

## Theorising (with) Amy Ashwood Garvey

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Amy Ashwood Garvey moved hundreds of thousands of people with her ideas and influence. She was an original co-conspirator, with her husband Marcus Garvey, in one of the largest and most remarkable social movements of the twentieth century: the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA). She travelled the globe, creating and sustaining networks of activists, thinkers and politicians that reached through West Africa, the Caribbean, North America and Europe. Her relentless initiatives spanned the worlds of entertainment, commerce, politics, social care, domestic economy, and publishing. She fraternised with the high and the low, the famous and the infamous.

An expansive Pan-Africanism framed Amy Ashwood's contribution to Black liberation. Moreover, that a women's contribution could and should be made to the intellectual landscape of Black liberation was one of her core beliefs. At just seventeen years of age, Amy Ashwood publicly debated in Kingston, Jamaica, on the question: "is the intellect of woman as highly developed as that of man's?"<sup>2</sup> In her late 40s, towards the end of World War Two, she sought to publish an international women's magazine "to bring together the women, especially those of the darker races, so that they may work for the betterment of all".<sup>3</sup> And in 1953, during the early years of the Cold War, Amy Ashwood gave a speech in Trinidad entitled "Women as Leaders of World Thought". The speech challenged the women

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<sup>1</sup> My thanks to Empress Ijahnya Christian for a critical eye, and to Colin Prescod for confirming my approach to Amy Ashwood Garvey. Colin is a long-standing member of the Institute of Race Relations. Upon arrival to London in the late 1950s, the first person who he met in London apart from his mother was Amy Ashwood.

<sup>2</sup> Tony Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey: Pan-Africanist, Feminist, and Mrs. Marcus Garvey No. 1 or a Tale of Two Amies* (Dover, MA: Majority Press, 2007), 24.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in Hakim Adi, 'Amy Ashwood Garvey and the Nigerian Progress Union', in *Gendering the African Diaspora: Women, Culture, and Historical Change in the Caribbean and Nigerian Hinterland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 212.

of the West Indies to raise their political consciousness so that they might “join the great women of the world in writing [their] own history across the pages of world history”.<sup>4</sup>

Amy Ashwood considered herself to be one of those thought-leaders. Throughout her life she regularly updated her biography of Marcus and the UNIA. In the course of her many travels she collated (often through “native informants”) information on the position of women in West African societies.<sup>5</sup> With this comparative data she planned to publish books with titles such as *Liberia, Land of Promise* as well as a multi-volume series entitled *Mother Africa*, which acknowledged women – especially those of poor rural areas - as “true repositories” of African histories.<sup>6</sup>

But Amy Ashwood’s grand publishing designs never materialized. Perhaps the closest she reached to publication success was the preview of her Liberia book written by her friend Sylvia Pankhurst, the famous suffragette, socialist and Ethiopianist.<sup>7</sup> Otherwise, the book manuscripts are missing presumed lost; at best, the archives possess only sets of un-edited notes. Few – if any - of her powerful speeches were recorded in detail. What remains in print of her philosophy and opinions are mostly titles, outlines, as well as personal and autobiographical notes. Compound this archaeological paucity with the fact that in life and in death her political and intellectual contributions were refracted through a polyamorous lifestyle, obsession with an ex-husband, at times inventiveness (and re-inventiveness) with the truth, indebtedness, and the unsustainability of a host of projects; her funeral in 1969 was attended by just 12 people.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> cited in Rhoda Reddock, ‘Feminism, Nationalism, and the Early Women’s Movement in the English-Speaking Caribbean (with Special Reference to Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago)’, in *Caribbean Women Writers: Essays From the First International Conference*, ed. Selwyn Cudjoe (Wellesley, MA: Calaloux Publications, 1990), 77.

<sup>5</sup> Tony Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey*, 225.

<sup>6</sup> Martin, 227.

<sup>7</sup> Martin, 241.

<sup>8</sup> Martin, 314.

What does it mean to produce international thought? Who is a theorist, and in what location and register does their thought become recognizable as such? These questions are entertained regularly enough in International Relations (IR), at least by its feminist and postcolonial theorists.<sup>9</sup> We should, by now, be acquainted with a series of methodological segregations and excisions by which international political thought is rendered as a provincial canon of mostly elite white, European, (dead), men.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, to frame the boundaries of what is recognizably international political thought is too often to make vicarious elite white European men out of non-elite non-white non-European non-men. The distorting nature of such an enterprise should be clear enough.

Amy Ashwood presents a further challenge. How might we reconstruct international thought from only fragments of archives, most of which are not written in a theoretical register recognizable to academics? One might argue that not all political actors should or need be treated as theorists. Still, it is impossible not to discern the contours of Amy Ashwood's intellect upon 20<sup>th</sup> century global politics, especially through her Pan-Africanist circuits. Is it satisfying, then, for this intellect to be lost in the crack between politics and theory, movements and texts? Such challenges are considered by the editors of this volume as they caution against straightforward recoveries of forgotten women, especially when such recoveries reproduce the exclusions and hierarchies congenital to canons of IR theory.

Brittney Cooper argues that the theories of women such as Amy Ashwood need to be retrieved from unexpected places, i.e. autobiographies, medical records etc.<sup>11</sup> This

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<sup>9</sup> For example Christine Sylvester, 'Editor's Interview', *Journal of Narrative Politics* 2, no. 2 (2016): 91–97; Arlene Beth Tickner and David L Blaney, *Claiming the International* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> For example Robert Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); Errol A. Henderson, 'The Revolution Will Not Be Theorised: Du Bois, Locke, and the Howard School's Challenge to White Supremacist IR Theory', *Millennium* 45, no. 3 (1 June 2017): 492–510.

<sup>11</sup> Brittney Cooper, *Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 12.

consideration brings to the fore the salience of “living knowledge traditions”.<sup>12</sup> I have mobilized this phrase to argue that theory does not appear only or even mainly in the form of a recognizable text and its author. “Theory” gives too much to written composition; and while theorists might balk at the prospective collapse of their professional wall against, say, ethnography, I must insist that theorising is more consequential than writing theory, and that living knowledge traditions exceed text. In the context of this chapter, and given Cooper’s instruction, I seek these living traditions in the praxis of “race women” – those who in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century publicly stood for the uplift of Black peoples.<sup>13</sup>

Theorising with Amy Ashwood is a journey not only in sketching the contours of an unpublished contribution to international thought. It is also a journey through lives lived that could never quite be categorised through academic canons due to the fine-grain of relations that wove them into lattices of being and action. Therefore, by theorising (with) Amy Ashwood, I seek to present her contribution to international thought as a sophisticated critical praxis of Black liberation on a global scale. Specifically, I situate the living knowledge traditions through which she reflected and acted as part of the contested respectability politics that surrounded Black patriarchy. I argue that the distinctive nature of her praxis can be identified in her fractal rather than categorical disposition towards Pan-Africanism. That is, instead of cleaving to a pre-given unitary blackness, Amy Ashwood critically worked through a set of what we would nowadays call oppressive “intersections” of race, class, sex, gender and nation.

