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# In Search of Utopia: Sylvia Pankhurst, Ethel Mannin, Nancy Cunard, and International Socialist Woman Authors in Interwar Britain

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# In Search of Utopia: Sylvia Pankhurst, Ethel Mannin, Nancy Cunard, and International Socialist Woman Authors in Interwar Britain

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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# Plagiarism Declaration

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SENATE PLAGIARISM POLICY

I Carrie-Leigh Timlin (Student number: 2348369), a PhD candidate in the Department of English (School of Literature, Language and Media, Faculty of Humanities) at the University of the Witwatersrand, hereby declare the following:

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- I have followed the required conventions in referencing the thoughts and ideas of others.
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# Abstract

A revival of anti-communist discourse in scholarship and politics has reignited decades-long debates between those who associate communism with the atrocities of totalitarian systems, and those who seek to emphasise the work of Socialists who genuinely sought to create a world free from gender, class and racial discrimination. In literary studies this has manifested as renewed interested in the lives and work of utopian Socialist authors like Nancy Cunard, Ethel Mannin and Sylvia Pankhurst, which suggests a shift in scholarship towards those outside the literary canon. Pankhurst and Mannin drew on literary forms that spoke to the culture, history, and experiences of their readers: women and the working classes. An exploration of the complexity of Cunard's journey from attempts to infiltrate elitist literary circles, to a poet whose work captured the hardships of racial inequality and war, challenges ideas about the politics of modernist experimentation, and the value placed on high art. Taken together, their fiction and non-fiction unsettles the boundaries between art and activism, high, middle and lowbrow art, and preconceived ideas about the canon in the study of literature. Bringing their fiction and non-fiction into conversation with their socio-political contexts, readerships, and the philosophies and utopian socialist doctrine that shaped them as author-activists opens new avenues of exploration into the interplay of politics and aesthetics. Blurring the line between public politics, fiction and non-fiction, Pankhurst, Mannin, and Cunard's work was a crucial and effective part of their internationalism, socialist activism, and resistance to totalitarianism. In the tradition of the utopianism of the late 19th Century they adapted literary forms as vehicles for socialist philosophy and doctrine. In addition to their creative work, they used literary techniques to shape non-fiction like newspaper articles, pamphlets and other political texts. The diversity of experience that Pankhurst, Mannin and Cunard recorded in their fiction and non-fiction amounts to an archive of work that complicates reductionist post-Cold War debates about the theory and practice of communism.

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# Introduction: Forging a Path to Eden

Since the Cold War, communism, socialism and utopia have become dirty words, while the literature and art promoting the ideology behind these words have been classed as dangerous and coercive propaganda. In recent years, the fervent anti-communism that fouled these words has re-entered public, political and academic discourse, and with it a revival of texts like *The Black Book of Communism* (1997).[1] In his introduction, Stéphane Courtois makes the argument central to anti-communism that there is no difference between the 'doctrine of Communism and its practice,' the political philosophy, and the 'altogether real Communism brought to life by its famous leaders,' like Joseph Stalin.[2] He goes on to dismiss the 'nitpickers who maintain that actual Communism has nothing in common with theoretical communism.'[3] When anti-communism resurfaces, its admittedly more measured anti-Totalitarian bedfellows are soon to follow. There is no denying that Stalin committed atrocities, and therefore it is unsurprising that theorists like Hannah Arendt, Karl Popper, and Carl Friedrich, writing in the 1940s and 1950s, were able to identify similarities in the systems of governance underpinning Nazism (fascism) and Stalinism (pseudo-communism).

The conflation of communism and Stalinism has led to generalised claims about utopianism and its role in propaganda – including literature and art – that promoted the formation of Totalitarian regimes. According to Popper (*The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 1945), 'the Utopian attempt to realize an ideal state, using a blueprint of society, is one which demands a strong centralized rule of a few,' which inevitably leads to a dictatorship.[4] Friedrich echoed Popper's ideas in 'The Changing Theory and Practice of Totalitarianism' (1968). After making the wild claim that Franz Fanon included 'Volkish, fascist ideology' in *The Wretched of the Earth* (*Les Damnés de la terre*, 1961), he connected violence and utopian politics.[5] Arendt (*The Human Condition,* 1958) outlined the very real ways that utopianism could be used to coerce subjects into creating a Totalitarian State by making an unequal society appear ideal and prosperous.[6]

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[1] Saed, 'Anti-Communism and the Hundreds of Millions of Victims of Capitalism', *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, vol.32, no.1, 2021, p.1
[2] S. Courtois, 'Introduction: The Crimes of Communism', S. Courtois (ed), *The Black Book of Communism*, trans. J. Murphy, and M. Kramer, London, UK, Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 2
[3] Courtois, 'Introduction: The Crimes of Communism', p. 2
[4] K. Popper, *The Open Society and It's Enemies*, Princeton, US, Princeton University Press, 2013, p.149
[5] C.J. Friedrich, 'The Changing Theory and Practice of Totalitarianism', *Il Politico*, vol. 33, no.1, 1968, p.64
[6] H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago, US, The University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Scholars challenging anti-Communism like Oleksa Drachewych and Ian McKay (*Left Transnationalism,* 2019), Saed ('Anti-Communism and the Hundreds of Millions of Victims of Capitalism', 2021), and Luke Martell (*Alternative Societies,* 2023) agree that the problem with these reductionist debates is that they are selective and one-sided. Anti-Communists and Anti-Totalitarians are guilty of the nit-picking that they accuse their opponents of. They tend to highlight how Stalin and other dictators perverted communist ideals and tactics while ignoring the activities of Socialists who took the positive principles of the movement, interpreted and adapted them for specific socio-political contexts. In other words, the ways that 'theoretical Communism' manifested authentically worldwide.

The project of mapping the global activities of Socialists in different contexts and countries has already been set in motion, in books like Drachewych and Ian McKay's edited collection, and articles like Su Lin Lewis' 'Women, Hospitality and The Intimate Politics of International Socialism, 1955–1965'(2023) in which she discusses the resilient Socialist networks that connected European and Asian women after World War II.[7] My research contributes to this ongoing project by considering an aspect of International Socialist activity that has been under-researched – the literary activity of socialist women and how their fiction factored into their activism. This study focuses on three exceptional British authors writing in the interwar period – Sylvia Pankhurst, Ethel Mannin, and Nancy Cunard – whose activism combined public politics, fiction and non-fiction writing that promoted utopian International Socialism, in Britain and abroad.

My decision to focus on British woman authors, mainly these three, was carefully considered. There is renewed interest in Pankhurst, Mannin, and Cunard, their lives, and their work. Recent examples include Eve Patten's engagement with Mannin's fiction in *Ireland, Revolution and the English Modernist Imagination* (2022), and John Newsinger's 'Ethel Mannin, Women and the Revolution' (2022) in which he draws attention to *Women and the Revolution* (1938), and other works 'written by a woman who, although well known, indeed notorious, at the time as a writer and activist' has been 'forgotten and hidden from history.'[8] Since 2020, two more biographies of Cunard – Jane Marcus' brilliant *Nancy Cunard: Perfect Stranger* (2020) and Anne de Coursey's *Magnificent Rebel: Nancy Cunard in Jazz Age Paris* (2022) have been released. Marion Wynne-Davies did the vital work of bringing Pankhurst's

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[7] S. Lin Lewis, 'Women, Hospitality and The Intimate Politics of International Socialism, 1955–1965', *Past & Present*, vol. 262, no. 1, 2024, pp. 242–280

[8] J. Newsinger, 'Ethel Mannin, Women and the Revolution', *International Socialism*, no.173, online: http://isj.org.uk/ethel-mannin/, accessed: 25 April 2024.

poetry into conversation with poems by Claude McKay within the context of the Suffragette movement in 'Sylvia Pankhurst Poetry and Politics' (*Women's Suffrage in Word, Image, Music, Stage and Screen,* 2022), and Rachel Holmes has contributed *Sylvia Pankhurst: Natural Born Rebel* (2020) to the list of Pankhurst biographies in circulation. What is missing from available work on all three authors is closer engagement with their socialist politics, and consideration of how it manifested in their fiction, and moreover, how their fiction was received by those who were reading it.

Reader reception is crucial to this study because utopian socialism was deeply humanistic. One of the primary ways I intervene in existing scholarship is by locating Pankhurst, Mannin, and Cunard's work firmly within the material contexts in which it was created, with a detailed focus on the communities for which they were writing. I have also recovered several works by Pankhurst and Mannin from the archives that have, to date and to the best of my knowledge not appeared in anthologies or scholarship. Recovering previously unknown works from the archives contributes to restorative projects by those like Rachel Holmes who published Pankhurst's play *Between Two Fires* in 2022, and others seeking to broaden the scope of scholarship on lesser known authors by expanding the existing body of available work to include their unpublished or neglected fiction, plays and poetry. Pankhurst's short story 'Thrift' (1914) exemplifies her ability to incorporate working-class literary styles in her fiction. Her unpublished play *A Bedroom…* (n.d.), about her mother Emmeline's childhood, speaks to an inherited politics that stretches back to her grandparents. Kathryn Dodd published the second instalment of 'Co-Operative Housekeeping'(1920) in *A Sylvia Pankhurst Reader* (1993). Without the first instalment it could easily be mistaken for non-fiction. When read in full, 'Co-Operative Housekeeping' adds depth to an analysis of Pankhurst's awareness of working-class women's concerns, and the ways that she carefully crafted her fiction to meet them. In 1937, Mannin wrote six interconnected short stories for *The Daily Mirror* that covered themes of elitism in the art world, class politics, the complexity of interpersonal relationships, and war. Her novelette 'Love's Winnowing' has been mentioned in scholarship, but only in passing. In all instances, it has in one way or another been framed incorrectly. Its title and date of publication have been wrongly cited; it has been mistaken for a novel, and dismissed as a trashy romance. Deeper engagement with the novelette reveals it to be one of Mannin's earliest engagements with Socialist politics in her creative work.

My analyses of these authors' fiction and non-fiction and how it was received by their readers, includes an in-depth engagement with the ideology and philosophies that foregrounded

their politics, how it informed their writing, and why it appealed to them and their target audience. Moving past reductive definitions of communism and socialism necessitates a breakdown of how utopian socialism developed, the philosophies that informed it, and how Socialists like Pankhurst, Mannin, and Cunard interpreted it in their fiction, non-fiction and activism. First, there is a marked difference between the Communist International and International Socialism. The former was an organised network overseen by The Soviet Union, while the latter refers to a transnational network of Socialists who strove to implement International Socialism and its core principles. Both groups engaged in practical activity under the banner of communism but to different ends. Forming a picture of International Socialism is complicated by the absence of a leader, structure of governance, set policies, and enforced laws. This can be solved by tracing common ground in ideals, interests and activities among Socialists working outside of the Comintern.[9]

One of the most unifying elements of International Socialism was a shared vision of a future-perfect world based on Marxist philosophy and the utopianism of the late 19th Century. The same utopianism was thematically pervasive in creative work by authors like Pankhurst, Mannin, and Cunard. Reframing the debate with a focus on how International Socialists interpreted and implemented the ideals of International Socialism moves past the tired theory/practice dialectic towards a more balanced discussion of two very different but equally 'real' ways that the doctrine of communism was interpreted and implemented on a global stage. International Socialists claimed the world as their country, and all its citizens as their equals. The absence of leadership from on high reflected one of the movement's core goals – the making of a society governed by the people, for the people. It was founded on a shared belief in equality, not a formal structure of top-down management.

Interwar Britain is an ideal example of the type of society that International Socialists were trying to change and, therefore, a perfect starting point for understanding the interplay of domestic and international politics. With the Industrial Revolution and the decline of feudalism had come the rise of the middleclass. Mass relocation to the cities led to an increasingly populous and complex society, both socially and politically. Among the mounting problems that government faced in the late 19th Century was growing class inequality and the issue of enfranchisement, as men and women started questioning their rights as British citizens. These problems only intensified in the aftermath of the First World War. The stakes for British

[9] 'Comintern' is commonly used as shorthand for 'Communist International'.

Socialist women were higher than they were for men. Unlike their male counterparts, who had for centuries occupied the public world of politics while their wives laboured to sustain the private sphere, women's political activity necessitated a merging of these spheres, a negotiation of the self in multiple spaces, and a recognition that these spaces are not mutually exclusive. The fight for the vote was a fight for the right to participate in civil society, acknowledgement of their citizenship, and their inclusion in developing a national identity.

Recognising citizenship implies a shift from subjecthood (the inability to participate in the processes that govern a country) to active participation in previously barred sectors of society. Daniel Gorman defines citizenship as a 'primary means through which societies assert, construct, and consecrate their sense of identity. It is about who belongs to the nation, who does not, and why. Citizenship thus connotes a sense of civic belonging, comprising both social and legal-political identities.'[10] The hope among British women was that once they had the vote the political and social spaces that they had been unable to access would open up to them. British socialist women, cognisant of their marginalisation as subjects (not citizens) were uniquely placed to recognise the gross inequalities that underpinned a nation divided by race, class and gender. In addition, they were alert to the reality that these inequalities were not confined to Britain. They were as (if not more) pervasive in the British colonies.

Barbara Bush writes in her chapter 'White Women, Race and Imperial Politics in Inter-War Britain' (1998) that British women were closer than men 'to the racialised margins of imperial culture and this impacted on the nature of their activism.'[11] The fight for gender parity was inextricable from the battle for class and racial equality as all three instances of oppression originated in economic, power and labour exploitation. International Socialism was premised on creating a world where these disparities would cease to exist and personhood would be recognised as universal. It promised to expand borders extending to the world at large. The significance of this idea lay not only in its utopian implications for global change but in the dissolution of already existing transnational relationships between Britain and the countries encompassed by the British Empire.

