest radical' and the 'greatest reformer' the world 'ever saw' (see also ii. 30). Human civilization could not last without a spiritual foundation (Garvey 1967: i. 25). And, in the light of the recent world war, Garvey (1967: i. 22) charged Western states with exercising power without morality: 'we profess to live in the atmosphere of Christianity, yet our acts are as barbarous as if we never knew Christ. He taught us to love, yet we hate; to forgive, yet we revenge; to be merciful, yet we condemn and punish.'

Such comments exemplify the use of a black biblical hermeneutic to undermine the sole claim of Europeans to represent the font of human civilization given their conduct towards each other during the world war (on which see Adas 2004). In fact, anticipating the theme of the future address by President Sukarno of Indonesia to the Asian-African Conference at Bandung in 1955, Garvey (1967: i. 25) went so far as to charge the non-white world, Negroes in particular, with saving human civilization by evolving 'a national ideal, based upon freedom, human liberty and true democracy'. Although the white race had enslaved and colonized others, Garvey proclaimed that the earth had been divinely apportioned so that Europe belonged to the white race, Asia to the brown, America to the red, and Africa to the black. All Africans, through this divine apportionment, were to be considered 'one common family stock' (Garvey 1967: i. 52). Although Garvey (1967: i. 34) affirmed that God had no colour, it was necessary and prudent for the African diaspora to 'worship him through the spectacles of Ethiopia'.

Legitimizing his Pan-Africanism through the will of the Almighty, Garvey used his Social Darwinian sentiments to raise the urgency of a return home for the diaspora: the assimilation of the races in the Americas would never happen as if it were among equals and the Negro would remain a minority surrounded by 'prejudiced races' (Garvey 1967: i. 39). To avoid this 'modified form' of slavery, and in order to recover human civilization from the barbarous hands of the white race, the Negro required true nationhood as 'the only means by which modern Civilization can completely protect itself' (Garvey 1967: i. 5). Only in Africa could the black race develop itself in all spheres to produce 'a bright star among the constellation of nations' (Garvey 1967: ii. 4-5).

And, indeed, Garvey structured the UNIA as the microcosm of this African nation (Martin 1976: 42): it boasted a paramilitary, civil service, passport and court system, its own service economy, a flag, the Red, Black and Green, a national anthem ('Ethiopia, thou Land of our Fathers'), and, most importantly, as the quintessence of national pride at the time, a marine presence, which Garvey sought to provide through the Black Star Line merchant navy (Vincent 1971: 166; Redkey 1974: 394; and, on this last point, see Stein 1994: 204–5). Africa was to be considered a spiritually mandated homeland for the diaspora, akin to Palestine for the Jews (on the influence upon and tensions between Garvey's Pan-Africanism and Jewish Zionism, see Hill 1998), a homeland represented in present reality by free, independent, and ancient Ethiopia, as voiced in the last verse of the UNIA's anthem:

O Jehovah, thou God of the ages
Grant unto our sons that lead
The wisdom Thou gave to Thy sages
When Israel was sore in need.
Thy voice thro' the dim past has spoken,
Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hand,
By Thee shall all fetters be broken,
And Heav'n bless our dear fatherland.
(Garvey 1967: ii. 141)

Garvey therefore brought his Pan-African political philosophy to bear upon the project of reuniting the African race in a free and independent continent, the living kernel of which was Ethiopia. And it is in this context that we should place Garvey's reclamation of the moral and material ownership of antiquity for the non-white (and especially African) races. Garvey effectively reversed the sequence of the civilizing mission's narrative:

honest students of history can recall the day when Egypt, Ethiopia and Timbuctoo towered in their civilizations, towered above Europe, towered above Asia. When Europe was inhabited by a race of cannibals, a race of savages, naked men, heathens and pagans, Africa was peopled with a race of cultured black men, who were masters in art, science and literature; men who were cultured and refined ... (Garvey 1967: i. 57)²

² The tendency for Garvey to marginalize the contribution of black women to this grand history and future will be clear by now. Women, however, did not marginalize themselves within the UNIA! See, e.g., Blair (1996).

and:

When the great white race of today had no civilisation of its own, when white men lived in caves and were counted as savages, this race of ours boasted a wonderful civilisation on the Banks of the Nile. (Garvey 1967: i. 17)

But Garvey (1967: ii. 82) also gave African civilization—genetically and culturally—an expansive influence:

Black men were so powerful in the earlier days ... they were able to impress their civilization, culture and racial characteristics and features upon the peoples of Asia and southern Europe. The dark Spaniards, Italian and Asiatics are the coloured offsprings of a powerful black African civilization and nationalism ... When we speak of 400,000,000 negroes we mean to include several of the millions of India who are direct offsprings of that ancient African stock that once invaded Asia.