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<sup>12</sup> Robbie Shilliam, ‘Discovering Knowledge Traditions through Co-Creation: Learning from and with Communities’, *QMUL Public Engagement* (blog), 2016, <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/publicengagement/blog/2016/items/discovering-knowledge-traditions-through-co-creation-learning-from-and-with-communities.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*; Imaobong D. Umoren, *Race Women Internationalists: Activist-Intellectuals and Global Freedom Struggles* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).

I proceed in two parts. The first part of the chapter lays out the challenge of Black patriarchy at *fin de siècle* and the ways in which “race women” negotiated its paradoxical entanglement of dependency and liberation through respectability politics. This part gleans Amy Ashwood’s life as praxis, and thus as theory-inducing in particular ways. The second part shows how her pursuit of Black liberation was framed by a critique of respectability politics that gave a fractal disposition to her Pan-Africanism. A fractal disposition does not undertake struggle as something that aspires to create an existential break in affairs; rather, struggle is pursued in recursive terms. I will explain a little more about this disposition later, but for now, a fractal disposition of this kind would be typified by an ever expansive critique of power within power, and an ever expansive pursuit of liberation within liberation.<sup>14</sup> I finish by folding Amy Ashwood’s own intellectual trajectory into such a fractal critique of Black liberation and respectability politics.

In making this argument I have marshalled evidence from a number of secondary sources, and mainly from the empirical, conceptual and methodological contributions of Black women intellectuals. Tony Martin (now passed on) has written probably the most authoritative biography of Amy Ashwood,<sup>15</sup> and to be clear, I have used his work as my key archive. One of the foremost scholars on Garveyism, Martin’s effort is the result of decades of care and careful investigation, archival work and interviews. It is both erudite and judicious, and the narrative undoubtedly gives space for Amy Ashwood to grow as a person and as a political figure. Yet ultimately, as the subtitle of his book suggests (“Pan-Africanist, Feminist and Mrs Marcus Garvey No.1 or, a tale of two Amies”), Martin’s Amy Ashwood is a foil to Marcus’s grand project. Contra to this framing I have liberally but reasonably

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<sup>14</sup> I am influenced here by my engagements with Māori cosmology and self-determination struggles, and with Rastafari cosmology and Pan-African struggles. On African fractals see Ron Eglash, *African Fractals: Modern Computing and Indigenous Design* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005). For a political application see Horace Campbell, *Barack Obama and 21st Century Politics: A Revolutionary Moment in the USA* (London: Pluto Press, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> I was unable to source the one other major biography of Amy Ashwood published by Lionel Yard in 1990.

imputed a logic into Amy Ashwood's praxis that at the very least cannot be subsumed under her – or anyone else's - obsession with Marcus.

### **Amy Ashwood's Praxis**

The challenges that I have outlined in the introduction are entirely familiar to scholars who seek to recover the ideas and practices of women from their elision by the “great race man” narrative of Black liberation.<sup>16</sup> Of key importance in this recovery is a sensitivity towards being inside and outside a politicized community at the same time. For instance, Carole Boyce Davies uses the work of Audre Lorde to situate Caribbean women such as Amy Ashwood outside of the standard narration of Black radical and Pan-African intellectual traditions while at the same time having substantively worked very much inside of these traditions.<sup>17</sup>

In *fin de siècle* North America, this inside-outside problematique manifested in the work of “race women” who discharged their public duty of uplifting the people through the execution of their domestic responsibilities of child-rearing and husband-nurturing. Above all, the public activities of race women were not expected to detrimentally impact upon these responsibilities.<sup>18</sup> Yet while certainly patriarchal, Black expectations necessarily differed from those experienced by white middle-class women whose domesticity also implied a duty to breed the white race.<sup>19</sup> Ula Taylor usefully describes this difference in terms of the “community feminism” of race women such as Amy Jacques Garvey (Marcus's second wife).<sup>20</sup> The politics of community-focused feminism implied the nurturing of a “race” that,

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<sup>16</sup> Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*, 23–24.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Sisters Outside: Tracing the Caribbean/Black Radical Intellectual Tradition’, *Small Axe* 13, no. 1 (25 March 2009): 217–29.

<sup>18</sup> see Ula Y. Taylor, ‘Intellectual Pan-African Feminists – Amy Ashwood-Garvey and Amy Jacques-Garvey’, in *Time Longer than Rope: A Century of African American Activism, 1850-1950*, ed. Charles M Payne and Adam Green (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 180; Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*, 13.

<sup>19</sup> see Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*, 13.

<sup>20</sup> *The Veiled Garvey: The Life and Times of Amy Jacques Garvey* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

under white supremacy, should never have been nurtured. Hence, the inside-outside problematique contoured Black patriarchy in white supremacist societies by politicizing the presence and work of Black women in ways excessive to white patriarchy.<sup>21</sup>

Black women intellectuals variously used this oppressive/liberatory space of race-gender slippage to pursue distinct projects. This was not an unprecedented undertaking. The garnering of women's power by circuitous means already had a long history in the Black church.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, the UNIA was somewhat exceptional in that it channelled such power through a secular, public-facing, mass organization. Still, the association was from the very start organized through a gendered division of labour. Women's spaces within the UNIA often reproduced quite middle-class norms of female respectability, including traditional issue areas such as charitable work, and chasteness represented by the formal canonization of the Virgin Mary as a Black woman.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, maternal, inward-facing roles were reserved for the leadership of women as in the Black Cross Nurse auxiliaries; masculinist, outward-facing roles were reserved for the leadership of men, as in the paramilitary African Legions. Hence, the "dual-sex" principle of organization proposed an equality in difference, but one that was still hierarchically ordered in terms of governance and leadership.<sup>24</sup>

And yet Black patriarchy in white supremacist societies unintentionally produced openings that white patriarchy did not. So, by publicly attributing feminine qualities to Black women, the UNIA challenged their bestialization just as it challenged the feminization of

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<sup>21</sup> see e.g. Rhoda Reddock, 'The First Mrs Garvey: Pan-Africanism and Feminism in the Early 20th Century British Colonial Caribbean', *Feminist Africa* 19 (2014): 59–60.