By the end of World War I, Pankhurst had already dedicated a significant portion of her life to politics. She had been a critical player in the Suffragette movement, and instrumental in forming its most famous branch, the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). By 1914,

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[10] D. Gorman, *Imperial Citizenship: Empire and the Question of Belonging*, Manchester, UK, Manchester University Press, 2006, p. 1

[11] B. Bush, 'White Women, Race and Imperial Politics in Inter-War Britain', C. Midgley (ed), *Gender and Imperialism*, Manchester, UK, Manchester University Press, 1998, p.200

at the onset of the war, she had been expelled from the organisation for her Socialism and inclusion of working-class politics across gender lines in her activism. By 1918, as Britain entered the interwar period, she had founded the East London Federation of Socialists (ELFS) and its corresponding newspaper, the *Workers' Dreadnought*. She had already established relationships with International Socialists worldwide in the wake of the Russian Revolution of 1917. Ethel Mannin inherited the struggle that Pankhurst and the women of her generation set in motion. She was only 18 in 1918 when, after a 50-year struggle spearheaded by the Suffragettes, some women were granted the vote provided they were 30 years or older and met the required property qualifications. Although young, she was politically aware. She was raised in a working-class household by a father who ensured that she was well-versed in socialist politics. Cunard was 22. War poems like 'Zeppelins' (1914) were the extent of her political activity. She left Britain for Paris in 1920 and became immersed in literary modernism. Her path to socialism was slow and winding, impeded often by her sheltered upbringing in high society, and lofty ideas about art in her early years as a poet determined to carve out a place for herself in modernist literary circles. Cunard's complicated journey from heiress to Socialist, and Modernist to socially conscious poet, contrasts usefully with Pankhurst and Mannin's lifelong socialism, and their political fiction that defied the elitism of high art. Placing these authors in conversation allows for a more nuanced engagement with utopian socialism, International Socialism, and literary production.

Pankhurst, Mannin, and Cunard rarely crossed paths. Different events at different times provoked their decisions to enter into active politics. Pankhurst's years as a suffragette shaped her understanding of inequality. Her maturity and experience allowed her to take an active role in advancing communism when the Internationalism of the late 19th Century was formalised under the banner of the Comintern with Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin at the helm. Pankhurst wrote poetry and short fiction geared towards a working-class readership. She was not concerned with the literary avant-garde, and experimental aesthetics of modernism – a movement in literature and the arts that has come to define artistic production in the interwar period. Mannin was too young in 1918 to fully appreciate the gravity of the Russian Revolution. She was concerned with establishing herself as an author, and only in the late 1920s and 1930s did she become publicly communist. From 1920 onwards, however, a socialist and socially conscious gender and class politics was apparent in her fiction and non-fiction. Although she spent some time in Bloomsbury – the hub of modernist exploration – she quickly lost patience with the elitism of high art. Cunard, on the other hand, was deeply enmeshed in modernist

circles. During her relationship with African American Jazz musician Henry Crowder in the late 1920s, she became alert to racial inequality. By the late 1930s, she had fully recognised communism as the most effective means of achieving international equality.

Pankhurst, Cunard, and Mannin's non-fiction was useful for contextualising their activities, ideas, and fiction. There are countless biographies written about Pankhurst and Cunard that are valuable for filling in the gaps in their memoirs. There are no existing biographies of Mannin, but of the three authors she produced the largest body of memoirs, autobiographical, and non-fiction books. Her reflections on various periods in British and international history, the literary industry, and utopian and revolutionary socialism enrich and expand accounts by Pankhurst and Cunard. Pankhurst's non-fiction has fulfilled a similar function, especially concerning gender politics, the Soviet Union, and the Comintern. Cunard's non-fiction in her anthology *Negro* (1934), recollections in *These Were the Hours: Memories of My Hours Press* (1969), and journalism during the Spanish and Ethiopian wars enhance discussions of racial inequality and the fight against Fascism.

It is precisely because of the richness of experience that each author brings to developing a picture of British and International Socialist politics that I chose not separate my engagement with them into three dedicated sections. Instead, I organised this study around a semi-chronological account of the causes that they championed. In Part I, I outline the intellectual, social, political and philosophical arenas in which their socialism developed, beginning with their exposure to utopian socialist ideals in childhood. From there, sections on suffrage, (reproductive) labour, and sexual politics deal primarily with how Pankhurst, Mannin and Cunard responded to gender disparity. However, despite a deep engagement with feminism, and the feminist activities of the authors central to this study, I do not define this as a work of feminist scholarship. I consider Pankhurst, Mannin, and Cunard's gender politics to be indistinguishable from their work in other arenas because utopian socialism lent equal weight to and recognised the connections between race, class, and gender politics. Viewing race, class and gender as interrelated was especially important in sections about Cunard. There is a worrying trend in scholarship on her life, literature and activism that sexualises her, or attempts to claim her for feminism despite little to no evidence that she concerned herself with gender activism. Exceptions include one or two poems, and an unpublished short story, 'A Lost Night', found by Anna Girling, and published in *The Times Literary Supplement* in 2019.

Taking Cunard seriously means privileging, as far as possible, what she did, said, and wrote as a political actor over conjecture about what she was trying to achieve by not

conforming to traditional gender roles. Her late arrival in socialist politics meant that there was little to say about her before her turn to activism in the 1930s. She therefore does not appear often, or only briefly where one might expect to find her, such as in the subsections 'The Body as Battlefield' and 'Free the Mothers' where I map the different ways that gender discrimination permeated all sectors of British society and 'The Politics of Pleasure' which centres on sexual politics. Cunard features more prominently in Part II where I explore class and gender politics in the literary industry and literary modernism, and in Part III, where I cover her, Pankhurst, and Mannin's growing disillusionment with the Comintern, and their resistance to racial inequality, Imperialism, and the rising tide of Fascism in the build-up to World War II.

In Part II, I expand in more detail on a discussion beginning in in subsection 'The Politics of Pleasure' about the interplay of society, law, publishing, and morality in Britain. The focus is primarily on modernism, the literary forms that Pankhurst, Mannin, and Cunard chose to relay their politics, and the gender, social, and class politics of literary production. I also challenge scholars like Andy Croft who have labelled Mannin's early literature apolitical and inconsequential. Croft, widely considered the foremost expert on Mannin's life and literature, is responsible for introducing the accepted and often cited view that it was only in the late 1920s moving into the 1930s that she incorporated socialism into her fiction. The novels, short stories and serials she wrote while she was still establishing herself as an author were undeniably socially conscious, but have been side-lined because they were not overtly political.

Croft's misconception arises from an identifiable problem in scholarship on woman authors who wrote popular fiction for woman readers and in this case women who wrote political fiction. Feminist scholarship has played a crucial role in the ongoing project of uncovering, and highlighting the importance of woman authors who fell into obscurity or have gone unrecognised in the traditionally male-dominated arena of literary production and criticism. For the most part this work is confined to the field of feminist scholarship. Croft, and others who work outside of this field, are content to dismiss the fiction Mannin produced before the 1930s because it responds to the concerns of middle and working-class women within the private sphere of feminised labour. They are primarily interested in the overtly political literature that reflected her entry into the traditionally masculine space of public politics. The labour of familiarising oneself with the gendered politics of the private space, and in doing so acknowledging it as inseparable from public politics, is appears to be too great a task for

scholars who do not consider their scholarship 'feminist'. Conversely, literature by authors known for the their feminism, like Pankhurst, that doesn't appear to fall within the realm of 'feminist literature' is often left unread. The tendency in Pankhurst scholarship is to focus on her Suffragette poetry, while the work that she produced in the service of socialism is neglected or remains untouched in the archives. Pankhurst is best known for her gender activism. As such, the work she produced while a Suffragette has taken precedence. In the same way that Croft fails to identify politics in Mannin's early work, feminist scholars like Patricia Romero and Mary Davis' claims that Pankhurst abandoned Feminism after the Russian Revolution arise out of a surface understanding of her politics and readership.

Uncovering the gender activism in Pankhurst's post-Revolution work requires a more profound engagement with her politics and readership. The same is true of Mannin's early work, which also requires recognition that her Socialism shaped her worldview throughout her career. The idea that her early work was apolitical is easily challenged when novels like her debut *Martha* (1923) are read in context. Outside of the novel's content which covers class and gender politics, newspaper reviews confirm that her readership was aware of the social critique in her narratives. Her memoirs and biographical accounts of her literary activity also suggest that she was not an apolitical author when she began her career.

In terms of the politics of literary production in the interwar period, Kristin Bluemel has made one of the most important contributions to the rapidly expanding field of scholarship challenging the modernist literary canon. Her pioneering critical category, 'intermodernism', introduced a new way to expand the field of literary studies to include authors who did not fit into the frameworks of literary modernism, but whose contributions to literary production in interwar Britain were as significant. She created this new category to bridge 'the gap between discursive territories signified by familiar labels' that have become synonymous with the interwar period in Britain when modernism was reaching its peak.[12] Since 2004, when Bluemel used the category for the first time in *George Orwell and Intermodernism in Literary London: The Radical Eccentrics*, it has been routinely cited, most recently in Allan Kilner-Johnson's 'Intermodernism and the Ethics of Lateness in Evelyn Waugh and Harold Acton' (2023).

Based on the criteria Bluemel set out in her introduction to *Intermodernism: Literary Culture in Mid-Twentieth-Century Britain* (2009), Pankhurst and Mannin could be classified

[12] K. Bluemel, *George Orwell and Intermodernism in Literary London: The Radical Eccentrics*, New York, US, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p.4

as quintessential intermodernists.[13] Their work spoke to 'working-class and working middleclass cultures,' they were 'politically radical', and wrote fiction for readers outside of elitist literary circles. [14] Conversely, Cunard occupies a liminal space in the modernist literary project. The barrier to accessing the literary industry was far greater for women than men. Cunard, who counted many canonised modernist artists and authors among her friends, experienced sexism and resistance first-hand when she was trying to gain recognition as a highbrow poet.

I have chosen not to situate Pankhurst and Mannin within Bluemel's category. The battle of the brows divided literary activity into three distinct spheres – high, low, and middlebrow – that when left intact are useful for tracing the interplay of aesthetics and politics because they mirrored the three-tier class structure of British society. In the history of literary production, the interwar period is one in which middlebrow and lowbrow challenges to the literary elite were revolutionary acts. High art, its boundaries, and the work canonised in literary studies were initially determined by the Modernists themselves, then by the generations of literary critics who, beginning in the interwar years, erected walls around art and literary production. Highbrow, lowbrow and middlebrow are not just categories for different types of literature. They are categories loaded with gender and class conflict. Socialist literature posed one of the most significant challenges to these categories because its authors were acutely aware of the social and cultural embeddedness of middlebrow and lowbrow genres in the working and middleclass communities that they were trying to reach.

An unconventional approach is necessary to make the argument that socialist authors' production of fiction and poetry using middle and lowbrow forms and styles was a deliberate and effective way to disperse political doctrine, on par with mandate building (distributing pamphlets, letters to newspapers, and articles), petitioning, and demonstrative activism (protests, strikes, and rallies). In his introduction to *The Work of Reading Literary Criticism in the 21st Century* (2021) Derek Attridge notes that literary criticism is constantly in flux. As it stands, 'the professionalization of the literary academy, together with the creeping dominance of the science model of research' has shifted literary criticism towards what is in vogue (and, therefore, publishable).[15] We have entered the age of what he calls 'empirico-historicism' – the

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[13] K. Bluemel, 'Introduction: What is Intermodernism?', Bluemel, K. (ed), *Intermodernism: Literary Culture in Mid-Twentieth-Century Britain*, Edinburgh, UK, Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2009, p.1
[14] Bluemel (ed), *Intermodernism,* p.1
[15] D. Attridge, 'Introduction: Criticism Today—Form, Critique, and the Experience of Literature Today', A. Sridhar, M. Ali Hosseini, and D. Attridge (eds), *The Work of Reading Literary Criticism in the 21st Century*, Cham, CH, Palgrave Macmillan, 2021, p.3

privileging of data over literary analysis. The term has merit in describing recent trends in scholarship where texts do little more than illustrate a central argument about a current social, environmental or political concern. The blanket term falls short in the conflation of data collection and historicist methods of literary analysis. Taking historical, social and political context into account does not necessarily preclude literary analysis and close reading. As I show at various points in this study, it is precisely a failure to take context into account that has amounted to misreading, and poor analysis.

Caroline Levine (*Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*, 2015) outlines two methods of literary criticism that have retained their popularity. New Formalism is concerned with literary techniques, while New Historicism considers the socio-political conditions under which the text was created. She makes a case for combining the two, and in doing so, 'expanding our usual definition of form in literary studies to include patterns of sociopolitical experience.'[16] Levine's attempts to bridge the gap between socio-political and literary forms, while path-forging, fall short in her choice of texts to illustrate her theory. With the exception of David Simon's acclaimed television series *The Wire* (2002-2008), she limits her examples to canonical texts like Sophocles' *Antigone* (roughly 441 BC), Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Charles Dicken's *Bleak House* (1853). Literary criticism that takes politics and aesthetics as its subject tends to focus on well-known literature, which, while socially conscious, was not necessarily written in service of specific arenas of politics. The exception, of course, is scholarship on propaganda. What emerges from this is a 'positive politics' teased out of texts marked as culturally valuable, versus a 'negative politics' associated with dangerous methods of coercion. There is a sea of scholarship arguing for the political impact of modernist literature in interwar Britain, but there are myriad instances where these claims fall short. I am not disputing the importance of literary modernism or its merits. Nor do I deny that it was effective in aesthetically capturing the complexities of British society and Imperialism. Rather, while widely read Modernists have transhistorical impact, in their time the intersection of politics and aesthetics in their work often failed in accessibility, readership and intelligibility. Middlebrow and lowbrow literature had a wider reach, was more accessible, and delivered ideas in a way that did not alienate an already marginalised reading public.

