

Decolonizing the Manifesto: Communism and the Slave Analogy

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Introduction

In this chapter I will engage with the Communist Manifesto through the sensibilities of what has been called the “Black Radical Tradition”. This tradition finds its source in the lived struggles of peoples of African heritage, especially those in the Diaspora, from slavery days until the present. Its intellectual provenance is the theorization and narration of racial order - especially, but not only, that of white supremacy. Those who work in the tradition differ in the personal and intellectual depth of their engagement with Marxism and Communism; however, on the whole, a sympathetic yet critical outlook defines this engagement.¹ In his seminal book, *Black Marxism*, Cedric Robinson explores the nature of this engagement - both theoretically and historically - and its necessarily critical appreciation of Marxism.² This chapter will adopt Robinson’s orientation in order to decolonize the Manifesto.

Most historical readings of the Manifesto focus on the political upheavals following the French Revolution, the growing economic consequences of industrialisation and the uprooting of extant agricultural systems in Europe and especially in France and Germany³. Other commentators - some from a postcolonial bent, some Marxist - have acknowledged the Eurocentric nature of the text, its unilinear narrative, and its inability to integrate the broader imperial and colonial context of the making of the world market.⁴ Kevin Anderson, following on from the pioneering work of Theodor Shanin, has explored how Marx’s investigations after the Manifesto seem to increasingly grapple with both non-European contexts and different temporalities of world development.⁵ Similarly, it is now established that Marx and Engels took great interest in the American Civil War and ultimately understood the conflict in terms of plantation slavery versus capitalist industrialization.⁶

My purpose in this chapter is to show that the engagement with plantation slavery exists in the Manifesto itself, yet as a recessive trait.⁷ The dominant narrative of the class struggle of the European proletariat is given life by making him (and it is him) an analogue of the enslaved African labourer of the American plantations. This analogical lexicon makes the racial oppression that is the rule of the world market a recessive narrative. The proletariat are animated through the slave analogy; however, precisely because this animation requires the proletariat to take on a universalising political force, the enslaved labourer must lose her/his presence in the flow of world

¹ See for example, Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*; Rabaka, *Africana Critical Theory*.

² *Black Marxism*.

³ See for example, Moss, “Marx and the Permanent Revolution in France”; Levin, “Deutschmarx”; Cunliffe, “Marx’s Politics”; Shilliam, “Marx’s Path to Capital: The International Dimension of an Intellectual Journey.”

⁴ See especially, Mitchell, “The Stage of Modernity”; Anderson, *Marx at the Margins*, 9–11.

⁵ *Marx at the Margins*; Shanin, *Late Marx and the Russian Road*.

⁶ “Symposium on Karl Marx and the US Civil War.”

⁷ I follow the Ashis Nandy inspired approach to critiquing the canons of classical political economy led by Blaney and Inayatullah, *Savage Economics: Wealth, Poverty, and the Temporal Walls of Capitalism*.

history. An insightful cognate argument has been made recently by James Edward Ford III regarding Marx's use of the "slave" in his *Capital* volumes.⁸ Rather than Marx, Engels is the key interlocutor of my discussion. And rather than *Capital*, the key texts that I will engage with are those by Engels leading up to and including the *Manifesto*.

I start by framing my argument through the Black Radical Tradition expressed eloquently by Cedric Robinson's sympathetic critique of Marxism. I clarify the importance of racial rule and European colonial expansion as non-derivative features of the capitalist world market. I then tease out the dominant and recessive narratives in the *Manifesto*, the former predicated upon the rise of industrial wage-labour in Europe, the latter predicated upon the technologies of colonial rule through the world market. I focus on the way in which the argument politicizes the European waged-worker through an analogy with African enslaved labourers in the American plantations. It is this analogical lexicon that makes the world market recede and the industrial landscape of Europe proceed to the fore.

Subsequently I illuminate the genealogy of the slave analogy by reference to Engel's engagement with Tory radicals and Chartists in England. I show how their analogical discourse apprehends plantation slavery as a warning sign of the future social effects of industrialization in England. Specifically, the destruction of paternal authority in the plantations promises a destruction of the common law compact so that anarchy will burst forth from the factories. I then textually chart how Engels uses this apprehension to animate the English working class with a unique political consciousness so that it ultimately frames his *Communist Credo*, and henceforth finds its way into the *Manifesto*. Finally, I use the contention between Marcus Garvey's "Race first" programme and the Communist International's "class first" programme to draw out the political stakes that ride on the slave analogy. I end by imagining a decolonized *Manifesto*.

The Black Radical Tradition and Marxism

Robinson re-narrates the making of the capitalist world market by positioning the racial order of Atlantic slavery at its dynamic centre. Rather than accepting the traditional Marxist narrative that capitalism forged a new European order, Robinson argues that capitalism should be understood more in terms of the re-weaving of the world market with the extant fabrics of the European feudal order.⁹ Crucially, this implies, for Robinson, that extant practices of European civilization – especially slavery and the differentiation of rights and privileges on the basis of blood – are used to reorder the world market by European powers. In this movement, existing differences – be they cultural, regional, or social – are racialized; indeed, race is used to rationalize the "domination, exploitation and extermination of Non-Europeans".¹⁰ Robinson distinguishes four moments in the development of European racialism. Two take place within this re woven world

⁸ "From Being to Unrest"; this chapter emerges out of recent work I have undertaken looking at the relationship between classical political economy and Atlantic slavery: see Shilliam, "Forget English Freedom, Remember Atlantic Slavery: Common Law, Commercial Law and the Significance of Slavery for Classical Political Economy."