<sup>22</sup> see e.g. Jualynne E. Dodson, 'Church Women's Legacy of Power: The Case of the U.S. African Methodist Episcopal Church', in *Religion, Culture and Spirituality in Africa and the African Diaspora*, ed. William Ackah, Jualynne E. Dodson, and R. Drew Smith (London: Routledge, 2017), 17–32.

<sup>23</sup> Barbara Bair, 'True Women, Real Men: Gender, Ideology and Social Roles in the Garvey Movement', in *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women's History*, ed. Dorothy O. Helly and Susan M. Reverby (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 159–60; Honor Ford-Smith, 'Women and the Garvey Movement in Jamaica', in *Garvey, His Work and Impact*, ed. Rupert Lewis and Patrick E Bryan (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1991), 75.

<sup>24</sup> Bair, 'True Women, Real Men', 155–57.

Black men. More, still: on occasion, the UNIA even projected an image of Black women equivalent to that of men. For instance, a female paramilitary unit existed – the Universal African Motor Corps - which complemented the African Legions.<sup>25</sup> Such an innovation introduced Black women into the public space as neither sub-female beasts nor as diminutive-(white)-females in training. In this respect, we could say, in contemporary academic parlance, that the UNIA's Black patriarchy "queered" white supremacism.

Above all, despite (or because of) its internal hierarchies, the dual-sex structure of the UNIA provided public leadership roles to Black women unparalleled to those positions offered to white women in white associations.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, as Honor Ford-Smith points out, UNIA women capitalized upon these openings in ways that further destabilized race-gender hierarchies by making a public image for themselves as intellectuals, activists and policy makers.<sup>27</sup> For example, Lillian Galloway ran the UNIA's printing press; while Henrietta Vinton Davis, a key Baltimorean associate of Frederick Douglass, became the UNIA's first official International Organizer.<sup>28</sup>

Amy Ashwood was, of course, an original and vital force in the self-making of UNIA women. Whether or not her claim to be co-founder of the association was overblown, she and her family were central in material and ideological ways to its beginnings. Amy Ashwood held associate and/or general secretary positions in the early years of the UNIA, and by 1919 she had become the director of the Black Star Line - Marcus's famous shipping venture.<sup>29</sup> Such was Amy Ashwood's prominence in the UNIA that secret agents for the US government described her as "a kind of managing boss".<sup>30</sup> It is also clear from the

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<sup>25</sup> Bair, 156; Tony Martin, 'Women in the Garvey Movement', in *Garvey, His Work and Impact*, ed. Rupert Lewis and Patrick E Bryan (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1991), 70.

<sup>26</sup> Reddock, 'The First Mrs Garvey', 65.

<sup>27</sup> 'Women and the Garvey Movement in Jamaica', 77–78.

<sup>28</sup> see Martin, 'Women in the Garvey Movement', 68–69.

<sup>29</sup> Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey*, 23, 41.

<sup>30</sup> Reddock, 'The First Mrs Garvey', 64.

documentary record that Amy Ashwood played a central role in the scoping out of the UNIA's constitution. Here lay perhaps her greatest influence in institutionalising the dual-sex structure through the requirement for each local division to elect a male and female president and vice president.<sup>31</sup>

In all these respects Amy Ashwood helped to politicize the public standing of Black women in both inward and outwardly facing ways, with all their accompanying paradoxes. She herself walked the walk in the arena of international politics. Her presence at key moments in the 20<sup>th</sup> century contestation by Black and African peoples over postcolonial (and postracial) futures must be understood as the outcome of her earlier politicization by – and politicizing of – the UNIA. A couple of examples will situate the argument within the flow of global history.

1945 saw Amy Ashwood in attendance at the epochal Pan-African Congress in Manchester, which marked the beginning of the post-war intellectual milieu of (Anglo) African decolonization. There, she addressed the predominantly male audience (comprising a number of future independence leaders) on the subject of the Black woman, “shunted”, as she put it, by commentators of the race “into the back-ground to be a child-bearer”.<sup>32</sup> Amy Ashwood was in large part responsible for the inclusion, in the final resolution of the Congress, five clauses that referenced women's concerns: equal pay for equal work, removals on bars to women's employment related for instance to their married status, legal provision for the registration of fathers, and the end of the “schoolgirl” system in domestic service.<sup>33</sup> This system, it should be noted, effectively placed young girls as unpaid wards of female

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<sup>31</sup> Taylor, ‘Intellectual Pan-African Feminists’, 183.

<sup>32</sup> cited in Marika Sherwood and Hakim Adi, ‘Amy Ashwood Garvey’, in *Pan-African History: Political Figures from Africa and the Diaspora Since 1787* (London: Routledge, 2003), 73.

<sup>33</sup> Reddock, ‘The First Mrs Garvey’, 70.

employers; Amy Ashwood characterised the practice as “quasi-slavery under a thin camouflage of philanthropic solicitude”.<sup>34</sup>

At the Manchester congress, Amy Ashwood also moderated sessions on Britain’s “colour problem”.<sup>35</sup> This concern remained with her during the post-war years, despite her periodic absences from the country. By the 1950s, the ostensibly “international” issues of colonialism and self-determination came to inflect (and still do) domestic politics in the form of “race relations”. As Kennetta Perry puts it, the racist murder in 1959 of a young Antiguan man called Kelso Cochrane “recalibrated the parameters of public debate”.<sup>36</sup> Against the predominating conceit that race relations simply referred to the assimilation of non-white Commonwealth subjects, Black organizers charged the state with failure to protect the rights of its citizens. In this development, Amy Ashwood took on a central organizing position through her Association for the Advancement of Coloured People and through her selection by the Mayor of Kensington (the London district in which Cochrane had been murdered) to represent Black residents on the issues.<sup>37</sup>

I have argued so far that, in pursuit of Black liberation in white supremacist societies, a negotiating/working through/besides/underneath Black patriarchy was crucial to the formation of Black women’s agency. I have also argued that the UNIA acted as an incubator for this agency, and that Amy Ashwood was both architect and exemplar of this agency and its (global) public effect. Yet I have also argued that the UNIA – as with most spaces of Black patriarchy - was fundamentally paradoxical for Black women to navigate in so far as race liberation entangled with patriarchal dependency. So, as they took to local, national,

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<sup>34</sup> cited in Marc Matera, *Black London: The Imperial Metropolis and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2015), 108.