Levine considers the 'ways in which literary and social forms come into contact and affect one another, without presuming that one is the ground or cause of another.'[17] The

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[16] C. Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*, Princeton, US, Princeton University Press, 2015, p.2
[17] Levine, *Forms*, p.22

canonical texts that she analyses necessitate this approach. In the case of socialist literature produced in interwar Britain, politics and society were the ground and cause of the fiction and poetry that its writers produced. Venturing outside of the canon, and away from preconceived notions of the aims and outcomes of propaganda, reveals sectors of literary production in which fiction and reality did not just collide, they were enmeshed. It is worth noting that 'propaganda' was a relatively harmless word in the late 19th Century that referred simply to the distribution of persuasive information.[18] It was only in the 1930s that its definition started to evolve. The sinister connotations ascribed to it today developed in response to the propaganda campaigns of World War II.[19]

In addition to literature, I expanded my field of enquiry to include how literary forms and techniques were used to shape non-fiction like newspaper articles, pamphlets and other political texts. Cunard, for example, often used her skill as a storyteller in her journalism. She humanised cold fact-based reportage by lacing her articles with creative descriptions of scenes and imagery designed to evoke an emotive response in the reader. This is especially evident in her coverage of the Spanish Civil War. The literariness at the heart of utopian socialist writing, fiction and non-fiction, made it compelling. The extent to which even the most socially conscious fiction can be used to influence society has been widely debated. Utopian socialist writing in the interwar period intervenes in these debates because literary forms traversed the divide between fiction and non-fiction. The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that political actors, familiar with the targets of their propaganda, identified literature and literary forms as the preferred vehicles for doctrine, which suggests that it was effective.

Having established how Pankhurst, Mannin and Cunard incorporated fiction into their activism in Parts I and II, Part III covers international politics towards the end of the interwar period, and the ways that Socialist authors, and Modernists responded to the Ethiopian and Spanish Wars, and Fascism. I conclude by bringing the art and politics of the interwar period into conversation with current events, and literary production which bear a striking resemblance to the socio-political contexts that Pankhurst, Mannin, and Cunard were navigating. Throughout this study I rely extensively on archival research to capture a sense of these contexts, including but not limited to articles, book reviews, letters, editorials, and

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[18] M. Wollaeger, *Modernism, Media, and Propaganda: British Narrative From 1900-1945*, Princeton, US, Princeton University Press, 2006, p.xi

[19] Wollaeger, *Modernism, Media, and Propaganda*, p.xi

interviews found in the British Newspaper Archives. Through archival work, I have also identified and corrected inaccuracies in scholarship that mention or centre on Pankhurst, Mannin, and Cunard's lives, activism, and fiction, including Andrew Roberts's questionable account of Winston Churchill's run-ins with the Suffragettes in his widely acclaimed biography *Churchill: Walking With Destiny* (2018). In Part I, I disprove Roberts's version of events as part of a larger argument, developed throughout, about how stories argued, were passed on, and moved through time.

Utopia was a story that transcended the divide between fiction and non-fiction. This powerful narrative could inspire and mobilise individuals by including them in imagining and making a new world. According to Anti-Totalitarians like Arendt, utopianism's political affordances made it dangerous. The utopianism that Anti-Totalitarians, and Anti-Communists have identified as a catalyst for violence is the same one that was in effect in the late 19th Century before the Comintern was established. It was not the same utopianism that Stalin, and other dictators incorporated into their propaganda. Lenin was famously anti-utopian and, as Silvio and others have pointed out, it was the cult of personality that Stalin strategically cultivated around Lenin after his death and the 'codification of Marxism-Leninism' that were foundational in the 'transition from the utopianism of the early post-revolutionary years to organized messianism.'[20] International Socialists who remained committed or returned to 19th Century utopian socialism after Lenin's death, were not perpetuating Stalin's utopianism. They were resisting it. What unites Pankhurst, Mannin, and Cunard is an International Socialist outlook informed by the utopian socialist politics of the late 19th Century, developed long before the formation of the Comintern.

How they arrived at utopian socialism is inseparable from why they viewed it as the only solution to Capitalism. Each developed a political sensibility informed by a complex web of personal and interpersonal experiences, embeddedness in and exposure to diverse domestic and international socio-political landscapes, philosophy, communist doctrine, and art. All of this must be considered to fully understand the activism they chose to engage in, the forms it took, where they succeeded, where they failed, where their work and ideas intersected, and where they diverged. When taken together, the diversity of experience that Pankhurst, Mannin and Cunard recorded in their fiction and non-fiction amounts to an archive of work that

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[20] S. Pons, *The Global Revolution: A History International Communism 1917-1991*, trans. A. Cameron, Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press, 2014, p.43

complicates reductionist post-Cold War debates about the theory and practice of communism. Their search for Utopia was conducted in good faith, premised on a shared belief that a better world was possible. Accounts of their lives and work as International Utopian Socialists open up new avenues for exploring how race, class and gender inequality manifested and were challenged in myriad contexts, ranging from the poverty-stricken streets of the London East End, to the literary industry, to the frontlines of the Spanish Civil War.

# Part I: Children of the Revolution

In 1938, Sylvia Pankhurst called herself a 'child of the late nineteenth century, an inheritor of the struggle for political democracy, not fully accomplished then even for men, whilst women were still outside the political system, profiting by the gains of democracy only adventitiously.'[21] Ethel Mannin and Nancy Cunard were born into the same struggle, and like Pankhurst, adopted it as their own. Pankhurst, Mannin, and Cunard began their political education at home. As a child, Cunard displayed an eager willingness to learn. Her 'desire to learn to read was acute, and she recalled an 'early reverence…for those who wrote books.' She was so overcome with anxiety over the 'longer phrases and abstract terms' that she 'feared [she] would never be able to read properly.'[22] Her mother, Maud, was an avid reader and supporter of Moore and Emil Zola, whom she admired for their free thinking. She introduced Cunard to Irish novelist George Moore who became her 'first friend.' [23]

Moore's politics and attempts to free art from bourgeois notions of propriety (including sexual propriety) inspired her. G.M., as Cunard called him, was instrumental in setting her on the path to socialism. She read all of his work which would have included *A Drama in Muslin* (1886), a reflection on his close friendships with Eleanor Marx (daughter of Karl Marx), and Olive Schreiner (his main source of information about the Boers and Empire). The novel, first serialised in the *Court and Society Review* in January 1886, was part reflection, and part critique of Imperialism and class inequality. Moore also took great pains to make clear his belief that women were entitled to an identity, education and a life outside of the domestic space.[24] He encouraged Cunard to write poetry and offered constructive criticism. When she published *Sublunary* in 1922, he reminded her that 'art cannot be altogether subjective, that even the most subjective poems, the most personal to the poet, must be re-created to some extent' to maintain a sense of objectivity.

For him, her obscurity was a failure to create something outside of herself, which arose from 'pale or weak thinking, uncertain vision.'[25] He would often talk of creation – of art and

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[21] S. Pankhurst, 'Sylvia Pankhurst', Countess of Oxford and Asquith (ed), *Myself When Young: By Famous Women of To-Day,* London, UK, Frederick Muller, 1938, p. 259
[22] N. Cunard, *GM Memories of George Moore*, London, UK, Rupert Hart-Davis, 1956, p. 18
[23] L. Gordon, *Nancy Cunard: Heiress, Muse, Political Idealist*, New York, US, Columbia University Press, 2007 p. 5
[24] G. Moore, *A Drama in Muslin*, Buckinghamshire, UK, Colin Smythe, 1886.
[25] Cunard, *GM Memories of George Moore*, p. 136

the self. In a letter to Cunard in 1923 he referenced Marx's *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (*Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte aus dem Jahre*, 1844): 'the Christian says "memento mori"; the pagan answers "remember life", which seems to me to express a finer spirituality, for do we not create ourselves, our bodies in some measure, our souls completely?'[26] Marxian ideas like this cultivated her long-held belief that the written word could change the world – something which would become central to her work as an activist, journalist, publisher and poet.

In *The Manuscripts*, Marx departed from Hegelian idealism, shifting instead to Feuerbach's humanist materialism. In Hegel's speculative philosophy of German idealism, theology's 'divine being' is transformed into reason. Feuerbach sought to free nature from its idealist-transcendent subjugation, restoring it to an autonomous primary reality. This is the pinnacle of his theory of the nature and essence of man. In *The Essence of Christianity* (1841), Feuerbach argued that God is man[27] because the object of man 'is his manifest being, his true, objective ego.'[28] He was not suggesting that consciousness is metaphysical in its own right. Instead, human consciousness is something anchored in the very being of man. In *The Manuscripts*, Marx expanded on his theories by suggesting that the disparate elements of human consciousness and society, including art production and concepts of beauty, are not the product of some external force but of human activity itself. As Marx put it, 'in creating an *objective world* by his practical activity, in working-up inorganic nature, man proves himself a conscious species.' [29]

Marx drew a comparison between production by animals and production by human beings. Animals produce in accordance with their immediate needs for survival, while man produces 'universally… free from physical need.'[30] A shift from idealism to materialism is tied up with freeing art from its subordination to abstract thought. Man uses all of his senses to perceive and thus create, and create freely, not necessarily to meet an immediate need but for the sake of production. Human beings are fundamentally social creatures, which means that

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[26] Qtd in: L. Gordon, *Nancy Cunard: Heiress, Muse, Political Idealist*, New York, US, Columbia University Press, 2007, p. 367

[27] 'Man' from the Pro-Germanic 'mann' means, simply, 'human'. 'Woman' is differentiated from 'man' by her sex as a 'female human'. Proof, indeed, that man constructs his world, not only through production, but through language. To quote Simone de Beauvoir, 'a man never begins by positing himself as an individual of a certain sex: that he is a man is obvious.' S. De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, London, UK, Vintage Books, 2009, p. 5

[28] L. Feuerbach, 'The Essence of Christianity', *Ludwig Feuerbach The Fiery Brook*, London, UK, Verso, 2012, p.101

[29] K. Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto*, trans. Milligan, M., New York, US, Prometheus Books, 1844 (1988), pp: 76-77 (emphasis mine)

[30] Marx, *Manuscripts,* pp: 76-77 (emphasis mine)

production cannot be achieved in a vacuum. Man produces in community with society as a whole, and in 'accordance with the laws of beauty' because production constitutes 'his active species life.'[31] Simply put, Man creates the world in which he lives, and himself through production.

The high degree of faith that Cunard placed in the power of art to change minds, and alter the course of politics, corresponds with Marx's argument that Man 'duplicates himself not only, as in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively, in reality' and reflects on himself in 'the world that he has *created*.' [32] An idea is a working up of things to come, not the things themselves. When the idea, in this case a political idea, is produced as art (thereby freeing it from abstract thought) the reader/listener/viewer receives, interprets, and makes it material through action. This line of thinking was central to utopian socialist narratives that relied on the imagination as the first and last site of primary production. The doctrine of International Socialism distributed in myriad forms, from articles to literature. The journalist or artist imagined or conceptualised it first before it was disseminated to potential recruits. The reader, viewer, or listener was then invited to imagine themselves not as they are but in a future-perfect society. In short, Utopia. Paragraph linking

Cunard was not raised in a political household. Her political sensibilities developed via independent reading, research, and outside influences like Moore. The majority of her informal education took place in adulthood after she left the sheltered world of upper-class society and was exposed to the realities of class and racial inequality. Her family was instrumental to her growth as an activist only in so far as her mother provided her with the example of an independent woman who read widely, and introduced her to G.M.. But Maud was also an absent and authoritarian figure who, despite her liberal lifestyle and progressive views in some areas, still clung to her class privilege and the power that it afforded her. Cunard found the hypocrisy of her mother's lifestyle revolting. Her hatred only intensified when Maud openly disapproved of her relationship with African American musician Henry Crowder. Cunard sought out an antidote to her parents' way of life in the communism despised by the upper-classes.[33]

Pankhurst's and Mannin's parents were radically different, and the first to expose them to utopian socialism. When in 1938 Pankhurst called herself 'an inheritor of the struggle for

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[31] Marx, *Manuscripts*, pp: 76-77
[32] Marx, *Manuscripts*, pp: 76-77 (emphasis mine)
[33] N. Cunard, 'Black Man and White Ladyship', M. Moynagh (ed), *Essays on Race and Empire*, Ontario, CA, Broadview Literary Texts, 2002, p.187

political democracy,' it was figurative and literal.[34] Her mother was the famous Suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst. Her father, Dr. Richard Marsden Pankhurst, was equally committed to women's rights and one of the founding members of the National Society for Women's Suffrage in 1872. Pankhurst captured Emmeline's early exposure to politics in an unpublished play, *A Bedroom…* (N.d), which has remained hidden in the archives. It is set in Emmeline's childhood home and maps her informal education through interactions with her parents, Robert and Sophia Goulden (abolitionists and supporters of women's suffrage).