⁹ Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 10, 24–25.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 23, 26–27.

market, the last being colonial practices of “plantocratic slavery” and the “formation of industrial labor and labor reserves.”¹¹

Because the Marxist narrative posits capitalism as a rupture from - rather than as a continuation of - feudal order, Robinson argues that class analysis does not fundamentally address the deeper determining structures of racial rule. Hence, Marxism finds its limitations in the understanding of race consciousness, that is to say, the “persistence of racialism in Western thought”.¹² Alternatively, he points out that, historically, what allowed enslaved Africans to creatively survive the plantation system was “the ability to conserve their native consciousness of the world from alien intrusion, the ability to imaginatively re-create a precedent metaphysic.”¹³ Robinson suggests that this “Africanity of our consciousness” is culturally inherited by the Black Radical Tradition of thought in order to bear witness to the “unacceptable standard of human conduct” practiced under “racial capitalism”.¹⁴ The Tradition, argues Robinson, always realised that,

something of a more profound nature than the obsession with property was askew in a civilization that could organize and celebrate – on a scale beyond previous human experience – the brutal degradations of life and the most acute violations of human destiny.¹⁵

The Black Radical Tradition therefore challenges traditional Marxist narratives that posit class and capitalist exploitation as the most deeply determining dialectic of world order, while race and racial oppression are ascribed derivative status vis-à-vis that dynamic. In this respect, some intellectuals, such as Charles Mills, have argued that even the term “racial capitalism” still implies that capitalism is a system of class exploitation facilitated by a mechanism of racial oppression. Mills favours the term, “white supremacy” to indicate that the racial ordering of social life is not an addition to, but rather is the fundamental dynamic of modernity.¹⁶ Robinson does use the term “racial capitalism” in passing; however, the notion of a global racial ordering of oppression that “white supremacy” infers is in keeping with the intellectual purpose of *Black Marxism*.

This implies that the core phenomenon to be addressed is not so much the alienation of the worker from the fruits of his/her labour power but rather, as Aimé Césaire puts it, the “thingification” (*chosification* in the French) of personhood through enslavement and its lasting racial legacies.¹⁷ In other words, while the industrial factory system alienates labour power (and its results) from the labourer via the technology of waged work, plantation slavery alienates the entire body and labour power of the person via the technology of racialization. Therefore, the problem of dehumanisation lies at the heart of the Black Radical Tradition and its critical engagement with Marxism. And this is why the Tradition is sensitive to the cultural, psychological and even spiritual determinants of racial oppression that are not simply derivative of the experience of class exploitation through the labour/capital relation and its attendant class rule.¹⁸ Even Manning

¹¹ Ibid., 67.

¹² Ibid., 66.

¹³ Ibid., 309.

¹⁴ Ibid., 308.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ See in general, Mills, *From Class to Race*.

¹⁷ *Discourse on Colonialism*.

¹⁸ On these issues see West, “The Dilemma of the Black Intellectual”; Bogue, *Black Heretics, Black Prophets*.

Marable, convinced that racial oppression serves a “larger class objective”,¹⁹ nevertheless acknowledges that the politics immanent to this objective point back to dehumanization and not simply alienation:

The cultural history of black Americans is, in part, the struggle to maintain their own group’s sense of identity, social cohesion and integrity, in the face of policies which have been designed to deny both their common humanity and particularity.”²⁰

I shall now use the sensibilities of the Black Radical Tradition to draw out a tension in the text of the Manifesto that is created in the attempt to contain the coordinates of the world-market - and its associated dynamics of colonial expansion, racial oppression and dehumanization – within the neat walls of Western Europe’s industrial factory system and its monologic dynamic of class antagonism situated in waged-work. I shall show how this tension is manifested through the analogising of the industrial waged-worker with the enslaved plantation labourer.

The Recessive Manifesto

The dominant narrative in the Manifesto is the decay of feudalism and the eruption of a new society with the appearance of two new classes – the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. This society purifies the dynamic of class struggle to a degree heretofore un-experienced in world history.²¹ As a purifier of the motion of human history, Marx and Engels prophesise that bourgeois society will give birth to a higher form of universal society that might even transform the fundamental dynamic of class struggle itself. Large-scale industry is identified as the arena wherein this singular class antagonism plays out through the exploitative nature of waged-work and the concomitant accumulation by the bourgeoisie of capital through the sanctity of private property. The Communists appear as a “working-class party” whose “theoretical insights” into the class struggle demand the abolition of private property and the conquest of political power by the proletariat.²² Germany is proclaimed as the society most ripe for such a revolution, because the starkness of its class antagonism is more marked there than even in advanced England or France. The dominant narrative is - as has been well commented upon - uni-linear and mono-logical, in that capitalist class antagonism is universalised over time to subsume all other social forces and entities into its global architecture. Indeed, this is why Marx and Engels posit the proletarian as the truly revolutionary class – all other exploited classes “decline into extinction” with the expansion of the industrial landscape.²³

However, the Manifesto does admit to another world in existence, with antagonisms and struggles that are other than the industrial kind. Entangled with the narrative of the world-historical uniqueness of bourgeois society is a recessive story of the “world market”. In fact, it is just as much here, as in the industrial landscape, that the grand narrative unfolds. The world market is articulated

¹⁹ *Beyond Black and White*, 217.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 227.

²¹ Marx and Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” 15. On the plurality of socialist agendas and programmes in Germany itself see another work of Robinson, *An Anthropology of Marxism*.

²² Marx and Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” 23.