<sup>35</sup> Kennetta Hammond Perry, *London Is the Place for Me: Black Britons, Citizenship, and the Politics of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 51.

<sup>36</sup> Perry, 128.

<sup>37</sup> Perry, 130; Sherwood and Adi, ‘Amy Ashwood Garvey’, 74.

imperial and global public stages, how did the likes of Amy Ashwood theorise Black liberation in, through and against such dependency?

Above all, the theorising of race women must be gleaned in the very act of cultivating the spaces for theorising and debating Black liberation. Imagine, for one moment, the difficulty in theorising as a Black intellectual in white intellectual locales wherein the meeting of Black minds is itself greeted with suspicion if not derision. Hence, for Black intellectuals in white supremacist societies, the cultivation of the space for theorising has always been at the same time the theorisation of power and resistance. This is the praxis of Black intellectual organization, one that is rarely documented or explicated in political theory texts. But furthermore, race women had to approach this underappreciated challenge fractally: the confrontation with power itself (race) was imbued with power confrontations (gender), and acts of resistance (against, e.g. white supremacy) were confronted with acts of resistance (against, e.g. Black patriarchy)<sup>38</sup>.

The necessarily fractal disposition of race women's praxis is all the more worthy of consideration when it came to the organizing of Black liberation. Consider, for instance, one of Amy Ashwood's many commercial enterprises: the Florence Mills Social Club, situated in London's West End. Mills was an African-American cabaret star who fatally contracted tuberculosis in London, and was known both as a proponent of Black rights and as the "queen of happiness". The naming by Amy Ashwood of her 1930s London club was no accident, but rather signalled a popular, diasporic Blackness – i.e. a Pan-Africanism – safely ensconced within a politically inflected entertainment space. Known for its good Caribbean and African food, the Club became a premier location for "race intellectuals from all parts of the world ... to gather" as the *Sunday Express* put it at the time.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> For thoughts on this as they pertain to the idea of the "kitchen table" see Jessica Marie Johnson, "Fury and Joy: Feminism at the Kitchen Table." *Women reVamped*, November 14, 2014.

<http://womenrevamped.org/2014/11/14/fury-and-joy-feminism-at-the-kitchen-table/>

<sup>39</sup> Cited in Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey*, 140.

In fact, CLR James, famous Trinidadian Marxist, claimed that it was in Florence Mills that the International African Friends of Abyssinian (IAFA) was gestated. In 1935, the Friends sought to catalyse public opinion over fascist Italy's belligerent and colonial designs on sovereign Ethiopia (both members of the League of Nations). The networks developed by the IAFA would eventually deliver the seminal 1945 Pan-African Congress in Manchester, to which Amy Ashwood herself made important contributions. The formation of the IAFA thus demonstrates how the sensate elements of food, music and dance at Florence Mills produced a Pan-African comradeship that could not have begun in the British Library. Contrary to androcentric and individualised accounts of theory production, theorising might also be, by necessity, a situated, communal pursuit, and in this regard Amy Ashwood was a luminary.<sup>40</sup>

To understand her acuity in this respect we need to acknowledge just how gifted a conversationalist Amy Ashwood was. Take, for instance, the opinion of CLR James, for whom Amy Ashwood was amongst four of the most "brilliant" conversationalists he had ever met, alongside the likes of Leon Trotsky.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, Amy Ashwood's conversational skills were fundamental to the cultivation of social networks that enabled her to raise funds and commitments for projects in almost every locale she frequented – whether that be in West Africa, Europe, the Caribbean or North America. Incidentally, despite her own itinerant lifestyle, the relationships that she developed were remarkably "sticky" and long-lasting.

These skills, though, did not only catalyse the thoughts and actions of elites and notables; remarkably, Amy Ashwood could turn them towards popular oratory. It is important to remember that, alongside other race women, Amy Ashwood was on a par with Marcus in persuading crowds in Harlem and elsewhere to commit financially and otherwise to the

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<sup>40</sup> An additional example might be Amy Ashwood's friendship with Claudia Jones, influential Trinidadian communist, a friendship that might have guided Jones towards deciding on the Notting Hill carnival as a response to racist murders. For these thoughts I am indebted to Colin Prescod. See also Marika Sherwood, Donald Hinds, and Colin Prescod, *Claudia Jones: A Life in Exile* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1999).

<sup>41</sup> Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey*, 144.

UNIA. Her success was in part to do with a mastery of rhetoric. But beyond that, she took a hermeneutical orientation towards her publics and the spaces within which they would meet and talk. That is, Amy Ashwood was concerned to discuss and agitate in ways that crossed the thresholds of various situated understandings of blackness. To understand the diasporic challenges of orienting thus, a brief excursus is required regarding the demographic and social contours of Harlem, the premier site of UNIA organizing in the late 1910s and early 20s.

Harlem was home to a significant migration of Black peoples not only from the South of the US but also from the Anglo-Caribbean. At this point in time, manual and unskilled labour circuits in the Caribbean and South America were vibrant and well-established.<sup>42</sup> Many migrants had already passed through other entrepôts of Caribbean immigration, especially Panama, including Marcus, Amy Ashwood's father, and Amy Ashwood herself prior to her first arrival in the United States. In Panamanian labour sites such as Colon, US interests had introduced Jim Crow segregation into the social and working regimes, thereby politicizing many sojourners to US-style racism before they even arrived in NYC.<sup>43</sup> Concomitantly, the "internal" migration to northern US cities was itself a reaction to – and further encouraged – a resurgence of Jim Crow legislation and practices.<sup>44</sup>

The meeting of different migrants – "internal" and "external" – could not but be intractably political. Neither could it occur without tensions. Caribbean peoples sometimes faced prejudice from African-Americans.<sup>45</sup> More acute than such prejudice, perhaps, were the class tensions within the Caribbean populations. In New York, white collar workers were

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<sup>42</sup> see especially Lara Putnam, 'Provincializing Harlem: The "Negro Metropolis" as Northern Frontier of a Connected Caribbean', *Modernism/Modernity* 20, no. 3 (13 November 2013): 469–84.

<sup>43</sup> Walter LaFeber, *The Panama Canal: The Crisis in Historical Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 62–65.

<sup>44</sup> John C. Walter, 'Black Immigrants and Political Radicalism in the Harlem Renaissance', *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 1, no. 2 (1977): 132.