Based on actual events, the play highlights the importance of self-education and the complex interplay of public politics and social conditioning in the home. Robert is portrayed as a man who is quick to anger. In the first scene, he calls his son Walter a 'dunce' for making 'small progress' at school.[35] He forces him to read from the newspaper, which Walter can't do. Emmeline asks for a chance to prove her skills and excels. She is tasked with reading the paper to her father every morning. Ironically, Robert is simultaneously proud of his daughter, and angry that his son has been 'beaten by a girl.'[36]

When Sophia enters the breakfast room, Robert redirects his anger at her for spending too much on housekeeping: 'I tell you woman I won't stand it. It is simply too much to have bills like this every month.' She is brought to tears and reminds him that he complains about bills while wanting 'appearances properly kept up.' The task of household management falls to her, and she 'can't manage on less.'[37] Emmeline jumps to her mother's defence: 'Mother's perfectly right; Mother's perfectly right! You must spend the money yourself if you do not like the way she spends it!' Robert, laughing, takes her in his arms: 'You little spitfire! You are the brightest of the lot. If you were a lad you would be standing for parliament yet!'[38] The contradictions in his behaviour create a hostile environment where Sophia feels compelled to discourage her daughter's reading, and prepare her to run a home. When Emmeline enters the nursery with a book under her arm, Sophia wonders 'who taught the child to read.'[39] Later, Emmeline is hiding in the attic with a stack of books. Sophia wants her to help ready the children to go out. When she finds Emmeline, she shouts, 'What a pity you even learned to read!'[40]

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[34] Pankhurst, *Myself When Young,* p. 259
[35] S. Pankhurst, *A Bedroom…*, N.d., p. 2, Estelle Sylvia Pankhurst Papers, International Institute of Social History Archives, Amsterdam, folder 137, ARCH01029.173
[36] Pankhurst, *A Bedroom…*, p. 2
[37] Pankhurst, *A Bedroom…*, p.3
[38] Pankhurst, *A Bedroom…*, p.3
[39] Pankhurst, *A Bedroom…*, p.1
[40] S. Pankhurst, *A Bedroom…*, p.4

The domestic concerns of the household are disrupted when Emmeline is reading to her father, and comes across an article about the arrest of the Fenians Thomas Joseph Kelly and Timothy Deasy. The Fenians were a secret nationalist society, based in the United Kingdom and the United States, who took their name from the Fianna Eireann (a famous band of Irish warriors). *The Dublin Evening Post* (19 September 1867) reported that the police were transporting Kelly and Deasy to the City Jail when they were attacked by a mob intent on rescuing the prisoners. 'The van was broken open, and the prisoners got off.'[41] In the play, Pankhurst shifts the story from focusing on the Goulden family to the street where the rescue occurs. The scene is inserted between those set in the Goulden house. They intrude on the private space of the home. The public and the private merge. From here, the children become more involved in politics. Sophia models the importance of education by reading to her children from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) to make them aware of the injustices of slavery.[42] Emmeline and Walter are tasked with collecting funds to help former slaves at a bazaar in Manchester opened by Henry Ward Beecher. Reading the newspaper is a recurrent event in the play. For Pankhurst print media was an important part of her efforts to introduce public politics into private spaces. The story concludes when Emmeline leaves home to study at l'Ecole normale supérieure:

> Scene 13: *Driving through Paris. Scenes of broken windows and damaged houses suggestive of a siege. German soldiers on guard. Signs of great poverty among the people; some wounded.*
> Scene 14: *Emmeline and her father enter the school and are received by the Head Mistress.*
> Head Mistress: I regret Monsieur, that the school is still in vacation.[43]

The last scene is set outside of the home, and like the scene in which Kelly and Deasy are rescued it takes place on the streets, this time in Paris. In 1873, when Emmeline was 15 and sent to the l'Ecole normale supérieure, France was still suffering the aftereffects of its defeat in the Franco-German war. Notably, Pankhurst ends the play before Emmeline enters the

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[41] **'**Great Excitement in Manchester: Rescue of Colonel Kelly and Captain Deasy', *The Dublin Evening Post*, 19 September 1867, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000435/18670919/078/0003, accessed: 22 October 2023.
[42] Pankhurst, *A Bedroom…*, p.8
[43] Pankhurst, *A Bedroom…*, p.9

school where she would have learned to style her hair and clothes, embroider and master other skills necessary for women destined for reproductive labour. The school is 'still in vacation,' ending Emmeline's education in the play on the ravaged streets of Paris, not at a finishing school.

In reality, Emmeline had learned more from engagement with her parents, and the causes they supported, than the gendered education considered proper for women in the late 1800s. She learned from their example, and spared her daughter from attending finishing school as she had. Instead, Pankhurst's education was an erratic combination of time spent at Manchester High School for Girls, lessons with governesses, her autodidactic efforts, and meetings organised by her parents which, as she remembered it, were attended by 'Socialists, Fabians, Anarchists, Suffragists, Free Thinkers, Radicals and Humanitarians of all schools' including William Morris.[44]

Richard encouraged Sylvia Pankhurst to read, and read widely across genres, often bringing home books spanning topics like 'history, travel, simple science, astronomy, botany, chemistry, engineering, fairy-tales, standard novels, reproductions of works of art, the best illustrations.'[45] He read her poetry by Walt Whitman and Percy Bysshe Shelley, but the works of Charles Dickens had the most significant effect on her. Dickens' depictions of workhouses, poverty and desolation in Victorian England kept her awake at night: 'The miseries of Oliver Twist and the other exploited children bit deep into my little heart.'[46] In keeping with Richard's commitment to extending suffrage to women, he deviated from the social norms of the late 1800s by urging his daughter to 'get something to earn a living by that you like and can do,' and that would provide her with an independent income. This was nearly unheard of in a society where middleclass women were expected to limit themselves to marital aspirations.

Mannin's father adopted a similar attitude to her future. She mentioned that he 'didn't care how [she] achieved happiness so long as [she] achieved it.'[47] As a young man, Robert Mannin had educated himself by reading Shakespeare, Wells, Gissing, Belloc, and Baring, among others. His example of reading widely and indiscriminately factored into her decision to become an author who wrote for the ordinary man and woman. In a chapter about her parents in *Confessions and Impressions* (1936), she placed them among the kinds of 'people who do

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[44] S. Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement: An Intimate Account of Persons and Ideals*, London, UK, Longmans, Green and Co., 1932, p.19
[45] Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement,* p.67
[46] Pankhurst, 'Sylvia Pankhurst', p. 262
[47] E. Mannin, *Confessions and Impressions*, London, UK, Penguin Books, 1936, p. 14

not fit into any of the class distinctions; they are the real people…it does not matter whether they are professionally poets or greengrocers, artists or artisans…they do not say "This is good; this is bad; this is right; this is wrong; this is beautiful; this is ugly." They say, "if you like that sort of thing, that's the sort of thing you like…".'[48]

In addition to her informal education at home, Mannin won a scholarship to a commercial school, where she stayed until she was 14. She listed three 'important contributions to her education,' none of which had anything to do with the curriculum. First, she 'discovered poetry by accident.'[49] The second and third 'came from the same source' – she fell in love with a communist teacher who began fostering her socialism in secret after reading an essay that she had written on patriotism:

> It was the subject set us…and all the girls wrote ardently of loyalty to one's King and Country – it was 1914 – and spoke in glowing insincere terms of the Union Jack. I wrote quoting Dr. Johnson's words: "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel." It was something I had heard my father quote at home.[50]

Much of Mannin's understanding of politics, class and social division came from watching and listening to her father. He was a member of the Socialist League, part of the Socialist League choir where he sang with John Burns, and attended gatherings at William Morris's house at Hammersmith. He and Burns had taken part in the 1887 demonstration in Trafalgar Square. The infamous event came to be known as 'Bloody Sunday' following the extreme police brutality inflicted on protesters, including Burns, who was badly beaten and jailed.[51] Mannin saw her father as a 'champion of his class.' [52] On an afternoon walk with him when she was five, they met Burns on the path. Her father and Burns had a brief conversation. When they parted ways, she noticed that her 'father seemed so excited and pleased about having met him.' She gathered that he 'admired him very much, because he was a Socialist.' It was then that she decided that 'a Socialist was the proper thing to be.'[53] Her teacher, 'Miss X' read to her from the *Labour Leader*, instilling in her a utopian reverence for the 'Red Dawn for which the Labour Party worked and hoped.'[54]

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[48] Mannin, *Confessions,* p. 15
[49] Mannin, *Confessions*, p. 46
[50] Mannin, *Confessions*, 1936, p. 46
[51] J. Newsinger, 'Ethel Mannin, Women and the Revolution'
[52] Mannin, *This Was a Man: Some Memories of Robert Mannin*, London, UK, Jarrolds, 1952, p.27
[53] Mannin, *This Was a Man,* p.18
[54] Mannin, *Confessions*, pp. 48-49

Devotion to her father and teacher set her in opposition to the school. She was punished for the essay, and she refused to salute the British Flag. She recalled that she would have 'died then and there rather than salute any flag but the Red Flag,' and even under threat of expulsion 'was prepared to face all the fearful odds for the ashes of my fathers and the temple of my gods.'[55] She captured her love for Miss X, whose kiss at the close of one of their Saturday meetings opened up 'new worlds of thought and emotions' for her in 'the most passionate love poems.'[56] In Mannin's formative years, literature, politics, and love were intimately linked. In the interwar period she drew inspiration from that link to sell socialism in her romance novels.

Pankhurst chose visual art as her first vocation. Like Cunard, she believed in the power of art to conscientize, and wanted to use it to make the 'struggle for a better world… beautiful, aesthetically uplifting and inspiring.'[57] Her paintings were a combination of Socialist Realism and pre-Raphaelite allegory that captured working-class women at work. She attended Manchester Art School, and later Chelsea's Royal College of Art where she was taught by Walter Crane. His illustrations for the Labour Party inspired her, and his illustration celebrating May Day in 1890 was of special significance. The Angel of Freedom depicted in the lithograph first appeared in Crane's *The Angel of Freedom,* exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1885. He drew from Algernon Charles Swinburne's poem 'The Eve of Revolution', in which 'The trumpets of the four winds of the world / From the ends of the earth blow battle / the night heaves, / With breasts palpitating and wings refurled.'[58] The four winds, North, South, East and West that brought together revolutionaries worldwide were represented in the May Day illustration by America, Europe, Africa, and Asia.

The Angel symbolised working-class emancipation, heralding the co-operative commonwealth of the future. It appeared again in Crane's cartoon for the Diamond Jubilee issue of *Labour Leader*.[59] The Angel's origins are more apparent in the cartoon. As in the May Day illustration, she wears a Phrygian bonnet, also called the Cap of Liberty (the same worn by the protesters who gathered in Manchester in 1819). However, Crane subverted the myth of the archangel Uriel guarding the gates to Eden. Instead of barring entry, the worker who is wise to his oppression is welcomed into the garden of 'economic independence.' Uriel is not found in canonical scripture, where only Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael are named. In the post-exilic

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[55] Mannin, *Confessions*, p. 47
[56] Mannin., *Confessions*, p. 49
[57] K. Connelly, *Sylvia Pankhurst: Suffragette, Socialist and Scourge of Empire*, London, UK, Pluto Press, 2013, p.8
[58] A.C. Swinburne, *Songs Before Sunrise*, London, UK, William Heinemann, 1917, p. 10
[59] See Appendix I

Rabbinic tradition he is commonly gendered male, wields a flaming sword and guards the gates of Eden to prevent Adam and Eve from re-entering after they were banished for eating fruit from the tree of knowledge. In Crane's depictions, Uriel is gendered female, and tasked with guiding the working classes to the economic, political, and social freedom that awaited them in a Socialist Utopia.

Utopian socialism developed from Christian socialism, accounting for Crane's use of Uriel and Eden to represent it in his work. The term Utopia was coined in 1516 by Saint Thomas More, who John Cort describes as the 'most prestigious, most humorous, and probably most admirable of all Christian socialists.'[60] Although More's *Utopia* (1516) predated socialism it contained socialist ideas, the intellectual origins of which can be traced back to Plato's *Republic* (Πολιτεία, 375 BC). He referenced Platonic ideals throughout the book, and poems in the Front Matter written in 'Utopian' (a language that More created by combining Latin and Ancient Greek) by a fictional poet, Anemolius.

A quatrain in the language of Utopia:

*Utopos ha Boccas peu la chama polta chamaan.*
*Bargol he maglomi baccan soma gymnosophaon.*
*Agrama gymnosophon labarem bacha bodamilomin.*
*Volvala barchin heman la lavolvala dramme pagloni.*[61]

General Utopos made me, from no island, an island.
I alone of all lands, in the absence of philosophy
Have represented for mortals the philosophical city.
Willingly I will share what is mine, without reluctance accept
something better. [62]

More created the word 'Utopia' by combining the classical Greek οὐ (not) and τόπος (place). Utopia is in essence, τόπος οὐ τόπος: a place that is no place or a place displaced. The

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[60] J. Cort, *Christian Socialism,* New York, US, Orbis Books, 1988, p. 63
[61] T. More, *Utopia*, trans. D. Wootton, Indianapolis, US, Hackett Publishing Company, 1999, p.48
[62] I've chosen to use David Wootton's 'literal translations' of these poems because he relies on the root meanings of the Latin and Greek words that More combined to create 'Utopian.' Notably, it is markedly different from the translations that readers in the late 19th and early 20th Century would have encountered. *Utopia* was first translated from Latin into English in 1551 by Ralph Robinson, following which it was translated by Gilbert Burnet. Late 19th and early 20th Century Socialists interested in More's work would have read one of these two versions (which have remained in circulation to this day), and most likely Burnet's more accessible translation. Burnet's first translation (printed for Richard Chiswell at the Rose and Crown in 1684) did not feature the poems. They did appear in the 1901 Cassell and Company edition. - T. More, *Utopia*, trans. Burnet, G., London, UK, Cassell & Co., 1901.

contemporary understanding of the word is closer to Eutopia – εὖ (good or well) and τόπος (place). εὖ τόπος, an ideal place. More toyed with both meanings in another poem by Anemolius:

*Utopia priscis dicta ob infrequentiam,*
*Nunc civitatis aemula Platonicae,*
*Fortasse victrix (nam quod ila literis*
*Delineavit, hoc ego una praestiti*
*Viris et opibus, optimisque legibus):*
*Eutopia merito sum vocanda nominee.*[63]

"No Place" I once was named, by reason of my solitude;
But now I rival Plato's state, perhaps exceed her, for
What he sketched out in words, that I alone exemplify in men and skills,
and the most excellent laws;
By the name of "Happy Place"
I do deserve to be called.[64]

He made the connection to Eden by depicting Utopia as a walled garden, and placing it at the Antipodes where some Renaissance cartographers believed the Earthly Paradise was located.[65] It differs from Eden in that it was not created by a god. It is an island transformed into paradise by the collective efforts of a community. A place that was 'no place' was transformed into a 'happy place.' More was a forerunner of early Socialists, including Robert Owen, who offered their own models for co-operative communities. Henri de Saint-Simon, a Christian and one of the founders of theoretical socialism, imagined a society where the classes worked together for the collective good.