Garvey even used this refiguring of the civilizational geography of antiquity as a guide to political allegiances in the present. Upon Mahatma Gandhi's arrest in 1922, Garvey (1985: 36) cabled King George V with a simple message: 'Four hundred million Negroes ask for the release of Mahatma Gandhi, the freedom of India and the complete liberation of the Negro colonies.'

Garvey (1967: ii. 18–19) remonstrated that antiquity had since been denied its African—and Afroasiatic—foundation for straightforwardly racist reasons, and he put the blame squarely on the shoulders of the Western Academy:

The custom of these anthropologists is whenever a black man, whether he be Moroccan, Algerian, Senegalese or what not, accomplishes anything of importance, he is no longer a Negro ... Professor George A. Kersnor, head of the Harvard–Boston expedition to the Egyptian Soudan, returned to America early in 1923 and, after describing the genius of the Ethiopians and their high culture during the period of 750 BC to 350 AD in middle Africa, he declared the Ethiopians were not African Negroes.

Hence, 'Greece and Rome have robbed Egypt [and Ethiopia] of her arts and letters, and taken all the credit to themselves' (Garvey 1967: ii. 19).³

Garvey (1967: ii. 19) reminded his readers of the facts of power and that words by themselves were not enough to reclaim their standing

³ Garvey seems to imagine that Egypt and Ethiopia are filially related, as implied in some Biblical narratives.

in antiquity: 'the above statements of the professors support my contention at all times that the prejudice against us as Negroes is not because of colour, but because of our condition'. Reclaiming antiquity could be made meaningful only when the African diaspora arose to develop out of their present Western subordination:

Yesterday we had the Roman empire, we had the Grecian empire, we had even before the Carthaginian, the Assyrian and the Babylonian empires ... but even yesterday we also had the great German Empire; we had the Russian Empire; we had the Empire of Austria and Hungary ... Therefore, I say to the four hundred million Negroes of the world, prepare yourselves for the higher life, the life of liberty, industrially, educationally, socially and politically. (Garvey 1967: i. 18)

It is especially clear, here, just how much Garvey's reclamation of antiquity was embedded within a developmentalist narrative of the progress of human civilization. And it is therefore fair to say that Garvey accepted the legitimacy of the very measures, standards, and comparisons that had been deployed by racist powers to deny the Negro any contribution to human civilization. The Rastafari movement can be distinguished from Garveyism over precisely this issue.

PLANNO'S ETHIOPIA

Members of the Rastafari movement appeared during Garvey's era. Most of the founding figures had partaken in the same colonial division of labour that Garvey had surveyed: for example, Archibald Dunkley had been a seaman for the Atlantic Fruit Company, Leonard Howell had worked in Panama and the United States, and Joseph Hibbert had leased land in Costa Rica to grow bananas (Smith et al. 1960: 6; Lee 2003: 20–2). Rastafari as a movement also grew out of the protestations of the Jamaican peasantry, especially as encapsulated in the Revivalist movements led by Paul Bogle and Alexander Bedward (Chevannes 1998). Garvey, too, was in part influenced by this Revivalist movement. However, Rastafari not only included a critique of continuing forms of socio-economic unfreedom experienced by the Jamaican peasantry both before and after political emancipation, as had Garvey; Rastafari also brought forth out of the Revivalist tradition a critique of developmentalism *per se*, and one that was at odds

with Garvey's pragmatic embrace of the Social Darwinist narrative in international relations.