<sup>45</sup> Robert Philipson, 'The Harlem Renaissance as Postcolonial Phenomenon', *African American Review* 40, no. 1 (2006): 146.

regularly colour-bared from taking positions they were used to filling in the islands; while manual labour paid far better than in the islands. In this respect, the colonial class and respectability hierarchies of the Caribbean (often colour-coded) were somewhat turned upside down in Harlem, just as Caribbean positionalities were challenged by African-American positionalities, the latter of which were also marked by migration journeys. Therefore, any hermeneutics of race uplift utilized in Harlem had to be attuned not only to a dizzying diversity of familial trajectories and lived experiences but also to the fractal nature of Black struggle.

Ula Taylor has incisively explored the way in which the “street strollers” of Harlem theorised in sophisticated ways by negotiating such a varied and contentious landscape as they socialised with groups in various public locales.<sup>46</sup> As Amy Ashwood moved from corner to corner she would have to quickly and pragmatically interpret the crowd composition, as well as the dynamic and tenor of the conversation. Furthermore, she would have to calculate her interventions in a way that seamlessly wove in the local conventions and traditions to her (multivalent) Caribbean voice so that she could cross thresholds of blackness. For this purpose, Amy Ashwood would sometimes use poetry to take advantage of what Taylor characterises as a particular “hear-me-talking-to-you mode of discourse”.<sup>47</sup> Tellingly, she was fond of using Paul Laurence Dunbar, the first African-American poet to gain national (and international) prestige, and who was unafraid to use a Black dialect in his work.<sup>48</sup> Amy Ashwood often recited from Dunbar’s “We Wear the Mask”, a poem that engaged themes resonant with WEB Dubois’s “veil” or “double consciousness”.

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<sup>46</sup> Ula Taylor, ‘Street Strollers: Grounding the Theory of Black Women Intellectuals’, *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* 30, no. 2 (2006): 153–71; see also the notion of ‘street scholar’ presented by Keisha Blain in *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

<sup>47</sup> ‘Women in the Documents: Thoughts on Uncovering the Personal, Political, and Professional’, *Journal of Women’s History* 20, no. 1 (2008): 191.

<sup>48</sup> Taylor, ‘Street Strollers’; Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey*, 124.

Let me now summarise the argument of this part of the chapter. To appreciate Amy Ashwood's mode of theorising, Black patriarchy must be apprehended not as a carbon copy of white supremacist patriarchy but as a paradoxical enabler of Black women's critique. The cultivation of the space for such critique through/despite/besides/underneath Black patriarchy, was at the same time the theorisation of power and resistance, a theorisation that proceeded through communal, colloquial and practical registers and activities. The kind of praxis emerging from this theorisation had to respond to the social and political constellations over diasporic blackness that were fractal in terms of the recursive nature of their struggles over class, gender, geography and nationality.

While Amy Ashwood was perfectly capable of sketching out grand abstract designs, her praxis was cultivated by working through these fractals, experienced in multiple locales and across multiple classes of peoples. However, the strongest directions were undoubtedly cast through Amy Ashwood's inter-linked pursuit of women's respectability and liberation. As I shall now demonstrate, it is through her paradoxical pursuit of both respectability and liberation that we might glean the fractal contours of Amy Ashwood's Pan-Africanism.

### **A Fractal Pan-Africanism**

The respectability politics of Black patriarchy primarily sought to protect Black women's bodies against their bestialization by the sexual economies of white supremacism.<sup>49</sup> Such respectability, as announced by Marcus Garvey, presented Black women as the defenders of chasteness and of the household's moral-sphere. Marcus himself frowned upon both illegitimate children and female-headed households.<sup>50</sup> One of the clauses in the UNIA's 1914

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<sup>49</sup> Cooper, *Beyond Respectability*, 15.

<sup>50</sup> Ford-Smith, 'Women and the Garvey Movement in Jamaica', 76.

aims and objectives even promised to “rescue the fallen women of the island from the pit of infamy and vice”.<sup>51</sup>

In her teenage years, Amy Ashwood seems to have strongly ascribed to such a respectable female model.<sup>52</sup> She first met Marcus at a Church Hall literary debate wherein she had proposed the motion that “morality does not increase with civilization”.<sup>53</sup> Less a radical Pan-Africanist organization, the early UNIA appeared more like a literary and debating society, the archetypal organization for women’s respectability politics.<sup>54</sup> One year into the organizations life, and Amy Ashwood was lecturing Jamaican women on the importance of providing a positive influence in the household so that Jamaican men might do “good and noble things”.<sup>55</sup>

Still, Amy Ashwood’s very association with Marcus strained the respectability politics that were expected of her. For example, who was dependent upon whom? Her own mother considered Marcus to be a lower-class suitor who suffered from “flights of fancy” that were nonetheless bankrolled by credit provided by Amy Ashwood’s father.<sup>56</sup> More importantly, as Rhoda Reddock puts it, in Amy Ashwood’s relationship with Marcus, “personal and racial liberation mingled.”<sup>57</sup> Above all, the Black liberation offered to Amy Ashwood via her working in and for the UNIA was somewhat confounded by her required deference to Marcus. She was famously feminist in her retrospective on this qualified independence:

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<sup>51</sup> Martin, ‘Women in the Garvey Movement’, 71.

<sup>52</sup> Taylor, ‘Intellectual Pan-African Feminists’, 183.

<sup>53</sup> Amy Ashwood Garvey, ‘The Birth of the Universal Negro Improvement Association’, in *The Pan-African Connection: From Slavery to Garvey and Beyond*, by Tony Martin (Dover, MA: Majority Press, 1983), 220.

<sup>54</sup> Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey*, 24.

<sup>55</sup> Cited in Martin, 325.

<sup>56</sup> Sherwood and Adi, ‘Amy Ashwood Garvey’, 69; Garvey, ‘The Birth of the Universal Negro Improvement Association’, 223.

<sup>57</sup> ‘The First Mrs Garvey’, 64.