The Saint-Simonians popularised and mainstreamed terms like 'Socialism… to "socialise," "socialisation," and socialising the instruments of labor.'[66] And yet, despite its religious underpinnings, Christian Socialism was secular and inclusive. More was a deeply religious Catholic but his approach to Utopia was unsentimental. His mythology, and the creation of an earthly paradise, were located firmly in the physical world. It was man-made,

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[63] T. More, *Utopia, Latin Text and English Translation*, trans. Adams, R.M., New York, US, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p.18
[64] More, *Utopia*, 1995, p.48
[65] W. Rebhorn, 'Thomas More's Enclosed Garden: "Utopia" and Renaissance Humanism', *English Literary Renaissance,* vol.6, no.7, 1976, p.143
[66] J. Billington, *Fire in the Minds of Men: Origins of the Revolutionary Faith*, New York, US, Basic Books, 1980, p.216

not god-made. Saint-Simon's similarly earth-bound 'New Christianity' was, as James Billington summarised it, 'the culmination of the *ideologiste* attempt to supplant all religion by absorbing it into a progressive scheme of secular evolution.'[67]

As Mannin understood it, the Christian Socialism that her father exposed her to as a child was 'the true communism of "all things in common"…the communism implicit in the command of Jesus to the rich young man to "go sell all that thou hast and give to the poor", and which is the very core of the Sermon on the Mount, but which the vast majority of professing Christians everywhere, busy accommodating Christianity to expedience, conveniently overlook.'[68] She notes that she was raised as 'a socialist in the old William Morris, Keir Hardie tradition,' which gave her a 'feeling for the under-dog, the under-privileged, the dispossessed.'[69] Similarly, Pankhurst saw her father as a 'Communist…in the broad sense which would cover William Morris, Peter Kropotkin and Keir Hardie.'[70]

Morris, the man and his work, is a thread that connects Mannin, Pankhurst, and Cunard who all mentioned or wrote about him in their fiction, non-fiction, and memoirs. Mannin's father knew and admired him. He was a regular visitor at the Pankhurst's home,[71]and while Cunard was not impressed by his poetry, she read his work at the behest of G.M. who sent it to her with notes about his 'perfect craftsmanship.'[72] Morris adopted Marx's view that labour exploitation sustained the system of Capitalism. The communities in his Utopias were founded on the collective ownership of the means of production. His vision of a future society, according to Florence and William Boos, was 'the imaginative construct of an active man, who assumed that camaraderie and craftwork could, if universalised, suffice to provide for all social needs.'[73] His preoccupation with craftwork – the artist as craftsman– is in keeping with how Christopher Shaw describes Morris as 'heir to a tradition…conspicuous in the Marx of the 1844 *Manuscripts,* that looked critically at the experience of work itself.'[74]

Shaw's description of Morris as 'heir to a tradition' is significant. Pankhurst, Mannin, and Cunard were not just inheritors of the struggle for political democracy. When they adopted

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[67] J. Billington, *Fire in the Minds of Men*, p.215
[68] Mannin, *This Was a Man*, p. 25
[69] Mannin, *This Was a Man,* p. 101
[70] R. Holmes, *Sylvia Pankhurst: Natural Born Rebel*, London, UK, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020, p.192
[71] Holmes, *Sylvia Pankhurst*, p.125
[72] Cunard, *GM Memories of George Moore*, p. 106
[73] F. Boos, and W. Boos, 'The Utopian Communism of William Morris', *History of Political Thought*, vol.7, no. 3, 1986, p.500
[74] C. Shaw, 'William Morris and the Division of Labour: The Idea of Work in News from Nowhere', *William Morris Archive*, online: https://morrisarchive.lib.uiowa.edu/items/show/2114, accessed 17 January 2024, p.23

the utopianism that they encountered in Morris's works they became heirs to a tradition spanning centuries that included the Saint-Simonians, the Owenites, Marx and More. For this reason, it is necessary to start at the beginning when tracing their development as political actors and authors. The philosophies, literature and art that they were exposed to when young, and those who introduced them to it, shaped them. Based on their recollections, all three singled out art, creative fiction, and the written word more generally as having the most profound effect on how they developed a sense of the world, their place in it, and their politics relative to it.

For Mannin and Pankhurst this meant a direct engagement with these ideas in their work. Pankhurst drew strong parallels between political inheritance and art in the unpublished play *A Bedroom…*, which has until now been omitted from studies of her work. She chose an artform to depict the origins of her mother's political sensibility – origins that included reading fiction - which in turn influenced her own. In Cunard's case, these ideas informed her long-held belief that art had the power to fundamentally alter society for the better. What follows expands on the tradition that they inherited, and how it developed over time.

## Marx, Morris, and Utopia

In the forward that Morris wrote for an edition of Ralph Robinson's translation of More's *Utopia* (1893), he noted its importance as a 'steady expression of the longing for a society of equality of condition; a society in which the individual man can scarcely conceive of his existence apart from the Commonwealth of which he forms a portion.' For him, this was the 'essence of his book', and 'the essence also of the struggle' in which he and like-minded Socialists were engaged.[75] Morris was an atheist but he believed that while the foundations of socialism were economic, it needed a moral centre, an ethical belief in the innate responsibility of one person for the other. Basic Christian moral principles not only provided a blueprint for those ethics, they were already well-known and centuries old. Familiar Christian allegories and iconography provided an easily traversed bridge from the pew to politics. Morris, like Crane, used Eden to represent Utopia. His epic poem, *The Earthly Paradise* (1868) emphasised the

[75] W. Morris, 'Forward to Thomas More's Utopia', *Marxist Internet Archive*, online: https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1893/utopia.htm, accessed: 14 September 2023.

importance of the journey when seeking paradise,[76]and his novel, *News from Nowhere* (1890)[77] promoted revolutionary socialism as a precursor of Utopia.

One of the artworks that captured Pankhurst's attention in her youth was an illustration by Edward Burne-Jones[78] captioned 'When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman' in Morris' *A Dream of John Ball* (1888).[79] She reprinted the image in the 16 December 1922 edition of the *Workers' Dreadnought*, and included it in a calendar for sale at the Dreadnought Bookshop.[80] Morris's story revolves around a conversation between a 19th Century man, Will Green, and John Ball, a 14th Century English priest hanged in 1381 for leading the Peasant Revolt and delivering sermons advocating a society free from class division. Will dreams that he is in Kent during the Revolt where he meets Ball and tells him about the future. Ball is horrified by 'the tyranny of the latter days' when 'the conquest of the earth shall not bring heaven down to the earth, as erst [he] deemed it would, but rather that it shall bring hell upon the earth.[81] Will's parting words assure Ball that in the future,

> men shall be determined to be free; yea, free as thou wouldst have them, when thine hope rises the highest, and thou art thinking…of the end of all, when men shall have the fruits of the earth and the fruits of their toil thereon, without money and without price. The time shall come, John Ball, when that dream of thine that this shall one day be, shall be a thing that men shall talk of soberly…[82]

The line accompanying Burne-Jones' depiction of Adam and Eve toiling and weaving to reap, and develop the fruits of the Earth, is borrowed from a verse by Robert Southey. The working of the soil is a reference to Genesis 3:24: 'Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.' The punishment for eating from the Tree of Knowledge was banishment from a paradise where God met all needs and wants. When Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden they were forced to become self-reliant, and cultivate the earth. This was a punishment reserved for *all* men not just the proletariat. At the origins of labour all men were equal. Mannin wrote that 'Religion for Morris's Utopians

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[76] W. Morris, *The Earthly Paradise*, London, UK, Longmans, Green, and Co., 1903.
[77] W. Morris, 'News From Nowhere', *Three Works by William Morris: News From Nowhere, The Pilgrims of Hope, A Dream of John Ball*, New York, US, International Publishers, 1977, p. 179
[78] See Appendix II
[79] Pankhurst, 'Sylvia Pankhurst', p. 267
[80] See Appendix III
[81] Morris, 'A Dream of John Ball', *Three Works by William Morris: News From Nowhere, The Pilgrims of Hope, A Dream of John Ball*, New York, US, International Publishers, 1977, p.109
[82] Morris, 'A Dream of John Ball', p.110

meant the religion of humanity – the worship of life itself, of the good earth, and of happy men and women.'[83]The message that Morris was trying to relay, and that Burne-Jones captured in his illustration is clear: if the status quo is not found in the origins of man, metaphorically speaking, then it is a social construct that can be dismantled. If it can be dismantled, then a new egalitarian construct can be created to take its place.

Mannin incorporated this message from Morris into her politics and work. In *All Experience* (1932), she recalled being 17, newly employed as a writer, and spending countless evenings in tea shops with a friend who would talk to her about socialism, and read her passages from Morris' *News from Nowhere*.[84] In *Confessions and Impressions,* she mentioned that her copy of *The Earthly Paradise* was 'as well-thumbed as [her] *Imitation of Christ*.'[85] Towards the end of her novel *Comrade O Comrade, Or Low-Down on the Left* (1945), Jackie tells Larry that 'there was an English poet called William Morris who said that the less people were governed the better… he wrote a book called *News from Nowhere*, about an imaginary community who lived according to the laws of common consent, and had all things in common.'[86] She suggests that they visit Kelmscott House where he lived, and 'all the young socialists of the day…the common working people' gathered.[87]

The real Morris lived in Kelmscott Manor in Oxfordshire. The Kelmscott House that Jackie and Larry visit is a fictional one which, as Jackie explains, 'was called the Retreat when he took it over' but renamed 'Kelmscott after the manor house he had had higher up the river.'[88] 'Retreat' was a nod to the penultimate chapter of *News from Nowhere* titled 'A Resting Place on the Upper Thames' in which Morris' protagonist and his guides stop near a 'modern stone house with a sort of natural elegance, like that of the trees themselves.'[89] It also refers to the novel's subtitle, 'An Epoch of Rest', that Charles March Gere included in the description of the wood engraving of the house that he made for the Frontispiece in the 1893 Kelmscott Press edition.[90]

Mannin's and Morris's characters travel to the same place but have temporally different experiences. The protagonist in *Nowhere* is looking at the future. Larry and Jackie are looking

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[83] E. Mannin, *Bread and Roses*, London, UK, Macdonald, 1944, p.115
[84] E. Mannin, *All Experience,* London, UK, Jarrolds, 1932, p. 75
[85] Mannin, *Confessions*, p.60
[86] E. Mannin, *Comrade O Comrade, Or Low-Down on the Left*, London, UK, Jarrolds, 1947, p.152
[87] Mannin, *Comrade O Comrade*, p.152
[88] Mannin, *Comrade O Comrade*, p. 155
[89] W. Morris, 'News From Nowhere', *Three Works by William Morris: News From Nowhere, The Pilgrims of Hope, A Dream of John Ball, New York, US, International Publishers, 1977,* p. 380
[90] See Appendix IV

at the past. Mannin, writing in 1945, felt that the drive for or ability to imagine a fully-formed Utopia had been lost. In *Bread and Roses: A Utopian Blueprint* (1944) she mourned a bygone era, and 'those two great Englishmen, Sir Thomas More and William Morris' who were able to see 'the dream whole.'[91] In her Utopia, she envisioned a return to Morris' socialist 'religion of humanity' through the restoration of Christianity as 'a guide to conduct which enables people to live together in love and peace and harmony, seeking the kingdom of heaven within them, creating it, co-operatively, here on earth.'[92] In the spirit of More she asked, 'what is Utopia if it is not that — heaven on earth?'[93]

Mannin's ideal society was governed by a fundamental law which according to her could not be 'better defined than by the Marxist.'[94] Mannin saw the benefits of Marx's philosophy, and as A.L. Morton understands it, 'when Morris wished to define his position precisely he preferred to call himself a Communist. By this he meant first a revolutionary Socialist, a Marxist.'[95] Marxism and utopianism were strange but inevitable bedfellows – a notion that Lenin vehemently opposed in *State and Revolution* (*Государство и революция*, 1917). He maintained that there was 'no shadow of an attempt on Marx's part to conjure up a Utopia, to make idle guesses about that which cannot be known.'[96] Lenin shared the view outlined in Marx and Engel's *The Communist Manifesto* (*Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*,1848) that utopian thinking developed as part of 'a crude, rough-hewn, purely instinctive sort of Communism' which was outdated and counterproductive.[97] He ensured that his position on utopian socialism and its place in the struggle for International Communism was unambiguous:

> We are not Utopians, we do not indulge in "dreams" of how best to do away immediately with all administration, with all subordination; these Anarchist dreams, based upon a lack of understanding of the task of proletarian dictatorship, are basically foreign to Marxism, and, as a matter of fact, they serve but to put off the Socialist Revolution until human nature is different.[98]

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[91] Mannin, *Bread and Roses*, p. 3
[92] Mannin, *Bread and Roses*, p. 119
[93] Mannin, *Bread and Roses*, p. 119
[94] Mannin, *Bread and Roses*, pp.13-14
[95] A.L. Morton, 'Introduction', W. Morris, *Three Works by William Morris: News From Nowhere, The Pilgrims of Hope, A Dream of John Ball*, New York, US, International Publishers, 1977, p. 19
[96] V. Lenin, *State and Revolution*, trans. unknown, New York, US, International Publishers, 1932, p.70
[97] K. Marx, and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, trans. Moore, S., London, UK, Penguin Books, 2002, p.202
[98] V. Lenin, *State and Revolution*, p.42