²³ *Ibid.*, 21.

by Marx and Engels as a colonial endeavour of European ruling classes in which the colonization of America marks a signal episode.²⁴ In fact, they give multiple explications as to the causal weight of this colonially induced world market vis-à-vis the development of modern bourgeois society. For example, the world market quickens this Eurocentric development, and “prepares” its way.²⁵ But at the same time, it is through colonial and/or imperial expansion that the bourgeois conquer national markets, and not via the inner driving force of capitalist class antagonism.²⁶ Indeed, the famous statement, “cut-price commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls”,²⁷ should not to be taken as a metaphor of industrial expansion: it is, in fact, a reference to the imperial Opium Wars of 1839-1842.

Moreover, while the world market inaugurates and facilitates the political dominance of the bourgeoisie, its significance for the Manifesto’s dominant narrative does not stop there. For bourgeois society does not seem to be universalized through the immanent working out of its historically unprecedented class antagonism. Rather, it is the colonial and imperial practices of the world market that stitch together once parochial and national-based struggles into a universal struggle.²⁸ But the very praxis of the Manifesto is centred upon the inherent universality of the capitalist dialectic between bourgeois and proletariat - capital and labour - in terms of its purification of all struggles heretofore in world history.²⁹ This dialectic being inherently universal, proletarians – according to the Communists – are not simply struggling for control over their own factories, communities or nations; rather, “they have a world to win” .³⁰ Yet if the very political technologies and instrumentalities owe no special allegiance to the capital/labour dialectic, how can Marx and Engels present the struggle over waged-work in the European-industrial context as a universalising political force?

The recession of the world market to clear space for the industrial landscape of Europe is facilitated in Marx and Engel’s narrative through a lexicon of analogy. In the key passages that depict the political nature of the struggle over labour Marx and Engels analogize the enslaved African of the plantations of the Americas with the waged worker of the industrial factories of Western Europe. Indeed, Marx and Engels use this analogy to make the argument that the latter are oppressed even more intensely than the former. Factory workers are not only the “chattel servants” of the bourgeois class as a whole but are also “hourly and daily enslaved by the machine, by the overseer, and above all by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself”.³¹ Moreover, every oppressed class must at least be able to “scrape a slave-like existence”.³² However, due to the wage contract, and the exigencies of crises-prone markets, the bourgeois class, unlike the slave-master cannot assure “its slave any kind of existence within his slavery”.³³ Even the labourer’s family - that provider, in the last

²⁴ Ibid., 15.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 16.

²⁷ Ibid., 17.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ See Ahmad, “The Communist Manifesto and the Problem of Universality.”

³⁰ Marx and Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” 37.

³¹ Ibid., 19.

³² Ibid., 22.

³³ Ibid., 22–23.

instance, of care - is “torn” apart by bourgeois rule.³⁴ It is for this reason that the proletariat *must* be revolutionary. And whilst they have a world to win, they “have nothing to lose but their chains.”³⁵

Marx and Engels are empirically mistaken on the issue of, what would later be termed, basic needs. Most enslaved populations in the plantation societies of the Americas – excepting the relatively marginal case of the American South - could not reproduce themselves, hence the consistent “importing” of new enslaved labour.³⁶ But empirics aside, the point is that Marx and Engels, after having proclaimed in their dominant narrative the historically unique and universal significance of the dialectic of private property and waged-work, nevertheless animate that struggle through an analogy to a non-waged struggle between capital and labour. Colonial forms of oppression that constitute the world market – specifically the enslavement of Africans - breathe life into the exploitation of waged-workers in the European industrial landscape such that the latter become the universal class of salvation while the former are consigned to the museum of modes of production.

It could be protested that in the German text, it is Knecht that Marx and Engels use, which, unlike Sklave (slave), denotes a more general type of servitude albeit one that connotes a sub-human quality. Perhaps, then, my argument as to the importance of plantation slavery in the Americas is an error borne from translation into English.³⁷ Nevertheless, in the section that follows I shall argue that the genealogy of this analogy is tied to Engels sojourn in England and his engagement with the political discourses over industrialisation at the time. Engels writings on the English working class are important not just because they were influential to Marx’s own critique of political economy but also because they constitute one of the first applications of post-Hegelian philosophy to the “facts” of industrialization.³⁸ And in the political discourses en vogue in England during Engel’s first sojourn, the purposeful analogising of enslaved Africans with English factory workers was fundamental to the lexicon. It is this analogy that finds its way into the Manifesto; it is this analogy that subsumes the world market under English industry; and that enables enslaved African labourers to recede into the past while European factory workers come to the fore of world history.

The slave analogy in British political discourse

By the early nineteenth century it had become an established practice to use slavery as an analogue device for moral argumentation concerning the condition of English subjects. During the English Revolution, Restoration and beyond, both royalists and anti-royalists compared political liberty and despotism through tropes of enslavement, biblical and otherwise.³⁹ For example, John Locke and William Blackstone used slave analogies to refer to all kinds of threats to the flowering of common law, whether in the guise of the Norman conquest or the ersatz French absolutism of the

³⁴ Ibid., 16.

³⁵ Ibid., 37; On this phrase, see also Gordon, *Existential Africana*, 12.

³⁶ See Vann Woodward, *American Counterpoint*, 91.

³⁷ My thanks to Terrell Carver for discussions on these issues.

³⁸ See Henderson, *The Life of Friedrich Engels*, 73; Carver, *Friedrich Engels*, 124–132.

³⁹ Hudson, “Britons Never Will Be Slaves,” 563, 566; Skinner, *Visions of Politics: Vol.2*, 286–307.

Stuarts.⁴⁰ However, the rise of plantation slavery in the English/British American colonies engendered a new intensity to this practice of analogising. These stakes were laid out clearly in the “Somerset case” of 1772.