Marcus Garvey stood before me and said in a very earnest voice, ‘Amy Ashwood, I appoint you secretary of the Universal Negro Improvement Association’. I replied with an equal earnestness, ‘and Marcus Garvey, I appoint you president’.<sup>58</sup>

Their split, as Amy Ashwood put it later, enabled her to “work in a more intimate fashion in order to help the Afro-American women to find themselves and rise in life”.<sup>59</sup>

The tensions between respectability politics and Black liberation were, in good part, responsible for the couple’s extremely short marriage. Marcus cited adultery with multiple partners and unseemly public behaviour such as drinking alcohol.<sup>60</sup> For her part, Amy Ashwood never accepted the divorce yet at the same time publicly belittled Marcus’s bedroom skills and his increasingly shoddy physical appearance.<sup>61</sup> The first musical comedy that she produced in New York, entitled “Hey, Hey!”, parodied Marcus’s Pan-Africanism through a subversion of his own respectability politics: two men, thrown out of their homes by their wives, seek new wives on the African continent, only to find their continental spouses to be their old wives who had followed them in order to expose their infelicitous conduct.<sup>62</sup>

In Amy Ashwood’s (sometimes vitriolic) public admonitions and artistic output can be identified a striking critique of Black patriarchy’s respectability politics and its constraining of the liberation promised to Black women. At the least, Amy Ashwood’s very public – and self-publicized – falling out with Marcus raised the issue as to when Black patriarchy’s protective ethos undercut Black women’s self-liberation from white supremacy, including its gender conformity codes. The systematic way in which she pursued this critique in relation to Pan-Africanism is suggested, for instance, by her abiding interest in polygamy on the continent. While Amy Ashwood was cautious to embrace such practices, she

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<sup>58</sup> Garvey, ‘The Birth of the Universal Negro Improvement Association’, 226.

<sup>59</sup> Cited in Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey*, 74.

<sup>60</sup> Ford-Smith, ‘Women and the Garvey Movement in Jamaica’, 77.

<sup>61</sup> Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey*, 36.

<sup>62</sup> Martin, 100.

nonetheless argued that they should be understood in their own historical and cosmological contexts rather than through the white supremacist morality of the Western church.<sup>63</sup>

Above all, Amy Ashwood's was a very personalised critique of respectability politics, especially considering the fact that debates in the UNIA over respectability often implicated her own conduct. I want to suggest that this intimacy super-charged her confrontation with and working through the diverse relationalities via which Black liberation had to be recursively pursued in Harlem (and elsewhere). Indeed, in Amy Ashwood's fractal disposition can be identified what we would now call the oppressive "intersections" of race, colour, sex, class and nationality, which rendered blackness and informed her street-strolling praxis.

In this respect, it is especially useful to dwell upon Amy Ashwood's careful engagement with "miscegeny" in distinction to Marcus's promotion of race purity. In marking this difference, I do not wish to reduce the politics of the Black Moses to a caricature. Marcus was no eugenicist of the Fabian or fascist ilk: he was concerned primarily with the iniquitous and violent power relations that had historically structured miscegeny in the Caribbean. It should be noted that colour hierarchies were perhaps far more finely etched into the majority-Black Caribbean from whence Marcus came than in the minority-Black North American continent where he politically "arrived" and in which "one [Black] drop [of blood]" rules of race-identification usually held sway. Still, Marcus viewed "race mixing" as a political dead-end for Pan-Africanism and dismissed it as such.

Alternatively, Amy Ashwood seemed to find the psychological and social mechanisms and consequences of "mixing" worthy of careful study and intervention rather than a-priori moral dismissal. The complicities of race, colour, sex, class and nation would no doubt have been apprehended by Amy Ashwood before her move to Harlem but were most

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<sup>63</sup> Martin, 90.

certainly appreciated even more there, especially considering her own public battles. Her artistic output that followed “Hey, Hey!” placed such issues to the fore. “Brown Sugar”, for instance, followed the travails of a father who wished his brown-skinned daughter to marry an Indian prince instead of a lowly mechanic whom she loved.<sup>64</sup> During a European sojourn in the 1920s, Amy Ashwood wrote a novel, “The Jungle of Civilization” which, as she put it, provided a “psychology of mixed marriages”.<sup>65</sup> In Britain, during and after the second world war, she turned her attention to the children of Black American servicemen, which at the time constituted one of the main “race problems” in the heart of empire.<sup>66</sup>

As suggested by the plot of *Brown Sugar*, Amy Ashwood’s concerns for “mixing” also extended to interest in the politics of Black and non-white-but-non-Black relations. For instance, Amy Ashwood’s second Caribbean tour in 1953 saw her reach out to Black and non-Black women groups.<sup>67</sup> Her address, “Women as Leaders of World Thought”, was in fact given at the Indo-Trinidadian Himalaya Club.<sup>68</sup> During the same time period, she began to model her Afro People’s Centre in West London as a residency for women which might help engender a “multi-racial society” that included Black, Indian and white women. As part of this project, and as a partial confrontation with respectability politics, she partnered with sex-workers with an ambition to improve their lives.<sup>69</sup>

Integral to her growing disposition towards the fractal nature of Pan-Africanism and its recursive implication of economic, sexual, national and racial elements ran Amy Ashwood’s own personal re-commitment to her African roots. Her mother was a Haitian “mulatto”; her grand-mother on her father’s side went by the name Grannie Dabas. Family

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<sup>64</sup> Martin, 106.

<sup>65</sup> Martin, 89.

<sup>66</sup> see St. Clear Drake, ‘The “Colour Problem” in Britain: a Study in Social Definitions’, *The Sociological Review* 3, no. 2 (1 December 1955): 197–217.

<sup>67</sup> Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey*, 70.

<sup>68</sup> Reddock, ‘The First Mrs Garvey’, 71.

<sup>69</sup> Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey*, 257–59.

legend held that Dabas, meaning of “strong or iron will”, had been born on the continent - in a place called Juaben - and kidnapped across the Atlantic.<sup>70</sup> In her later years, Amy Ashwood met the Asantehene of Ashanti who eventually confirmed Grannie Dabas’s story. She subsequently took on the Ashanti name Yaa Boahimaa (also her grandmother’s name).<sup>71</sup> These auto-biographical notes suggest that Amy Ashwood’s Black consciousness was congenitally cultivated along with her consciousness of continental roots.<sup>72</sup> Put another way, the journey towards her own Ashanti heritage was at the same time a reclaiming by Amy Ashwood of her own independent Pan-African credentials. Not all roads to the continent – or Blackness – passed through Marcus’s paternalistic persona and standing.

In this sense, Amy Ashwood’s fractal disposition sought out routes of Pan-Africanism rather than a root of Blackness. Consider, for instance, the way in which she was quickly moved to take issue with Marcus’s presentation of the Pan-African mantra: “Africa for the Africans, at home and abroad”. The idea of a singular African kingdom, Amy Ashwood proposed, was a “geographical blunder”, with “too many tribes each differing from the other in customs that it is quite impossible to form them into a simple people”.<sup>73</sup> While her critique was certainly driven by acrimony over divorce proceedings, Amy Ashwood nonetheless had staked out an early position in one of the most defining Pan-Africanist debates of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: what to do with the continent’s colonial borders. And while her position might seem to defend such borders, it is clear from her own evolving ethnographic investigations and personal investments in a series of West African locales that Amy Ashwood was thinking primarily in terms of meaningful self-determination at the level of peoples and communities rather than “race” per se.