In Marx's words, Utopia had no 'practical value,' and was contrary to 'all political action on the part of the working class.'[99] Engels, generally in accordance with Marx, accused the 'great Utopians' (Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Owen) of failing to represent the interests of the proletariat in their efforts to establish an Earthly Paradise.[100] At the same time, Henri Maler notes that unlike Marx, Engels was not wholly free from idealism, and was prone to occasionally drifting back into the mindset of an 'impatient young man who praised, at times, with some lack of judgement, all the utopians' ideas that could contribute to a plan of total emancipation.'[101] In *Principles of Communism* (*Grundsätze des Kommunismus*, 1847), the draft version of the *Manifesto*, he proposed the construction of 'great palaces as communal dwellings for associated groups of citizens engaged in both industry and agriculture, and combining in their way of life the advantages of urban and rural conditions while avoiding the one-sidedness and drawbacks of either.'[102] His palaces call to mind the house on the Thames in *News from Nowhere*, surrounded by 'fields everywhere treated as a garden made for the pleasure as well as the livelihood of all,' that serves as a communal home for field-labourers.[103]

Whatever their intentions, Marx and Engels created a set of guidelines that made their way into the socialist imaginary because they built on and refined already-established aspects of utopian thinking. An apparent, specific example is the rallying cry: 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.'[104] While it has become commonplace to attribute it to Marx, variations can be found in early Christian socialist propaganda. A version of the slogan 'To each according to his capacity, to each capacity according to his works' was printed on the front covers of the Saint-Simonian Journals *L'Organisateur* (1829–31) and *Le Globe* (1830–32). The epigraph, 'First Right: To Live – To each following his needs,' and 'First Duty: To Work – From each following his strengths' decorates the cover of the 1845 edition of Étienne Cabet's *Voyage en Icarie* (1840) – a fictional account of an ideal society with an economic system premised on collective ownership.[105]

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[99] Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, pp. 255-256
[100] F. Engels, *Socialism Utopian and Scientific*, trans. E. Aveling, Chicago, US, 1908, p.32
[101] Maler, H., 'An Apocryphal Testament: Socialism, Utopian and Scientific, *Science and Society,* 62:1, 1998, p. 50
[102] F. Engels, *The Principles of Communism*, Peking, China, Foreign Languages Press, 1977, p. 16
[103] W. Morris, 'News From Nowhere', p.380
[104] K. Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program*, trans. Anderson, K.B., and Ludenhoff, K., Oakland, US, PM Spectre Classics, 2023, p. 59
[105] L. Bovens, and A. Lutz, '"From Each according to Ability; To Each according to Needs": Origin, Meaning, and Development of Socialist Slogans', *History of Political Economy*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2019, p. 239

In *Anti-Dühring* (1877), Engels conceded that many of the systems proposed by the Utopians, and especially those set out by Fourier and Owen, showed that they were 'perfectly clear as to the effects of the division of labour, the stunting on the one hand of the labourer, and on the other of the labour function, which is restricted to the life-long, uniform and mechanical repetition of one and the same operation.'[106] He also approved of the notion shared by Fourier and Owen that 'man should develop in every direction through universal practical activity and that labour should recover the attractiveness of which the division of labour has deprived it, in the first place through this variation of occupation.'[107]

The idea of Utopia was a motivating force that appealed to a diverse audience. It was not, as Marx, Engels, and Lenin claimed, a product of disorganised communities. On the contrary, it organised communities by injecting a sense of humanity into the cold constraints of politics. As shown, the ethical core of Christian Socialism was contained within the basic principles of utopian socialism. Eden, The Earthly Paradise, and the Angel of Freedom were motifs in scripture that when carried over into political rhetoric were easily interpreted by an audience that would have been familiar with them. For the ideological to become material, it needed to be clearly articulated, consistent, and contemplatable. Consistency was key. The repetition of specific iconography and motifs kept the socialist doctrine that activists were trying to disseminate uniform. It did not matter in which country, context or community it was received – the message was the same. In Marxian terms, the ideological precedes the material in the world that man actively creates for himself, but to create he or she must first imagine. In the socialist imaginary, Utopia was a simple idea that could be used to reach the masses, including those who would not have been able to comprehend more complex economic arguments fully.

Having established how the utopian socialism of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries is the product of a long tradition of utopian thought, the next step is understanding the mediums through which these ideas were passed on, and why these mediums were crucial to the success of the message. They took on various forms including art, song, literature and poetry, as well as speeches, news articles and pamphlets, the contents of which were shared in conversations on the factory floor, in the mines, at leisure, and so forth. As previously stated, Pankhurst, Mannin, and Cunard identified art and literature as powerful tools for conscientizing. utopianism lent itself to both fiction and political discourse. They were not just heirs to the

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[106] F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, trans. Burns, E., New York, US, International Publishers, 1939, p. 319
[107] Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, p. 319

ideology of Utopia; they were heirs to a rich literary tradition. Pankhurst took a particularly calculated approach to form in her work by drawing on literary traditions in working-class communities, including but not limited to oral literature and history.

## The Soap Box as Stage

Dave Douglas (1981), drawing on his own experiences growing up in a mining community, advocates the importance of collective memory, oral history (accounts of events), and oral literature (poetry, songs, and stories) as an antidote to the often anaemic representations of the British working classes in scholarship. Oral histories and oral literatures also provide an alternative to 'studies' conducted in the 19th Century and interwar years by those like Fanny Mayne, who wrote extensively on education and reading habits between 1850 and 1852. She viewed the working classes as uneducated, uncultured, and dangerous. She was horrified when she discovered that they were 'to a great extent, a reading people; a reading and a thinking people!' [108] The oral transmission of stories and events from generation to generation captured a richness of experience that would otherwise have been lost. Douglas used the yearly Durham Fair as an example of how politics was disseminated in this way. From 1916 to 1924, one of the highlights of the fair was a parade down Main Street that included a procession of flags commemorating vital historical events and influential figures. In some instances, banners were emblazoned with the hammer-and-sickle alongside portraits of Marx and Lenin.

The rarity of these images did not diminish what they represented. Instead, 'the fact that they were rarities meant that they were all the more watched for, and their notoriety made knowledge of those characters portrayed there more likely.'[109] This knowledge was shared in speeches, stories, and information passed on by those who had read books, and pamphlets contextualising these figures, and their importance in the struggle for economic and social freedom. For children, they became a symbol of security. If a child sought his father, he knew he would find him with the other men, talking politics in the shade of these effigies. As Douglas recalls, 'great events and characters passed through childhood memories by proxy…of those who'd experienced them directly, either informally by front-room conversations of the adults or else at sports days and suchlike where formal speeches are made.'[110]

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[108] Qtd. in: M. Dalziel, *Popular Fiction 100 Years*, London, UK, Cohen & West, 1957, p.5.
[109] D. Douglass, '"Worms of the Earth": The Miners' Own Story', R. Samuel (ed), *People's History and Socialist Theory*, New York, Routledge, 2016, p. 62.
[110] Douglass, '"Worms of the Earth"', p. 62.

Mannin was born into a working-class family, and her first encounters with politics align with Douglas' description of how children inherited information. Her earliest engagement with socialism involved listening to her father talk about meetings of the Socialist League, his experiences as a postal worker, and the concepts he encountered while reading. Mannin based the essay that caught her teacher's attention on something she heard her father quote at home. Pankhurst recalled a growing awareness of politics while listening in on discussions at her parents' gatherings. When they took up the mantle as activists, they were alert to the cultural and political affordances of informal discourse in the home, and the social sphere. Utopian socialist propaganda was uniquely effective (and affective) in these contexts because of the ease with which it assimilated into oral literature. In keeping with Robert Kellogg's definition, it comprised 'formulaic language, stock scenes, repetitions of themes and motifs, set runs and refrains, standard topoi and metaphors.'[111] In broad terms, socialist Utopias were located in an imagined, albeit not entirely unrealistic future in which an overarching ethical belief in equality governed a cooperative society. The Angel of Freedom, and the Earthly Paradise (Eden) were recurrent metaphors for a promised land accessible to all, given the collective will to realise it.

Strategically speaking, the cultural practice of passing oral literature down through the generations was already commonplace in working-class communities, priming them to receive and relay the message. In addition, and in alignment with the fundamentals of socialism, oral literature is organically inclusionary in that it is 'created anew each time it is heard.' [112] Authorship was shared, and with each retelling – in conversation, in newspapers, speeches, literature or on the stage – new life was breathed into core ideas and principals. By interpreting and relaying the narrative, the author claimed it as their own. A sense of ownership – of the narrative and the politics that informed it – strengthened commitment to the cause. At the same time, formulaic language and the repetition of metaphors, themes, and motifs ensured a degree of uniformity that fostered a sense of collaboration and synergy.

Utopian narratives combined theory and organisational practice – two spheres that many of Marx's followers believed should be kept separate. *Critique of the Gotha Program (Kritik des Gothaer Programms,* 1875), in which Marx imagined the aftereffects of a successful revolution, complicated attempts to maintain the divide. Peter Hudis described a phenomenon in communist circles where there was 'a pervasive silence over…*Critique*: a widespread

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[111] R. Kellogg, 'Oral Literature', *New Literary History*, vol 5, no.1, 1973, p.58
[112] Kellogg, 'Oral Literature', p.58

prohibition against saying anything substantial about a future society.'[113] Disdain for *Critique* was equally matched by its popularity among Socialists who still recognised the value of utopian narratives, and their practical application. In *Critique* they found the blueprint that they needed to rally the masses, summarised neatly in the passage ending in the line 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs' – a line that originated in utopian political discourse. It was concise, memorable, and easily reproduced in text and speech. Pankhurst, who encountered the passage in a translation distributed by the Socialist Labour Party (SLP), recognised its affordances and referenced it often in her work. [114] In the 18 March 1922 edition of *The Worker's Dreadnought,* she quoted the last few lines in 'Kuzbas or Communism':

> When the productive forces of society have expanded proportionately with the multiform development of the individuals of whom society is made up – then will the narrow bourgeois outlook be utterly transcended, and then will society inscribe upon its banners: 'From everyone according to his capacities, to everyone according to his needs.'[115]

Henry James Stenning borrowed from the SLP's translation of *Critique* in his 1925 translation of Karl Kautsky's *The Labour Revolution* (*Die proletarische Revolution und ihr Programm*, 1922).[116] Kautsky quoted the passage in full:

> In a higher phase of communist society, when the slavish subordination of the individual to the yoke of the division of labour has disappeared, and when concomitantly the distinction between mental and physical work has ceased to exist; when labour is no longer the means to live, but is in itself the first of vital needs; when

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[113] P. Hudis, 'The Alternative to Capitalism in Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program***,** K. Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program*, trans. Anderson, K.B., and Ludenhoff, K., Oakland, US, PM Spectre Classics, 2023, p. 22

[114] In the 31 July 1919 edition of *The Socialist* the SLP advertised 'Pamphlets and Books in stock' including 'The Gotha Program' by Karl Marx.' Socialist Labour Party, 'SLP Pamphlets and Books in Stock', 31 July 1919, *The Socialist*, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0003231/19190731/071/0008, accessed: 8 October 2023. The British SLP translation is not to be confused with the Socialist Labor Party of America's 1922 republication of *The Gotha Program*, originally translated in 1909, 'especially for the *DAILY PEOPLE*.' K. Marx, *The Gotha Program*, New York, US, National Executive Committee, Socialist Labor Party, 1922, p.5 (trans. unknown).

[115] S. Pankhurst, 'Kuzbas or Communism', *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 18 March 1922, p. 2, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0002236/19220318/002/0001?browse=true, accessed: 7 October 2023.

[116] Stenning is known for his English translations of an impressive number of Socialist texts including Max Beer's *The Life and Teaching of Karl Marx* (National Labour Press, 1921) and 'The Manifesto of the Moscow International, signed by Lenin, Trotsky, Platten, Zinoviev, and Rakovsky' (National Labour Press, 1919). It's possible that he translated *Critique* for the SLP, and was therefore using his own translation in another text, but this couldn't be confirmed.

> the productive forces of society have expanded proportionally with the multiform development of the individuals of whom society is made up – then will the narrow bourgeois outlook be utterly transcended, and then will society inscribe upon its banners, "From everyone according to his capacities; to everyone according to his needs!"[117]

The way that Pankhurst incorporated this passage into her work displayed a keen awareness of oral literature, and the importance of formulaic language, repetitive themes, and recurrent motifs in storytelling. In an article published on 11 March, a week before 'Kuzbas or Communism', she had adapted it to outline her vision of socialism in practice:

> Under Capitalism the masses are as a flock of sheep driven by their owners. Under Communism, on the contrary, they will be free co-operators, producing, inventing, studying, not under the compulsion of law, or poverty, or the incentive of individual gain, but from deliberate choice and with eager zest for achievement.[118]

Pankhurst took 'the slavish subordination of the individual to the yoke of the division of labour' and simplified it as 'under Capitalism the masses are as a flock of sheep driven by their owners.' Marx described a society where 'labour is no longer the means to live, but is in itself the first of vital needs.' Pankhurst reframed this as the freedom to produce, invent and study by 'deliberate choice and with an eager zest for achievement.' On 7 October 1922, she concluded a piece comparing communism to capitalism with 'Each shall give according to his capacity, each shall use according to his needs.'[119] In 1923, she returned to *Critique,* again simplifying Marx's message:

> Under Communism all shall satisfy their material needs without stint or measure, from the common storehouse, according to their desires. Everyone will be able to have what he or she desires in food, in clothing, in books, music, education and travel facilities. The abundant production now possible, and which invention will constantly facilitate, will remove any need for rationing or limiting of consumption.[120]

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[117] K. Kautsky, *The Labour Revolution*, trans. Stenning, H.J., London, UK, George Allen & Unwin, 1925, pp.255-256. Stenning cites the SLP in a footnote.
[118] S. Pankhurst, *Communism and its Tactics*, Arizona, US, Prism Key Press, 2011, p. 39
[119] S. Pankhurst, 'Who Shall Rule the World?', *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 7 October 1922, p. 7, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0002236/19221007/034/0007, accessed: 7 October 2023.
[120] Pankhurst, *Communism and its Tactics*, p. 47.