When the front page of the *Gleaner* on 11 November 1930 reported Haile Selassie's recent coronation as emperor of Ethiopia, Howell, Hibbert, and others proclaimed Selassie to be the Messiah and thus temporal ruler of the African diaspora rather than the colonial British king. Selassie's lineage was said to stretch back to the biblical union of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Moreover, his official title, 'His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, King of Kings of Ethiopia and Elect of God', resonated with the title of 'he who would open the seven seals and fulfill prophecy' in Revelations 5:5. In the black biblical hermeneutic, Selassie, known by his other name as Ras Tafari (Head Creator), appeared as Godlike or even God made black flesh on earth. Garvey, too, had initially greeted Selassie's coronation with enthusiasm and had even suggested that this event fulfilled the prophecy of Ethiopia stretching forth her hands unto God (Garvey 1930). Seven years later, however, Garvey (1937) charged Selassie with betraying the race by running to England for protection from the Italians. To those in Jamaica, like Howell, who attributed a divine essence to Selassie, Garvey was scathing; and there is reason to assume that Garvey judged this 'spiritualization' of Ethiopia as antithetical to his Social Darwinian programme of African development. Nevertheless, after his death, the Rastafari movement appropriated Garvey as their prophet of 'Black man redemption' (see Lewis 1998).⁴

Here it is important to note the shift in register by which Ethiopia was placed in antiquity—that is to say, from Garvey's political-economic developmentalism to the spiritual redemption foregrounded by Rasta. This shift should not be understood in categorical terms as a division between 'politics' and 'spirituality'—one simply cannot make such a distinction with regards to the black biblical hermeneutic tradition. But the movement from Garveyism to Rastafari does connote the embedding of antiquity primarily within a cosmological register rather than in a political, or political-economic one.

⁴ Male chauvinism is practised to a greater and lesser degree among Rasta, but it is an abiding challenge for the Rastafari movement. It is, though, Rasta women who have led the charge to affirm their legitimate standing as children of Zion. See, e.g., Tafari-Ama (1998).

To explore this shift I shall rely heavily upon the writing of Mortimo Planno, who was a leading figure in Rastafari, a gifted orator, effectively self-educated and incredibly well read, a close influence upon Bob Marley, and a crucial go-between among Rasta and government at a very dangerous time for the movement, when it was under sustained attack from authorities, especially the police (see Lewis 2003). Planno is also effectively responsible for bringing Rastafari to the interest of the academic world when he approached the University of West Indies to write a report on the movement in an attempt to tackle popular prejudice (Smith et al. 1960). He was also instrumental in effecting the following mission to Africa in 1961, sponsored by the Jamaican government that explored the practicalities of repatriating Rasta to Africa (Alvaranga et al. 1961). In 1969, Planno wrote a treatise on Rastafari for the anthropologist, Lambros Comitas, and it is this text that I now focus upon.

It is first necessary to contextualize Planno's writings within the broader black biblical hermeneutic tradition that I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. Planno situates Rastafari at the heart of the contested intersection of slavery and the Bible. Invoking, in a sense, genetic memory, he notes: 'The Echoes of the Memories of Slavery resounded in the minds of the yet unborn' (Planno 1970: 1). Planno (1970: 2) then subtly takes back ownership of the Bible from European Christianity on behalf of slaves and the descendants of slaves, the African diaspora: 'I an I ancestor worship with the Bible, I an I also worship from the Bible but do not worship the Bible' (Rasta use the pronoun 'I an I' in order to assert the metaphysical presence of God in themselves, interpolating themselves as self-determining beings). In other words, Planno (1970: 84) provides them with moral authority among the community of humankind in the form of the love communicated by God and his Son. By identifying as Ethiopian, Planno (1970: 5-6) renders the African diaspora, not as objects of slavery but as their own agents sojourning in the Americas as good shepherds who 'volunteer[ed] to be cast into Babylon to fulfil this part of the Rastafarian Christian Discovery'.