Somerset, an enslaved person had been brought to England with his master, had promptly escaped but was recaptured.⁴¹ A group of abolitionists subsequently applied for *habeas corpus*, arguing that no slaves could be permitted to exist on English soil lest the traditional liberties of common law be uprooted and despotism return to the polity.⁴² Justice Mansfield ruled that Somerset should indeed be freed because there was no precedent for the return of a slave from English shores. However, his ruling was not a categorical outlawing of slavery, because at stake also was the paternal authority of the property owning man over his servants. And the rights of the *pater familias* were as much a compact of common law as were the rights of private property.⁴³ Similarly, moral philosopher and abolitionist James Beattie attempted to distinguish between the immoral condition of enslavement and the deeper paternal principle of servitude: “[the slave] cannot be bought or sold; but if he has bound himself by contract to serve his master for a certain length of time, that contract, like those entered into by apprentices, and some other servants, will be valid.”⁴⁴

No doubt, it was more fantasy than practice that one could un-wrap the immoral skein of the slave to reveal an appropriately paternalistic relation of servitude. However, the problem that presented itself to Beattie and others was that commercial law – the British law that applied to the world market - enabled plantation slavery while common law – the domestic law of Britain – did not. And the Somerset case clarified the danger that the former law posed to the latter, i.e, commercial law sought to render all property relations utterly alienable and mobile, hence upsetting the very source of English liberty encoded in common law, namely the rights of the *pater familias* transmitted through patriarchal inheritance. The slave master had usurped the paternal authority of the male slave; and it was evident to some that factory owners, in employing children and women, were usurping the paternal authority of male servants.⁴⁵

By the 1830s, as Joseph Persky has insightfully detailed, Tory radicals (“compassionate conservatives”) were using the image of the free and paternal yeoman to contest the ills of slavery - both real and the “waged” variant found in Yorkshire.⁴⁶ Tory radicals drew comparisons between, on the one hand, the overseers of England’s satanic mills with its children labourers, and on the other hand, plantation owners and “their” slaves in the colonies. Both forms of exploitation, argued Tory radicals, had displaced and disintegrated paternal authority within the poor family.⁴⁷ In plantation slavery they therefore gleaned not the pre-commercial past but rather the terrible prospects of commercial society in Britain. If servants could not be fathers, then the grand chain of paternalism would be severed, common law ousted, and true anarchy reign. Thus Richard Oastler, a

⁴⁰ Michals, “That Sole and Despotic Dominion,” 208–209; Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 5.

⁴¹ See Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery*, 16–19.

⁴² Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, 375, 392.

⁴³ See especially Michals, “That Sole and Despotic Dominion.”

⁴⁴ Beattie, *Elements of Moral Science*, 165.

⁴⁵ For an extended argument along these lines see Shilliam, “Forget English Freedom, Remember Atlantic Slavery: Common Law, Commercial Law and the Significance of Slavery for Classical Political Economy.”

⁴⁶ Persky, “Wage Slavery,” 646; see for example, Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*, 317 fn2.

⁴⁷ Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, 460; Persky, “Wage Slavery,” 641–642.

Tory radical who had started out his political life as a follower of William Wilberforce, declared the horror of “child slavery”. He described the groups of workers arriving at factories as “shiploads” being brought to “plantations”. “There is Slavery at home,” Oastler proselytised, “... as demoralising, as debasing, and as killing as West India Slavery ! – aye and much more so!”⁴⁸

Concurrently, Chartist newspapers of the 1830s and 40s, to which Engels was later a foreign correspondent, decried Britain’s imperial and colonial ventures especially the Opium Wars that were presently battering down “all Chinese walls”.⁴⁹ But particular attention was often paid to the abolition of slavery in the Caribbean and the attempts at self-determination, including a three part biographical sketch of Toussaint L’Ouverture, and the coining of one cooperative effort by “native labourers” to purchase their former plantation as a “chartist land plan of Guinea”.⁵⁰ Indeed, just like the Tory radicals, the Chartist movement availed itself of the slavery analogy, and also in order to remonstrate against the evil of the factory system.⁵¹ Both groups utilized this analogical discourse in debates over the “10 hours movement”, the issues of which were to later form the substance of Marx’s chapter in *Capital* Vol.1 on “The Working Day”. In commenting upon the extinction of the handloom weaver and, thus, the extinction of the family economy, Peter Murray McDougall argued,

I would rather be the slave of the West Indies and possess all the physical benefits of real slavery than be the white factory slave of England and possess all the hardships of an unreal freedom.⁵²

In this respect, what becomes evident in much of the Chartist analogical discourse is less a trans-racial/national solidarity, and more a strategy to use plantation slavery to sharpen sympathy for factory workers in England.⁵³ This is congruent to the analogical strategies deployed by Tory radicals, even if the political aims of each group were different.

It is true that Engels’ awareness of the Americas as a colonial landscape predates his first sojourn in Manchester. Writing to his sister in 1842, Engels mentioned that he would see the play, *Columbus*, by Karl Werder. The play presented Columbus as a man driven by the enlightenment spirit of discovery and knowledge accumulation, but also as a man compromised by the need to collaborate with state power and, by these means, to even be complicit in slave trading.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, Engels key influence regarding plantation slavery owes to his engagement, in England, with the parallel analogical discourses of the Tory radicals and Chartists.⁵⁵

In this respect, Engels imbibes a comparative morality predicated upon the difference between the (domestic) servant and (colonial) slave, and the intimacy engendered by this comparison in the apprehension that plantation-like conditions were being introduced into England with the entrenchment of the non-familial, industrial factory system. In short, the racial oppression of enslaved plantation labourers inflected the class exploitation of industrial waged-workers. The

⁴⁸ Cited in Boime, “Turner’s Slave Ship: The Victims of Empire,” 40.