In the 11 March 1922, and 7 October 1923 editions of the *Dreadnought,* Pankhurst rewrote Marx's ideas in the future perfect progressive tense. She switched to the present tense when she spoke about production, and how it would be repurposed under socialism. In the 1923 article, she used the pronouns 'all' and 'their' to connote the collective, while 'he' and 'she' individualised the reader. Pankhurst's revisions became progressively romantic and affective. She replaced 'zest for achievement' with 'desire', implying something longed for but not yet achieved. In doing so, she increased the accessibility and appeal of Marx's ideas by weaving the fantasy of Utopia into the benefits of socio-political and economic reform.

Her approach to teasing the utopian narrative out of the passage from *Critique* was nuanced and subtle. In *Bread and Roses,* Mannin took the same passage and integrated it firmly, and blatantly into her vision of Utopia:

> Given the will to it the Utopian dream could be realised…a world in which all things were in common, each giving to society according to his ability and taking according to his need; a world in which there was no buying or selling, no useless toil, no exploitation of the many by the privileged few; a world in which human beings lived according to the natural law of mutual aid, in a stateless, moneyless, and co-operative society; a world of true liberty, equality and fraternity…There could be such a world if humanity wanted it enough.[121]

The extracts from Pankhurst's articles, and Mannin's *Bread and Roses* are thematically congruous with the passage from Marx's *Critique*. They all outlined an equal society built on community, and the freedom to pursue production, invention, and education without the constraints of Capitalism and poverty. *Critique* was used as the source material for a script that was easily replicated, and imagined anew with each retelling without compromising the central *Idea*.

Alain Badiou defines an 'Idea' as the abstract culmination of three elements: 'a truth procedure, a belonging to history, and an individual subjectivation.' The Idea informs subjectification which makes it possible for an individual 'to understand that his or her participation in a singular political process (his or her entry into a body-of-truth).' Participation in these processes is 'also, in a certain way, a *historical* decision.' [122] Socialism was an Idea located within a discourse of emancipatory politics that was localised (the individual's

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[121] E. Mannin, *Bread and Roses*, London, UK, Macdonald, 1944, p. 120
[122] A. Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis*, trans. D. Macey and S. Corcoran, London and New York, US, Verso, 2010, p. 235.

affiliation with regional collectives like political parties) and global (the shared goal of economic, social and political emancipation). In simple terms, 'to be a militant of a Communist Party was also to be one of millions of agents of a historical orientation of all of Humanity…To give out a leaflet in a marketplace was also to mount the stage of History (*Donner un tract sur un marché était aussi monter sur la scène de l'Histoire*).'[123]

To be on the stage is to *perform* the Idea, inhabit it, and participate in the *making* and movement of History. In Badiou's short philosophical treatise, *Rhapsody for the Theatre* (*Rhapsodie pour le théâtre*, 1990), he identifies three conditions of theatre: the 'public gathered with the intent of spectacle,' 'actors who are physically present,' and a textual referent, 'of which the spectacle can be said to be the representation.'[124] Politics occurs when these elementary conditions present as,

> the masses who all of a sudden are gathered in an unexpected consistency (events); the points of view incarnated in organic and enumerable actors (subject-effects); a reference in thought that authorizes the elaboration of discourse based upon the mode in which the specific actors in question are held together, even at a distance, by the popular consistency to which chance summons them.[125]

For Badiou, theatre is the artform that most closely resembles politics because it produces truth by asking the spectator, via an 'indirect means of representation and distance,' to 'think their lives otherwise than they usually do.'[126] Utopian socialist rhetoric was encased in a narrow script, a textual referent, enacted collectively by a group of actors (*āctor*, doers) who challenged, and sought to dismantle the barriers erected by the systems of social organisation in which they found themselves.

The line between fiction and non-fiction blurred when utopian ideas were encased in mediums like newspaper articles typically associated with factual information. The same is evident in oral literatures where historical and contemporary events were relayed through the same medium as folktales or fables. Including literature in the analysis of politics bridged the gap between doctrine and the people who received it. Oral literatures helped traverse this divide. Accounts by those like Douglass, who experienced the generational transmission of ideas, stories and history first-hand, are evidence of literary culture in these communities

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[123] Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis*, p. 236.
[124] A. Badiou, *Rhapsody for the Theatre*, trans. B. Bosteels , London and New York, US, Verso, 2013, p. 6
[125] Badiou, *Rhapsody for the Theatre*, pp.7-8
[126] A. Badiou, *In Praise of Theatre*, trans. N. Truong, Cambridge, UK, 2015, p.27

('thinking people!') long before the educational reforms in the 19th Century expanded the reading public in Britain.

Engagement with working-class literary culture, specifically oral literary traditions, has been largely omitted from scholarship that considers Pankhurst and Mannin's work. Their awareness of the people that they were writing for, and how Pankhurst and Mannin carried these traditions over adds depth to fiction and non-fiction that has been side-lined because it appears to lack literary merit, or is classed as generic propaganda. Reinvigorating their work in this way opens new avenues for considering how their fiction and non-fiction intersected, and the political affordances of bringing these sites of ideology into conversation.

How Pankhurst and Mannin wove Marx's *Critique* into their non-fiction was evocative of the repetition and reworking of the Angel of Freedom, and Eden in fiction by the utopian authors and artists like Morris who inspired them. When taken up, the script, its primary material – themes and motifs, set runs and refrains, standard topoi and metaphors – imitated the flow of information through oral literature and history. When writers like Pankhurst, Mannin, Cunard, and others took up the script, the marketplace leaflets became novels, poems, short stories, and journalism. In congruence with their literary work, they were involved in direct action. Pankhurst first mounted the stage of history as a Suffragette.

## The Body as Battlefield

In 1893, Pankhurst's parents and Keir Hardie, an ardent Socialist, founded the Independent Labour Party (ILP). Pankhurst was studying at the Manchester School of art when she was commissioned to paint a series of murals in the ILP's Pankhurst Hall in Salford (named in memory of her father who had died in 1898). Richard Pankhurst's commitment to gender equality was not taken into consideration in the running of the Hall, which did not admit women. Emmeline and Christabel determined that the women in the ILP needed to form their own organisation. In 1903, a week after the Hall was opened, the Pankhurst women hosted the first meeting of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU).[127] Mannin included 'the Pankhursts among the revolutionary women that she documented in *Women and the Revolution* She provided an abridged version of what unfolded after 1905 when the WSUP adopted a policy of direct action, growing increasingly militant:

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[127] E. Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide 1866-1928*, London, UK, UCL Press, 1999, p. 2022-2023

> members of parliament were lobbied, ministers' houses picketed, pavements and walls chalked with the battle-cry "Votes for Women" and "No Taxation with Representation"; mass meetings and processions were organised all over the country, leaflets and handbills and suffragist papers distributed and sold; the full machinery of militant propaganda was in action, and accelerated as time went on.[128]

On Black Friday, 18 November 1910, disruption evolved into destruction when 300 women descended on Parliament. The Suffragettes who were arrested were charged with 'window breaking, assaulting the police, obstruction, and throwing stones and doing wilful damage.'[129] What the courts called assault was self-defence against an onslaught by law enforcement outlined in a detailed pamphlet entitled 'Treatment of the Women's Deputations by the Police' released in 1911. The pamphlet included accounts of unprovoked physical and sexual violence. Women were 'flung hither and thither amid moving traffic, and into the hands of a crowd permeated by plain clothes detectives, which was sometimes rough and indecent.'[130] Suffragette Henria Williams reported that: 'One policeman after knocking me about for a considerable time, finally took hold of me with his great strong hands…I knew that unless I made a strong effort…he would kill me.'[131]

Calls for a public enquiry into police brutality were rejected by then Home Secretary Winston Churchill. This came as no surprise to Pankhurst who had her first run in with Churchill in January of 1906 while he was on the campaign trail for the general election. He hoped to secure the Manchester North West seat in the House of Commons for the Liberal Party. In her memoir, *The Suffragette Movement* she wrote that in a hall in Cheetham she had asked him whether the Liberal Party would give women the vote. When he ignored her, some of the men from the ILP started shouting from the back of the room, demanding a response. In an attempt to calm them down Churchill invited Pankhurst to deliver her question from the podium. When she tried to re-join the audience, Churchill 'seized [her] roughly by the arm and pushed [her] into a chair at the back of the platform,' insisting that she listen to what he had to say. As Pankhurst remembered it, he concluded a brief speech with: 'Nothing would induce

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[128] E. Mannin, *Women and the Revolution*, New York, US, E.P. Dutton & Company, 1939, p. 75
[129] 'Suffragette Raid: Women Brought Up at Bow Street', *Leicester Evening Mail*, 22 November 1911, p. 1, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0003329/19111122/013/0001, accessed: 13 October 2023.
[130] **'**Treatment of the Women's Deputations by the Police', The National Archives, Kew, UK, Catalogue Reference: MEPO 3/203.
[131] 'Suffragettes: Complaints Against Police', The National Archives, Kew, UK, Catalogue Reference: MEPO 3/203.

me to vote for giving women the franchise; I am not going to be henpecked into a question of such importance.'[132] She was then detained in a room which she managed to escape through a window with the help of protesters outside.

Pankhurst's account differs from what has been written by biographers like Lewis Broad (1957), Randolph S. Churchill (1967), and Andrew Roberts (1918). Broad, quoting from Pankhurst's memoir, painted her as a villain 'delighted when she could sting Churchill.'[133] The tone of his writing suggests that he approved of the moment when she was removed and locked in a room. Randolph S. Churchill gave a predictably biased account of his father's response to the situation, using an article from *The Manchester Guardian* as an example of 'a typical meeting interrupted by suffragettes.'[134] According to *The Guardian*, the crowd had shouted 'the woman' down when she interrupted Churchill. He in turn jumped to her aid, and giving her the platform appealed to the crowd to 'be quiet' so that they could 'hear what she had to say.' When Pankhurst asked her question, the crowd responded with 'cries of "Never!".' Churchill, ever the champion of women's rights, urged the crowd to 'observe courtesy and chivalry to the weaker sex dependent upon us.' [135]

The 6 January 1906 edition of the *Sheffield Evening Telegraph* told a different story that aligned with Pankhurst's version of events. She was 'received with cheers and hooting, and eventually one of her male supporters was removed.' When she asked her question 'Mr. Churchill replied that, having regard to the treatment he had received and the destruction of great meetings which he had witnessed by advocates of women's suffrage, nothing would induce him to vote for giving women the franchise.'[136] As to *her* treatment: 'Miss Sylvia Pankhurst…was somewhat roughly handled. She was hustled into an ante-room where she was detained, and virtually imprisoned.' She ultimately 'found her way into an adjoining room and with the assistance of some of the crowd outside, made her exit through the window.'[137]

Roberts' biography, *Churchill: Walking With Destiny*, was named one of the best books of 2018 by *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Economist*. In his review for *The New York Times*,

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[132] S. Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement: An Intimate Account of Persons and Ideals*, London, UK, Longmans, Green and Co., 1932, p. 193
[133] L. Broad, *Winston Churchill: The Years of Preparation*, New York, US, Hawthorn Books, 1958, p. 123
[134] R.S. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill: Young Statesmen 1901-1914*, Michigan, US, Rosetta Books, 2007, pp. 276-277
[135] qtd. in Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill*, pp. 276-277
[136] 'Election Notes and Items', *Sheffield Evening Telegraph*, 6 January 1906, p.4, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000276/19060106/092/0004, accessed: 14 October 2023
[137] 'Election Notes and Items', p.4

Richard Aldous called it 'the best single-volume biography of Churchill yet written.'[138] The book, which has been lauded as a comprehensive, academically impressive account of Churchill's life, is riddled with inaccuracies. In the short section on Churchill's interactions with the Suffragettes, Roberts made sure to mention that 'although Churchill had voted for an early measure of female suffrage in March 1904 in the House of Commons, in the 1906 election his high profile made him a particular target for [the] disruptive tactics that had been adopted by their radical wing for several months.' [139] Roberts claimed that Churchill handled the disruptions calmly and diplomatically, unlike Suffragettes like Flora Drummond, who was invited to take the stage to make her point ('forcefully') during a rally in Manchester.[140] According to Roberts, Drummond was 'a spokeswoman for the Woman's Suffrage Association.'[141] The Woman's Suffrage Association did not exist in Britain. The only organisation bearing a similar name was the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) founded by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony in 1869 to fight for suffrage in the United States. The NSWA was not on the same continent, let alone in Manchester during Churchill's campaign. Drummond was a high-ranking member of the WSPU who went by the name 'The General' because she dressed in a military uniform complete with an officers cap, and famously lead protests riding a large horse.[142] In his brief mention of the meeting where Pankhurst was manhandled, Roberts confuses her with her sister, writing that 'the meeting was disrupted by Adela Pankhurst.'[143] Apart from a quote carefully selected to show Churchill in a good light, he says nothing more about what unfolded after she asked her question.