Furthermore, Planno deploys an identification commonly made by Rasta with the true elect of the Bible, the Ethiopian (and thus black) Jews—known as the Falasha (Owens 1979: 41). Babylon, the biblical site of Jewish bondage under King Nebakanezer, becomes analogous to the colonial, slaveholding Western system; Holy Mount Zion, the land of redeemed souls, is mapped onto Ethiopia. Crucially, in Rastafari

cosmology, the connection and movement between Africa/Zion and the West/Babylon is not conceived of in straightforward developmentalist terms—that is, as an endogenous transformation of a savage or barbaric culture into a civilized one. Rather, the sense of time and movement in Rastafari is much more centred upon a spiritual forwarding of prophecy towards a moment of redemption. This means that both systems, Zion and Babylon, exist synchronically and are imbued with cultural values and social structures inherently at war with each other over the condition of mental and physical slavery.

Having briefly sketched out the Rastafari black biblical hermeneutic, it is instructive now to examine how Planno places his understanding of Ethiopia and antiquity within this hermeneutic, as well as the moral and political fate of human civilization that it proposes. Planno (1970: 2) speaks of Ethiopia both as the actual country and as a signifier of 'All for One, One for all... The only true interpretation for Africa for Africans'. Planno places this moral and spiritual significance of Ethiopia in the hearts of humankind firmly within antiquity via a biblical genealogy: 'The foundation of life flows from Ethiopia, and the mines of Gold are in Ethiopia. The Throne of David is in Ethiopia: And it is proven that the God Choose to dwell in Ethiopia' (Planno 1970: 16). Three thousand years of civilization make Haile Selassie the 225th head of the world's 'oldest independent state', a state that 'emerged when England and France were unconceived' (Planno 1970: 67). Thus, Ethiopia 'must be required to play her role in the resurgent [sic] of Africa which I an I venture to bring in truth to the world' (Planno 1970: 4).

To understand this role it is necessary to remember that the Rastafari sense of time is redemptive rather than developmentalist. Babylon is seen to have many incarnations that make the past live in the present. Hence, the Anglo-European Atlantic slave system is considered the same system that exists in the contemporary postcolonial West; this system is the same as Nebakanezer's biblical Babylon; which is the same as the Roman Empire in Christ's time and also manifested as the fascist dictatorship of Mussolini, who invaded Ethiopia with Britain's consent (see Planno 1970: 75-6; Owens 1979: 36-7).⁵ It is through this sensibility that Planno interprets the deeds and words of Selassie, giving great weight to his speech to the League of Nations in 1936 against the Italian invasion (which

⁵ Currently, the Papacy acts as the latest incarnation of Rome.

he revisited at the UN in 1963).⁶ Selassie's speech stressed the peaceful intentions of Ethiopia, reminded the audience of the barbarism that the Italian forces had visited upon thousands of Ethiopians through the liberal use of mustard gas, and launched an appeal to the League to uphold its promises in order to protect the equality and integrity of all peoples. 'In a word,' pleaded Selassie, 'it is international morality that is at stake... God and history will remember your judgment' (Selassie 1936).

For Planno (1970: 24), Selassie's concern was godly—namely, the 'collective security of the Black man and in truth for all Human'. Of course, this positive image of Selassie is an extremely contentious one and is perhaps the most debated point between Rasta and their sympathizers. While Rasta celebrate Selassie's internationalist statements and speeches, they do imagine him domestically, not as a despot who lived off the hard work of his own people but as an emperor who humbly worked side by side with his charges (Owens 1979: 101). Planno, then, sees Selassie's actions in the international arena as setting the scene for a peaceful, just, and equal world order, as articulated in the UN Declaration of Human Rights that followed the Second World War. Moreover, against this standard the colonial powers of Britain and France are revealed as hypocritical and in decline (Planno 1970: 26–7). Whereas Garvey saw in these moments the denouement of Pan-Africanism's defeat, Planno (1970: 18) recognizes them as the fulfilment of prophecy, where Ethiopia stretches forth her hands unto God. Planno also believes this to be the fulfilment of the prophecy in Revelations 5:1, a core eschatological text for Christianity wherein the lion of the tribe of Judah, David's root, would open the book and loose the seven seals. Planno believes that this eschatological moment refers to education. Thus: 'Ethiopia is a Book, Haile Selassie I was the only one found worthy to open and expose the Truth of Ethiopia that Enlightened illiterate Millions. How many Government [sic] at the League of Nations in 1936 knew anything of Collective Security? Ethiopia Leads in Collective Security' (Planno 1970: 18–19).