⁴⁹ See Guan, “Chartism and the First Opium War”; Vargo, “‘Outworks of the Citadel of Corruption’.”

⁵⁰ Vargo, “‘Outworks of the Citadel of Corruption’,” 245.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 247.

⁵² Cited in Turley, *The Culture of English Anti-Slavery: 1780-1860*, 177.

⁵³ Mays, “Slaves in Heaven, Laborers in Hell: Chartist Poets’ Ambivalent Identification with the (Black) Slave.”

⁵⁴ Engels, “To Marie Engels in Mannheim, Jan 5, 1842,” 538; Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies*, 178–179.

⁵⁵ Persky, “Wage Slavery,” 646; see for example, Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*, 317 fn2.

notion of the wage slave was certainly a product of Tory radicals. However, the accompanying apprehension that plantation slavery – a practice of the world market – was the future prospect of industrial practices in Britain was overtaken in Engels writings by a related sensibility garnered from the Chartists: wage slaves were more dehumanized than “real existing” slaves. As a tool to sharpen attention on the plight of waged workers in “free” Albion, this assessment also imbibed a long standing abolitionist sensibility that enslaved Africans were fundamentally human, but not effectively so.⁵⁶ With this sensibility, the enslaved would diminish from a sign of the future global commercial compact to a relic of the pre-modern past.⁵⁷ We shall now examine how these strategies are employed in Engel’s writings pre-1848. And we shall see how they pre-empt many of the key tropes and rhetorical devices of the Manifesto itself.

Engels and the slave analogy

In his 1844 outline of a critique of political economy Engels makes an intimate connection between the factory and plantation; both are economic practices that “yield nothing in inhumanity and cruelty to ancient slavery”.⁵⁸ Whilst this statement suggests the co-constitutive relationship of the world market and European industrialism, Engels interlocutive intent is to highlight the hypocrisy of the bourgeois defence of private property through their proselytising of British freedoms. Enthusiastically citing Thomas Carlyle’s repudiation of industrialization, Engels then reverses the flow of influence between world-market slavery and domestic industry imputed by the Tory radicals. In other words, the hypocritical defence of private property by English bourgeoisie disseminates outward as part of their re-ordering of the world market;⁵⁹ indeed, by “dissolving nationalities”, bourgeois rule “universalises enmity”. Engels then takes the end point of commercial society in Britain prophesied by the Tory radicals through the slave analogy – i.e. the dissolution of the family – and universalises it as an effect not of enslavement but of industrialization. The final step of this global bourgeois project, claims Engels, is to dissolve the family and replace it with the despotic rule of the factory owner. Hence the “last vestige of common interests” – a “community of goods” disappears.⁶⁰

Engels argues that “the philanthropic Tories were right when they gave the [factory] operatives the name *white slaves*”.⁶¹ That he does not translate this English phrase into German is proof of his conceptual debts to the Tory radicals and Chartists.⁶² Engels goes on to argue that “the slavery [Sklaverei] in which the bourgeoisie holds the proletariat chained, is nowhere more conspicuous than in the factory system. Here ends all freedom in law and in fact”.⁶³ Indeed, “disguised slavery” allows for the bourgeois affirmation of political freedom. Here Engels pre-empts Marx’s understanding of “double freedom” as the condition that historically *distinguishes* industrial waged-work from all other prior forms of exploitation; that is, formal political freedom combined

⁵⁶ See for example, Geggus, “Haiti and the Abolitionists.”

⁵⁷ On these temporal issues in general, see Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America,” 550–551.

⁵⁸ Engels, “Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy,” 420.

⁵⁹ See also Engels, “The Condition of England: Past and Present, by Thomas Carlyle, London, 1843.”

⁶⁰ Engels, “Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy,” 424.

⁶¹ Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*, 212 my emphasis.

⁶² For the German I have consulted http://www.mlwerke.de/me/me02/me02_225.htm

⁶³ Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*, 205.

with an ironic substantive “freedom” from direct access to the means of production.⁶⁴ In Engels, this condition is explicated not as an immanent critique of waged-work, but through an analogy to enslaved labour. Moreover, Engels goes on to argue that it is precisely this contradictory condition of freedom that cultivates in the English proletariat a political consciousness. The principle of freedom, affirmed in the midst of oppression, and experienced by the “white slaves”, will “one day see to it that this principle is carried out.”⁶⁵ Some years later, CLR James would return this argument to the historical experience and prospects of enslaved Africans and their descendents in the Americas.⁶⁶

Engels clarifies his sociological prognosis of the radical potential of the English waged worker, again, by virtue of the slave analogy. The worker is the “slave” of the property-holding class, and in fact this “slave ... is sold like a piece of goods, rise and falls in value like a commodity.”⁶⁷ Here, as in most of the book, the German original deploys the term *Sklave* (as well as *Sklaverei*) rather than *Knecht*. Engels thus draws out the radical sociality of the waged worker by intentionally *likening* him to a slave. In fact, he goes on to imply that the waged-worker is more immiserated than the enslaved plantation labourer because the former has to sell himself not once but every day, and, further, the bourgeoisie as a class have no responsibility to ensure his basic needs.⁶⁸ As we have seen, these arguments derive directly from both the Tory radicals and Chartists concerns over the effect of industrial factories upon the working class *pater familias*. And they shall be repeated in the Manifesto. Through the slave analogy, then, Engels presents the English working class as the most immiserated and thus most potentially radical class at this juncture of world history.