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<sup>70</sup> Martin, 16–18.

<sup>71</sup> Martin, 216–20.

<sup>72</sup> Garvey, ‘The Birth of the Universal Negro Improvement Association’, 223–24.

<sup>73</sup> Adi, ‘Amy Ashwood Garvey and the Nigerian Progress Union’, 2010, 203.

Amy Ashwood further argued, in a thinly veiled criticism of Marcus's organizational penchant for pomp and title, that continental Africans wanted "no Afro-Americans or West Indians as rulers over them", nor did they fancy "kings or dukes or earls created over here sent there to them".<sup>74</sup> This critique was perhaps even more salient to Pan-African diplomacy than the issue of colonial borders. As Edward Blyden, a 19<sup>th</sup> century Pan-Africanist forerunner to Marcus, had made clear with regards to Liberia's colonisation, Black peoples in North America were constantly been taught that their proximity to white society (even through slavery) had prepared them to rule over continental primitives.<sup>75</sup>

In my estimation, then, Amy Ashwood's street-strolling praxis, her critique of Black respectability, and her personal retrieval of Ashanti heritage all inter-twined in her movement towards independence from Marcus. This movement opened up – in many ways necessitated – a fractal disposition towards Pan-Africanism and an ever expansive engagement with the recursive struggles that rendered Blackness. For instance, in some national or social contexts, blackness might be articulated through class rather than race per se; in some political contexts the Diaspora might have to qualify its singular claims to Blackness; in some contexts, anti-Blackness might take on a pro-"brown" veneer, and in other contexts, Black women's freedoms might be usefully pursued in solidarity with non-white women of e.g. Asian heritage; in some contexts, the discriminations experienced by children of "miscegenation" revealed itself to be a central issue for Pan-Africanism; in some contexts, respectability oppressed rather than protected Black women and in this case the Pan-Africanist might even have to positively support sex-workers of many hues. Each case had lessons to bear for each other case.

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<sup>74</sup> Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey*, 88.

<sup>75</sup> see especially Edward Wilmot Blyden, *The Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans* (Cambridge: John Wilson and Son, 1882).

None of this is to diminish the fundamental and irreplaceable importance of Marcus as a well-spring of 20<sup>th</sup> century Pan-Africanism which cascaded over the continent. Still, as Marika Sherwood argues, “if ever there was a life of *lived* Pan-Africanism, it was that of Amy Ashwood Garvey”;<sup>76</sup> or, as Tony Martin perceptively suggests: she was far more a Pan-Africanist than a Black nationalist.<sup>77</sup> Above all, unlike Marcus, Amy Ashwood pursued Black liberation through a fractal disposition towards Pan-Africanism that had been cultivated as part of a critique of Black patriarchy and the politics of respectability.

However, elements within a fractal disposition are never disappeared or completed; they continue to be activated, albeit in different constellations where different political stakes are at play. And sure enough, despite her own living critique of it, Amy Ashwood never disavowed the tenets of respectability as they pertained to and structured the public – and global - presence of Black women. These tenets are especially pronounced by her consistent focus upon women’s social work and domestic labour.

The UNIA began as a traditional Caribbean social welfare organization and Amy Ashwood considered social work to be the most appropriate pursuit for the association’s race women.<sup>78</sup> Amy Ashwood herself started the Ladies Division, which subsequently developed into the Black Cross Nurses arm.<sup>79</sup> She never rescinded such a seemingly middle-class commitment to respectable women’s work. Her Afro-Woman’s centre in London was also organized along the lines of a voluntary welfare society;<sup>80</sup> and her African tour, begun in 1946, addressed the conditions facing the continent’s women in a register that was comfortably “respectable”, focusing especially on female education.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Sherwood and Adi, ‘Amy Ashwood Garvey’, 69 my emphasis.

<sup>77</sup> *Amy Ashwood Garvey*, 319.

<sup>78</sup> Martin, ‘Women in the Garvey Movement’, 68; Ford-Smith, ‘Women and the Garvey Movement in Jamaica’, 77.

<sup>79</sup> Reddock, ‘The First Mrs Garvey’, 62.

<sup>80</sup> Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey*, 256.

<sup>81</sup> see Martin, 222.

Concomitantly, Amy Ashwood considered domestic work to be a potential vehicle for poor Black women's mobility, despite its complicities with the white patriarchal division of labour. For instance, during much of the Second World War Amy Ashwood worked in Jamaica to help found and promote the J.A.G. Smith political party. While the party had a mandate to support the poor, Amy Ashwood also envisaged it advancing the interests of women through a programme of "domestic science training".<sup>82</sup> It is reasonable to presume that Amy Ashwood gleaned a positive potential in such training as by 1944 and 1945 she was connecting women's liberation through these means to Black and African self-determination. In fact, in the last years of the war, Amy Ashwood took on the immigration system of the United States, arguing that the scheme to recruit male Caribbean labour for farms and war industries was discriminatory towards the region's women. To rectify the situation, Amy Ashwood agitated for a domestic labour scheme.<sup>83</sup>

Thus, when it came to considering the proper kind of work that both middle class and working-class Black women should undertake for Black liberation, Amy Ashwood was doggedly accepting of the divisions of labour aspired to by respectability politics. She remained so even as the constellations of Black liberation shifted and as new generations of women pursued the cause in new circumstances with different political stakes at play. Crucially, in these new constellations, Amy Ashwood's acceptance of respectability politics was rendered oppressive, as demonstrated in an interview for the *Harlem News* in October 1968, one year before her passing.

During this, her final sojourn in the United States, Amy Ashwood capitalised upon the resurgence of Black power ideology, including a revived interest in her husband. Seeking to return herself to the centre of Black liberation struggle, Amy Ashwood read some of

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<sup>82</sup> Martin, 167.

<sup>83</sup> see Fitzroy Andre Baptiste, 'Amy Ashwood Garvey and Afro-West Indian Labor in the United States Emergency Farm and War Industries' Programs of World War II, 1943-1945', *Ìrìnkèrindò: A Journal of African Migration*, 2003.

Marcus's speeches for a charitable recording, and even undertook a lecture tour of California under the auspices of the Black Panthers.<sup>84</sup> Her interview for the Harlem News was entitled "The Black Women" and, in part, presented a defence of Black patriarchy. Amy Ashwood bemoaned the Black matriarchy that she claimed developed during slavery in so far as it had robbed Black males of their masculinity thus disarming them in terms of their duty to defend Black women. The newly assertive Black Power man, Amy Ashwood claimed, was "the kind of man the black woman would gladly love, honour and respect".<sup>85</sup> Under this arrangement, the Black woman would be able to retain her modesty and virtue and, through them, inspire the Black nation.