The promise of human civilization, represented by the Christian message of peace and love, had for so long been appropriated by

⁶ The latter was made popular when Bob Marley put to music in the song 'War' a section of the speech that Selassie had previously delivered to the first conference of the Organization of African Unity in Addis Ababa.

Europeans and twisted for the purposes of Babylonian enslavement and exploitation. But now, Ethiopia, that godly power of antiquity, redeems humanity. The African sojourner is the world's 'most stranger man' because he understands this biblical message and recognizes its instantiation on earth, even when he is downtrodden in the heart of Babylon. It is time, then, to return home to Africa, wherein lies the holy mount Zion:

Am I the lost child of your womb Black Mother
The abortive fetus of a false love
being drowned in the depths of obscurity
Am I a fading page in the dead eye of history
Is anonymous now my name.
But once I had a true name Black Mother
A name like the might spirit of Chaka
A name like the spirit of Herereo, of Namaqua
Of Zululand, of Matabelle

Hold my hand I need to stand on my feet
I need to rise
I need to accuse the world Black Mother hold.
(Planno 1970)

CONCLUSION

Garvey as a persona resonated throughout the history of the twentieth century, mostly in the multiple and manifold thought of Africa and its diaspora, but beyond that constituency too.⁷ However, the UNIA, although it is still in existence, is a shade of its former self. Rastafari has fared much better, and it is no exaggeration to say that, out of the two, and through the medium of Reggae music, it is the Rastafari movement that has made the deeper mark within the various constellations of global culture. In terms of the movement itself, there is no denying that Rastafari has been in part appropriated by the Babylon system, either as an aesthetic symbol of cultural tourism or as a commodity of world music. Nevertheless, there is also no denying the fact that the black biblical hermeneutic and cosmological register of

⁷ For the positive reception of Garveyism amongst Aboriginal Australians, see Maynard (2007).

Rastafari—redemptive rather than developmentalist—has been enthusiastically received by many diverse peoples around the world who experience an unethical, unredeemable, and still colonial present.

This reception pre-empted a challenge. Bernal's own critique comes late in the day, following at least a century and a half of a black biblical hermeneutic tradition that has sought to decolonize antiquity for the purpose of pursuing self-determination and justice in the present. It is very easy to write this tradition off as Afrocentric and suffering from mysticism and essentialism, qualities chided by mainstream and more so, left-field intellectuals. I have no wish to give ground to cultural-nationalist projects that do not place social justice at the centre of their world views. Yet critiques of essentialism can presuppose a subject that has already been *allowed* to possess a legitimate root, an origin. Because of their hermeneutic practices, choice of archives, and target audience, thinkers in the black biblical hermeneutic tradition have rarely been considered worthy of serious academic enquiry, even though they come to constitute one of the most globally influential subversions of Europe's claim to antiquity and, consequently, the vanguard of human civilization. The causes and consequences of this exclusion constitute another front that must be opened up in the struggle over antiquity and its place in—and meaning for—a decolonized present.

Bernal's critique of the Aryan Model is political because it seeks to pluralize and entwine the filial bonds that connected antiquity to Europe to human civilization. Effectively, Bernal wants to make antiquity impure, a zone of encounters and transmissions. It is an important and heartfelt gesture, but it presumes a certain security on behalf of the author in terms of further opening up a domain to which one already has access. From Garvey's and Planno's perspective, this gesture is inadequate, because there exists an urgent need to claim integrity as a social and spiritual being in a system that subverts, precisely, one's existence as an integral being. The ancestry of the black diaspora is segregated from the stock of civilized and civilizing humanity by virtue of racial markers and mutilations. Therefore, a positive rather than diffusive claim must be made: the ancestral integrity of peoples of the black diaspora must hold, discretely, within the fold of antiquity. In Garvey, this claim is made, sustained, and mobilized into political action by reference to a developmentalist narrative that connects antiquity to the colonial and racist present; in Planno, and in Rastafari at large, this claim is made by reference to

redemption. The later claim, I would suggest, disrupts the ideology of a whitewashed antiquity far deeper than both Garvey's and Bernal's theses. Of course, Classics as a discipline need not interrogate the black biblical hermeneutic tradition at all. But political projects that seek to decolonize antiquity should.