At this point we are faced with the resonance *and* discord between the Marxist notion of alienated labour power and Césaire’s notion of the thingified labourer. It is the latter that presents the most radically and fully commodified entity – and through the laws of the world market. Yet, via analogy, this radicality is poured into the English proletariat, bypassing any analysis of the immanent effects arising from the systematic alienating of (only) labour power. In this respect, and not withstanding or belittling the principled stance on abolition taken by the Chartists and by Marx and Engels, the slave analogy works to segregate the world market from the English industrial factory system, and, ultimately, to consign one of the occupants of the former sphere - enslaved peoples of the American plantations - to a mute, pre-modern condition. Once a sign of the future of commercial society, the enslaved are now historically superseded through an analogical device.

I would argue that the slave analogy preys vampirically upon real living enslaved peoples. It drains them so much that it makes of them spectres, a haunting presence in narratives and tropes throughout European writings of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century.⁶⁹ For example, soon after the deployment of the slave analogy Engels, in ethnographic mode, notes the prevalence of peddlers on street corners selling ginger-beer or nettle-beer. “Two cooling effervescent drinks”,

⁶⁴ Marx, *Capital Vol. 1*, 272–273.

⁶⁵ Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*, 212.

⁶⁶ James, *American Civilization*.

⁶⁷ Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*, 112.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 112–113.

⁶⁹ For a particular take on this trope, see Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic*; see also Ford III, “From Being to Unrest.”

Engels explains in a footnote, “the former made of water, *sugar* and some ginger.”⁷⁰ And it is the factory workers of the *cotton* districts who, for Engels, form the nucleus of the labour movement.⁷¹ Back in Prussia, one year after the publication of the *Conditions of the Working Class*, Engels explicates the many relations of production and exchange in the world market that a product passes through before it reaches the consumer. Cotton from North America passes to exporters, to speculators in Liverpool, to manufacturers in Rotterdam, to printers, and to consumers. However, the initial labourers in this global commodity chain are absent from Engel’s narration. All we know is that a bale of cotton, produced in North America, “passes from the *hands of the planter* into those of the agent...”⁷²

Engel’s attribution of a historically unprecedented agency to the waged-working class via the slave analogy is subsequently parsed through Marx’s post-Hegelian philosophy to form the guiding grand narrative of the German Ideology, which, pre-empting the Manifesto, gives rise to a chaotic grand narrative of world markets and industrial factory landscapes where, within the cracks of the chaos, flows the molten lava of an apparently universalising and purifying social force – the immiserated waged-worker. By the time Engels sketches out his confessions of faith in Communism in 1847 he has retained the affect of the slave analogy but has disavowed what the analogy emerged from: the contemporaneous intimacy between enslaved labourers and waged-workers, as conceived even by Tory radicals and Chartists. The slave now represents the historical archaeology of the proletarian.

In the Credo, Engels presents an historically unparalleled relationship between big capitalists and the proletariat – the “totally dispossessed”.⁷³ True, says Engels, a working class has always existed. For example, in “days of antiquity”, workers “were the slaves [Sklaven] of those who owned them, just as they even still exist in backward lands and even in the southern part of the United States”.⁷⁴ In this comparison, the South that the enslaved presently inhabit is consigned to the past.⁷⁵ How, then, is the proletariat different to this pre-modern slave, asks Engels? Engels repeats the arguments made in the *Condition of the Working Class*: “the slave [Sklave] is sold once and for all, the proletarian must sell himself by the hour”.⁷⁶ Furthermore, “the slave [Sklave] is counted an object [Sache] and not a member of civil society; the proletariat is recognized as a person, as a member of civil society.”⁷⁷ Here, again, Engels refers to the distinction between things and persons, thingification and alienation.

Moreover, even if it is the slave that exhibits a far more fundamental commodification of labour and self, Engels repeats the comforting partial-truth that the slave might be able to secure basic needs more successfully than the proletarian.⁷⁸ The most intense contradiction of the commercial age therefore is imputed to lie in the condition of the latter. Indeed, Engels clarifies the

⁷⁰ Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*, 118 fn1 my emphasis.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 261.

⁷² Engels, “Speeches in Elberfeld,” 246–247, my emphasis.

⁷³ Engels, “The Communist Credo,” 171–172.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 172. I use the German provided here: http://www.mlwerke.de/me/me04/me04_361.htm

⁷⁵ see Hindess, “The Past Is Another Culture.”

⁷⁶ Engels, “The Communist Credo,” 172.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

consequences of commercial crises as the need to abolish private property. Yet for him, private property is a peculiar manifestation of the industrial revolution, not of the world market and plantation slavery.⁷⁹ In any case, “the proletarian belongs to a higher stage of development of society than the slave [Sklave]”, for when the slave is freed, he becomes a proletarian.⁸⁰ The world market is now purified of slave labour by the industrial factory system: “large scale industry, by creating a world market, has so linked up the peoples of the earth, and especially the civilized peoples, that each of them is dependent on what happens in other lands.”⁸¹ The revolution will take place globally, enacted by the proletariat, the truly universal class because they have nothing left to lose. Except, perhaps, their very personhood?

Marx uses Engel’s confessions in order to partially frame the argument of the Manifesto. Retrieving this genealogy of the slave analogy in Engel’s thought therefore illuminates that crucial part of the Manifesto where the ambivalent term Knecht is used to sharpen the radical and world-shaking potency of the proletariat in their struggles over factory life. In writing the Manifesto, Knecht most probably made more dialectical sense to Marx than Sklave. After all, the Herr (master)/Knecht (servant/sub-human) pairing had already been deployed in Hegel’s influential *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Susan Buck-Morss has argued that Hegel’s dialectic of self-consciousness, represented by the struggle between Herr and Knecht was influenced by the contemporaneous Haitian Revolution.⁸² And this claim has drawn much critical consideration.⁸³ However, my argument is that plantation slavery exerts another influence on the Manifesto, one that explicitly engages with enslavement and abolition.⁸⁴ It is the influence of the slave analogy cultivated by Radical Tories and Chartists that propels Engels to politicize (rather than just sympathise in a Kantian fashion with) the conditions of the factory worker. Marx then supports this politicization with a German philosophical frame.