Black matriarchy was an extremely contestable and arguably damaging idea at the time. Just a few years earlier, sociologist Daniel Moynihan had written a report on the Negro Family while appointed to the US Department of Labour to guide policy making for President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. In the report, Moynihan contrasted the pathologies of Black family life – including the eclipsing of male presence by female agency – to the normality of patriarchal-nuclear white family life.<sup>86</sup> By this logic, the "Black matriarchy" thesis explained away the historically sedimented inequalities of white supremacism simply as cultural pathologies of the victims.

Amy Ashwood's commentary is even more uncomfortable in historical retrospect given the inauguration of the Black Women's Liberation Committee just a couple of months after her interview. The Committee was subsequently to promote "intersectional" analyses that challenged social movements to account for women's liberation as they pursued Black liberation. This, of course, was a position once pioneered by Amy Ashwood and others in the UNIA as they engaged with Black patriarchy through a fractal disposition. In any case,

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<sup>84</sup> Sherwood and Adi, 'Amy Ashwood Garvey', 75.

<sup>85</sup> Cited in Martin, *Amy Ashwood Garvey*, 301.

<sup>86</sup> United States. Department of Labor. Office of Policy Planning and Research, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, 1965.

intellectuals in the Committee took direct issue with the way in which the Black matriarchy thesis damaged the pursuit of Black liberation which, they claimed, required a confrontation with the capitalist system rather than a resurgent cultural patriarchy.<sup>87</sup> This put the Committee fundamentally at odds with Amy Ashwood's defence of respectability politics.

Still, I hesitate to consider Amy Ashwood's intellectual legacy obsolete. Recall that a fractal disposition must relate every struggle to the larger struggles that that struggle is part of, and the struggles within that struggle. Nothing is left behind, or finished. The movement of struggle is, rather, creatively recursive, and thus infinitely expansive. I want to also connect this argument to my position stated in the introduction to this chapter that the defence of Theory can attenuate theorising, and that living knowledge traditions always exceed text. Putting these two considerations together, I am loathe to simply jettison "respectability" from Black liberation struggle. Is liberation possible without respectability? For instance, there is a conversation to be had about the way in which some Black youth currently utilize "respect" as a more politically consequential term than "rights" (to the chagrin of some older activists). Put another way, is there a way to recast it as something other than solely an aspiration towards middle-class patriarchy?

I must admit, my concerns primarily arise out of my own relatively-provincial and amateurish "street-strolling" in Pan-African movements - Rastafari especially. There are many Black women whom I have known and learned from who doggedly pursue Pan-African liberation in practical, mundane, globe-trodding terms, yet who are as devastatingly radical in action as they are conservative in disposition. The editors of this volume caution over a subtle conflation of women intellectuals with "progressive" feminism. Perhaps respect remains a communal good to be radically wielded by those who face drastically constrained choices for

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<sup>87</sup> see for example Frances Beal, 'Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female', in *Black Women's Manifesto*, ed. The Third World Women's Alliance (New York, 1970), 19–34.

their and their (various) family's wellbeing at the same time as they pursue liberation "work on the self" even within these constraints.

## Conclusion

This chapter has struggled with the challenges of theorising (with) Black women who have contributed to Black liberation through a fractal Pan-Africanism. Before closing, though, I want to dispel one assumption that might be made from the pitch of this chapter. There is a tendency to engage with Black thought as not really theory, but rather, "lived experience", the "street", "anecdote", "feeling". Such exoticism abounds and leaves the white androcentrism of social and political thought intact. Yes, Black thought is all this... *and* it is written and read and enacted in logical analytical constructions by Black intellectuals.<sup>88</sup> It is not a case of either/or. The simple fact of the matter is that we possess hardly any of Amy Ashwood's writings; it is not that she categorically did not write - logically, analytically. That a record exists through which the contours of her international thought can be reasonably reassembled (albeit not without controversy) is testimony to the praxis of race women who left their mark not only on the dry, white pages that narrate world politics. I submit this chapter as a small accretion to Black women's liberation understood as a living knowledge tradition, a tradition that is excessive to the texts written about and for it.

Those of us who wish to curate a more capacious and less Euro/andro-centric archive of international thought have much to learn from and with Amy Ashwood. Her Pan-Africanism not only tutors us in the specific abiding tensions between liberation and respectability, but at the same time impresses upon us a non-categorical Blackness that is globally mobile and socially motile. To theorise global order with Amy Ashwood is also –

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<sup>88</sup> see especially William Henry, *What the DeeJay Said: A Critique from the Street!* (London: Nu-Beyond Ltd, 2006).

and necessarily - a lesson in praxis. It is to travel widely in body and soul; to converse in conditions not always of your own choosing; to rebel against what you used to free yourself with; yet to stick doggedly to a commitment towards the liberation of humanity; to be infuriatingly audacious in doing so; to fail – at least by certain standards; above all, to cultivate time and again the spaces that make such commitments a possibility, and to accept the challenge of those who might cultivate your work seemingly against you.

In this respect, I have learned from theorising with Amy Ashwood that, instead of curating the archive of international thought in an exclusionary and hierarchical fashion, we might do better working with a fractal disposition. This would compel us to consider how we might retrieve the praxis of the race women whom even Amy Ashwood's star eclipsed. I am thinking, for instance, of another UNIA race woman, Satira Earle, Lady President of the St Andrews division in Jamaica. I have come across her in the historical record a number of times, although usually only mentioned in piece-meal fashion.<sup>89</sup> A working class woman, and union organizer, Ms Earle on one occasion challenged the middle class leadership of the UNIA thus: "wake up men, if you are afraid to carry on, I will organize a committee of women and launch out against capitalists in this island and leave you drowsy men behind!"<sup>90</sup> The fractal disposition renders a straight line as a set of infinitely recursive relations. Similarly, we might think of working with living knowledge traditions instead of only discrete individuals as we try to recall and retrieve the fullness of women's international thought.

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<sup>89</sup> for an exception see Honor Ford-Smith, 'Unruly Virtues of the Spectacular: Performing Engendered Nationalisms in the UNIA in Jamaica', *Interventions* 6, no. 1 (1 April 2004): 18–44.

<sup>90</sup> Ford-Smith, 'Women and the Garvey Movement in Jamaica', 79.