Communism and Garveyism

In order to draw out the political stakes of this argument I shall finish by investigating the relationship between the Black Radical Tradition and Communism in the early twentieth century. The question to be posed is: what of the quest for personhood and re-humanization in a world market structured through white supremacy? It was Marcus Garvey, along with Amy Ashwood and Amy Jacques Garvey, who developed the most influential philosophical and political platform (initially in Jamaica) that sought to address such a question. Through the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League, the Garveys galvanised, for the first time in the history of the United States, a mass public movement of descendants of enslaved Africans, much to the exasperation of the Communist International.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 178.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 173.

⁸¹ Ibid., 182.

⁸² Buck-Morss, “Hegel and Haiti.”

⁸³ See for example, Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 24–33.

⁸⁴ But see the suggestive comments by Marx in 1846 that distinguish between the “indirect” slavery of the proletariat and the “direct” slavery of “Blacks” in the Americas Marx, “Marx to Pavel Vasilyevich Annenkov,” 101.

The Garveys' platform was race - not class – first; and although each chapter of the UNIA embedded itself in particular local contexts, the focus upon economic self-reliance and political self-organization had avowedly pan-African coordinates. Garvey impelled his constituencies to retrieve their personhood on the world stage, and while in philosophical and symbolic terms this calling was heavily masculinised, the UNIA had a historically pronounced percentage of offices – senior and junior – filled by women. Inextricably woven into these substantive activities was a focus upon the redemption of Black humanity, both spiritually and psychologically. Marcus Garvey entreated his constituencies to sight their God “through the spectacles of Ethiopia” since humanity was created in the image of God.⁸⁵ And late in his life, to a Nova Scotia audience in Menelik Hall (named in honour of Haile Selassie I) Garvey articulated a principle he had long held: “We are going to emancipate ourselves from mental slavery because whilst others might free the body, none but ourselves can free the mind”.⁸⁶

The UNIA grew as a mass movement of at least one million members, and extended across the Americas into Europe, Africa and even as far as Australia. Concurrent to the rise of the UNIA was, of course, the emergence of the Comintern onto the world stage, buoyed by the Bolshevik triumph of 1917. Antonio Gramsci described the Russian Revolution as “against Capital”, meaning, against the expectations of Marx’s Capital volumes – harking back to the Manifesto – that the universal class to drive forward a new stage of human being would be the proletariat of “civilized” countries.⁸⁷ The Revolution that brought a Communist party to state power had in fact occurred in a predominantly peasant society with no real bourgeois leadership and a minute – if concentrated – industrial factory system. This “backward” context, though, was also the source of intellectual strength among the Bolsheviks.

One year before the inauguration of the UNIA, Lenin had written a suggestive piece on “Russians and Negroes”. Unlike Engel’s Communist Credo, Lenin, critical of his own society’s backwardness, effectively retrieved the contemporaneous entanglement of plantation slavery and factory waged-labour. Lenin noted that serfdom in Russia had been legally abolished in 1861, just a few years before the American emancipation proclamation.⁸⁸ Moreover, “Negroes”, argued Lenin, “still bear ... the cruel marks of slavery”, because “capitalism *cannot* give either *complete* emancipation or even complete equality.”⁸⁹ Although Lenin here follows Engel’s notion of contradictory freedom, he does not do so at the price of historically or cognitively segregating enslaved labour and waged work.

George Padmore, famous Trinidadian Marxist and Pan-Africanist, was later to comment on the progressiveness of the Bolshevik awareness of the racial and ethnic heterogeneity of empires.⁹⁰ Indeed, the Russian empire had been internally structured almost as heterogeneously as the world market itself. Furthermore, by the end of the Second World War, Harold Moody, chief figure of the London based coalition, the League of Coloured Peoples, was positively inclined towards the

⁸⁵ Garvey, *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, 34 vol.1.

⁸⁶ Garvey, “Speech by Marcus Garvey, 1937,” 791.

⁸⁷ “The Revolution Against ‘Capital’.”

⁸⁸ Lenin, “Russians and Negroes,” 343.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 344.

⁹⁰ Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, 291–293.

proclaimed (if not actual) equality of races and nations under the Soviets. By no means a Marxist or Communist himself, Moody nevertheless argued that “the whole future of this British commonwealth of nations rests upon the fact as to whether she is big enough to follow Russia’s brilliant example”.⁹¹

In 1919 the Comintern started to extend its influence into the United States and subsequently set for itself the task of recruiting the most immiserated group of people - the Negroes whom Lenin in 1913 suggested *could* be considered a nation.⁹² However, this nation had already been announced – and was being organized presently – by the Garveys. The contention between manifestos for “race first” and “workers of the world unite” was extremely complex, shifting, and by no means exhibited a straightforwardly personal black versus white dynamic. For example, the Programme of the African Blood Brotherhood decried Garvey’s “grandeur” as impractical.⁹³ And by 1922 the Brotherhood was intimately organizing with the Comintern and also attempting to steal membership away from the UNIA.⁹⁴ Conversely, in 1925, the Workers (Communist) Party of America issued a demand for the immediate release of Marcus Garvey from his jail cell in Atlanta, and supported “the full and free intercourse of American negroes with their brothers of the African continent”.⁹⁵

Nevertheless, with the admission of no imminent world revolution and the rise of Stalin, the Comintern’s relationship to the Black struggle in the United States became more and more instrumentalized and perfidious. Garvey’s own platform, while not socialist, was socialistic in its pursuit of collective self-reliance; however, Garvey was always (correctly) suspicious that the Comintern would use the Black struggle for its own purposes. Most importantly, the Comintern never managed to orchestrate a mass movement of African Americans along the lines of “workers of the world unite”. But Garvey’s “race first” programme had. Two famous (Black) Trinidadian Marxists – Padmore and CLR James - provide testimony of Garvey and Garveyism’s influence and its challenge especially to Black Marxists.

Both James and Padmore had been influenced by Garveyism in their formative years in Trinidad. James remembers, on behalf of himself and Padmore, how they both read Garvey’s paper, *The Negro World*.⁹⁶ James also remembers the great strike of Trinidadian waterfront men in 1919, all of whom were Garveyites, “even if they didn’t say.”⁹⁷ By the later 1930s both Marxists were heckling the “petty-bourgeois” Garvey from the audience at Speakers Corner in London’s Hyde Park.⁹⁸ And In 1940 James described Garvey as a fascist similar to Hitler. Nevertheless, James also argued that Garveyism had to be studied by Marxists in that it constituted the “first great eruption of the Negro people”.⁹⁹ Along these lines, James acknowledged that “no revolution is ever made expect when the

⁹¹ Moody, “Editorial,” 22.

⁹² Lenin, “Russians and Negroes,” 543; in general, see Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line*; Kelley, “Afric’s Sons with Banner Red.”

⁹³ “Programme of the African Blood Brotherhood.”

⁹⁴ see Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 215–218.

⁹⁵ Workers Party of America, “Speech by Marcus Garvey, 1937,” 142.

⁹⁶ James, “Transcript of Speech: Reflections on Pan-Africanism”; see also Martin, *Race First*, 261.

⁹⁷ James, “Interview.”

⁹⁸ Dhondy, *CLR James*, 55.

⁹⁹ James, “Marcus Garvey.”

masses have reached this pitch of exaltation, when they see a vision of a new society.”¹⁰⁰ Similarly, after World War Two Padmore reflected on Garvey’s “fanatical racialism”, but also judged him to be “the greatest black prophet and visionary since Negro Emancipation”.¹⁰¹ Again, both James and Padmore had to acknowledge the political efficacy of race consciousness, despite their broadly class-based analyses.

Indeed, Garvey’s sensibility towards “race first” infiltrates both James and Padmore’s oeuvres, albeit more clandestinely in the former. James was a committed Hegelian Marxist, framing much of his work around the dialectic of freedom as expressed in association and labour. However, James was to place the enslaved labourer in the Caribbean plantations at the heart of the narrative that he spun from this dialectic.¹⁰² In this endeavour, the consciousness of race, racism, enslavement and liberation played a crucial part, if, nevertheless, contending with James’s Marxist sensibilities.¹⁰³ Padmore was much more of a political worker than James, consistently agitating against European imperialism in Africa both before and after he left the Communist Party in response to Stalin’s sacrifice of Africa to Europe on the eve of the Second World War.¹⁰⁴ Whereas James articulated the issue of African enslavement and liberation through a philosophical register, Padmore did so in a directly political one. He subsequently came to see in Pan-Africanism the space wherein peoples of African heritage – at home and abroad – could “attain freedom under ... a banner of their own choosing.”¹⁰⁵ In both authors, the analogy of slavery is insufficient to address the problem of freedom from oppression. Both must acknowledge Garvey because it is Garveyism and not Communism that disavows the lexicon of analogy.

Conclusion

The Manifesto conjures up a breath-taking image of an inter-connected world populated by a diverse set of peoples spread over a geographical mosaic that is scarred with the brutality of oppression, exploitation and immiseration. The many suffer the few - as they always have - and yet the Manifesto prophesies that soon enough the mosaic will rearrange as a new humanity forges itself in resistance to such brutality. What must be acknowledged is the fact that due to this imaginary, many Marxists and Communists have been emboldened to stand on a principled anti-racist platform in front of sometimes virulently racist societies. Indeed, the strength of the Manifesto’s vision is that we can all emplot ourselves in it. Yet still, only some will be sanctified by its prophetic movement as saviours.

To decolonize the Manifesto is to redeem the prophecy. And to embark on this path one must disavow the Manifesto’s analogical lexicon, the grammatical structure that animates some by draining many others of their life force. Specifically, I have argued that the Manifesto animates the waged-workers of Europe’s factories as analogues to the enslaved African labourers of America’s plantations. Henceforth, the Manifesto makes of the enslaved a “worthy sacrifice”, at the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Respectively, Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, 89; and cited in Martin, *Race First*, 263.

¹⁰² James, *The Black Jacobins*.

¹⁰³ On this issue see Shilliam, “Civilization and the Poetics of Slavery.”

¹⁰⁴ See Lewis, “George Padmore.”

¹⁰⁵ Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, 16.

epistemological level, for the progress of European civilization.¹⁰⁶ What would happen, though, if we apprehended emancipation – liberation even - through a non-analogical and decolonial apprehension of that mosaical world presented in the Manifesto? I argued above that the most logical extension of the right of private property in English commercial law lay in the turning of African captives into labouring things for sale upon the world market. One could say, in this respect, that the most intense contradiction of the commercial age lies in the retrieval of personhood for those whose exploitation and oppression derives from the white supremacist structuring of that age.¹⁰⁷ Forward, then, to a Manifesto coloured human.

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¹⁰⁶ Dussel, "Eurocentrism and Modernity," 75.

¹⁰⁷ See Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom."

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