In *The Suffragette Movement,* Pankhurst recorded myriad instances of women attacked by law enforcement *and* the men who attended meetings. When Annie Kenney asked the question, 'Will the Liberal Government give women the vote?' at a meeting in Sheffield, Pankhurst felt that it was no longer a question – it was a 'signal' that would 'bring…violence upon her.' Her fears were confirmed when the 'men in the audience struck at [Kenney] with fists and umbrellas as she was carried past them.'[144]

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[138] R. Aldous, 'Is This the Best One-Volume Biography of Churchill Yet Written?', *The New York Times*, 13 November 2018, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/13/books/review/andrew-roberts-churchill-winston-biography.html, accessed: 16 October 2023.
[139] A. Roberts, A., *Churchill, Walking With Destiny*, London, UK, Allen Lane, 2018, p. 103
[140] Roberts, *Churchill*, p. 103
[141] Roberts, *Churchill*, p. 103
[142] W. Parkins (ed), *Fashioning the Body Politic: Dress, Gender Citizenship*, Oxford, UK, 2002, p. 118
[143] Roberts, *Churchill*, p. 103
[144] Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, p. 195

The State sanctioned violence against women grew worse as the struggle for suffrage went on. Women who were imprisoned (Pankhurst no less than 15 times) continued their activism with hunger strikes that resulted in forced feedings. On 25 March 1913, the Cat and Mouse Act was put into effect to manage the hunger strikes. The Act allowed for the release of prisoners whose health was under threat until they had recovered. They would then be detained again, and the process would start over.[145] The men who were arrested at protests were not subjected to the same sentences. *The Irish Citizen* (20 June 1914) reported that Pankhurst had been 'repeatedly imprisoned under the Cat and Mouse Act merely for speech.' Socialist politician George Lansbury, although 'sentenced for precisely the same offense, and to precisely the same term' was never 'rearrested under the Act.'[146] In Hardie's words: 'the endurance and heroism that these women are showing in prison equals, if it does not excel, anything we have witnessed on the field of battle, or elsewhere.'[147]

Pankhurst remained wholly committed to the WSPU until 1914 when she started to question the feminism that her mother and sister championed. They had limited their efforts to abolishing inequality between men and women, while Pankhurst sought to unite the struggle for gender equality with the emancipation of the working classes and peoples subjected to Imperialism and colonialism.[148] When she refused to break ties with the labour movement and socialist politics, she was expelled from the organisation. She founded the ELFS, and its corresponding weekly the *Woman's Dreadnought*. The ELFS differed from the WSPU in that it focused on working-class women – a demographic whose political interests were underrepresented in mainstream efforts for suffrage. Further distancing herself from the WSPU, Pankhurst opened up the ELFS to men. The ELFS became the East London Federation of Socialists, and in 1917, *The Woman's Dreadnought* was renamed *The Workers' Dreadnought.*

The battle that Hardie spoke of was being fought on women's bodies, for the ownership of women's bodies. The means of production that socialist men were working to seize was tied to labour in the public sphere. Women's labour was paid and unpaid, in the public workspace, and the private space of the home. Production was as grounded in their bodies as it was in the

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[145] Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement,* p. 453
[146] 'Shall Sylvia Die?', *Irish Citizen*, Dublin, 20 June 1914, p.1, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0002209/19140620/004/0001, accessed: 18 October 2023.
[147] Qtd. In: S. Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement: An Intimate Account of Persons and Ideals*, London, UK, Longmans, Green and Co., 1932, p. 454
[148] S. Rowbotham, 'Forward', B. Winslow, *Sylvia Pankhurst, Sexual Politics and Political Activism*, London, UK, Routledge, 1996, pp. ix-x

economic and socio-political landscape that needed to be fundamentally altered to achieve a fully realised Socialist society. Capitalism was (is) an exploitative mode of production that relied (relies) on private ownership of the means of production. The Capitalist did not buy the worker's labour, he buys his labour-power, or ability to work for a period of time. It is labour-power that becomes a commodity under Capitalism. The female body is not only the source of labour, but the site of commodity production – it is through the body that reproductive labour is performed, and reproduction occurs. It is, metaphorically, the machine that facilitates the maintenance and reproduction of the labour force. The private nature of reproductive labour meant that it was harder to regulate.

The society that women were forced to navigate was nothing short of dystopian. Consequently, the need to think their lives otherwise than they usually do was more urgent for them than it was for men. It was also necessary to imagine a future in which equality was commonplace, failing which the reality of the present would overwhelm them. The decision made by Pankhurst, Mannin, and Cunard to adhere to utopian socialism despite opposition from Lenin, and other anti-Utopians was not just the recognition of the importance and effectiveness of storytelling in propaganda. It counteracted the dystopian lived-reality of women in Britain, and elsewhere.

In short, they understood that the pragmatism of immediate action and practical solutions were, for women and other marginalised peoples in their own dystopias, inseparable from storytelling and imagined futures. Stories helped women to understand, in Mannin's words, 'as clearly as the Suffragettes knew, what they want, what is capable of achievement under the existing system, and what can only achieved by the overthrow of that system.'[149]A history of Pankhurst's time as a Suffragette lends context to her transition from a feminist-centric approach to politics to the inclusion of men in the ELFS when she committed herself fully to communism ahead of World War I. Her path to socialism is an example of how narratives are passed down through the generations, and how they affected those who inherited them. Pankhurst was aware of, and inspired by accounts of socialist women's activism dating back to the early 19th Century.

Working-class women spearheaded one of the earliest expressions of political activity in British politics. A massive, organised rally in Manchester on 16 August 1819[150] calling for a

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[149] Mannin, *Women and the Revolution*, p. 207

[150] The protest was later called 'The Peterloo Massacre' - 15 people were killed when the cavalry charged the crowd. The rally was met with extreme violence – a trend that would continue in the State's response to organised political action throughout the century that followed. Pankhurst would record the arrests, beatings and

reform of parliamentary representation showed them to be a potent, unified and politically astute force to be reckoned with. They wore Phrygian caps, a symbol of socialism and the French Revolution, and spoke clearly and publicly about issues outside of the private space of the family and women's work. They occupied and claimed a public space typically reserved for men.[151] As Mannin put it in *Women and the Revolution,* the Industrial Revolution 'got women out of the home and into the wider world in which they could fight side by side with men for the emancipation of the working class in general…because they were workers, and becoming thus "human beings regardless of distinctions of sex", it was natural that they should seek political emancipation.'[152] She included the rising Trade Unionist Movement of 1833 in her record of revolutions where women drawn into industry joined male workers in the struggle against 'capitalist greed and exploitation.'[153] They formed various associations, and societies that became the forerunners of the Suffrage Movement.[154]

In *The Suffragette Movement: An Intimate Account of Persons and Ideals* (1931), Pankhurst wrote that before the formalisation of the 1884 Reform Act extending voting rights to adult males who rented properties, large groups of women attended meetings 'in size and enthusiasm greatly exceeding those of the agricultural labourers, who cared little or nothing for enfranchisement.'[155] Pankhurst's decision to include men in the ELFS continued the activism across gender lines that she and Mannin discussed in their books. Accounts of the Suffrage movement, the revolutions that preceded it, the violence and perseverance, alerted the socialist women who were too young to participate in it to their marginalised place in the socio-political landscape of interwar Britain.

Mannin included the Suffrage movement in her book about revolutionary women because it marked a period in British history that directly affected the women of her generation. Reflecting on her youth, she wrote that the 'young women of this era were caught up on this tide of freedom and borne along on it, and taking it for granted gave no thought to the years of struggle on the part of the Feminist movement which had at long last released it.'[156] *Women*

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forced feedings that she, and others, endured while fighting for the right to participate in the polity, in her fiction and non-fiction work.

[151] E. Chalus and F. Montgomery, 'Women and Politics', H. Barker, and E. Chalus, (eds), *Women's History: Britain 1700-1850,* London, UK, Routledge, 2005, p. 242
[152] Mannin, *Women and the Revolution*, pp.70-71
[153] Mannin, *Women and the Revolution*, p. 67
[154] Mannin, *Women and the Revolution*, p. 67
[155] Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, p. 69
[156] Mannin, *Women and the Revolution*, pp.30-31

*and the Revolution,* published in 1938, was an attempt on Mannin's part to rescue that legacy - the greater 'revolution for women…the revolt of Woman against the oppression of Man'[157] – and pass it on to a generation that, as Caitriona Beaumont and others have pointed out, failed to take advantage of their new freedoms after they were granted the vote in 1928.[158] When Mannin's history of revolutions is juxtaposed with Pankhurst's recollections of her time as a Suffragette, it shows how stories and accounts of events were passed down through history, and interpreted by those who inherited the work that still needed to be done to attain full equality with men.

The transmission of narratives that invited participation in the making of history extended (and extend) to both sides of the struggle for emancipation – its proponents and opponents. History is not static, and how events are portrayed affects how they are remembered. When historians and biographers like Roberts do not bother to do the necessary research to correctly depict these narratives – or worse, choose to ignore the evidence to provide a biased account of events – they participate in a long tradition of misrepresenting women's history. In recent years, there has been a resurgence of right-wing historians rewriting history to the benefit of those seeking to erase the legacies of left-wing revolutionaries.

Revolutionary women's activities profoundly influenced their successors, who encountered them through narratives, and stories passed down through the generations. Inaccurate accounts in books like *Churchill, Walking With Destiny*, when marketed as fact, corrupt these narratives. Ironically, Roberts has been praised for his extensive archival work, and, according to Aldous, 'is in complete command both of his sources and the vast historiography.'[159] His dive into the archives could not have been that extensive, and his command shaky, because it was precisely through archival research that his claims were quickly debunked.

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[157] Mannin, *Women and the Revolution*, pp.30-31
[158] C. Beaumont, 'Citizens not Feminists: the Boundary Negotiated Between Citizenship and Feminism by Mainstream Women's Organisations in England, 1928-39', *Women's History Review*, vol.9, no.2, p. 412
[159] R. Aldous, 'Is This the Best One-Volume Biography of Churchill Yet Written?', *The New York Times*, 13 November 2018, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/13/books/review/andrew-roberts-churchill-winston-biography.html, accessed: 16 October 2023.

## Free The Mothers

Pankhurst's fiction and poetry do not appear often in biographies, articles, and books about her life in politics. *Writ on Cold Slate* (1922)*,* the collection of poems that she wrote while detained in Holloway Prison, is the exception. What has been almost entirely overlooked is that Pankhurst's creative writing was not limited to poetry. Her plays, although they weren't performed, were attempts to capture politics on the stage. *Between Two Fires* was written at the same time as the poems in *Writ on Cold Slate* but forgotten until Holmes rescued it from the archives in 2022.[160] Pankhurst also wrote short stories – 'Thrift'(1914), written in the style of working-class life writing, a work of science fiction 'Utopian Conversations' (1923), and 'Co-Operative Housekeeping'(1920) that when read in context provide insight into her readership, and the techniques that she used to make her political non-fiction more accessible to an audience of working-class women. She was cognisant of the ways that stories *argued*.

The incident with Churchill is an example of how a story has moved through time, and continues on its trajectory today. In Pankhurst's time, how the event was reported in the media– the wildly different versions in *The Manchester Guardian* and the *Sheffield Evening Telegraph* for example – provided readers with politically-charged narratives that could influence how they perceived the Suffrage movement. News media was a powerful way of reaching an audience, and Pankhurst harnessed this power in *The Dreadnought*. As a Feminist, she was interested in how socialist societies would be structured to meet women's needs. She found the idea of the co-operative household particularly compelling. It liberated women from the isolation of work in the private space of the home, and waged work in the homes of others. After leaving the WSPU, she set up a base of operations for the ELFS and her paper in one of London's poorest areas, the 'East End, with its miserable housing, its ill-paid casual employment and harsh privations bravely borne by masses of toilers.'[161] There, she could live and work closely with the women and men that she was invested in helping.

Pankhurst was trying to implement what we today would call an intersectional approach to understanding women's oppression.[162] According to her, 'the yoke of poverty oppressing all

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[160] S. Pankhurst, *Between Two Fires*, London, UK, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022. (Arranged by Rachel Holmes).
[161] Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement,* p. 523
[162] Intersectional Feminism is seen as the primary way that Third Wave Feminism differs from First Wave Feminism (the fight for civil equality) and Second Wave Feminism (Marxist Feminism). According to Claire Snyder, Rebecca Walker is credited as the woman who 'kicked off the new movement' in 1992. Walker (quoted by Snyder) believed that the Second Wave did not 'allow for individuality, complexity, or less than perfect

was a factor no one-sided propaganda could disregard. The women speakers who rose up from the slums were struggling, day in day out, with the ills which to others were merely hearsay.'[163] When these women were still attending WSPU meetings, the movement's class divide was unmistakable. Pankhurst recalled that 'Sometimes a group of them went with [her] to the drawing-rooms of Kensington and Mayfair; their speeches made a startling impression upon those women of another world, to whom hard manual toil and the lack of necessaries were unknown.'[164] In Britain, and elsewhere, the home was distinct from the public sphere, and run differently depending on class. Working-class women performed domestic labour for their own families, and the families of more wealthy men and women.

The co-operative household divided housework between women in a classless community. 'Co-Operative Housekeeping' was published in August 1920 in *The Dreadnought* as a newspaper serial – a medium that working-class women were familiar with, and in some cases the only way that they could access fiction. Pankhurst used the tropes typical of utopian socialist fiction in 'Co-Operative Housekeeping': it is set in post-Revolution London (a distant future) where work and wealth are distributed equally among people who live in a classless society. The conversational structure of the narrative is reminiscent of Morris' *A Dream of John Ball*. The plot is simple: A woman tells another woman the story of how she went from opposing co-operative living to fully supporting it (for ease of distinction, I will refer to them as 'Woman One' and 'Woman Two'). The first line in the first instalment, printed 21 August 1920, is written as if to answer a question: 'Oh, yes, I am a genuine convert to Communist housekeeping, Co-operative housekeeping I prefer to call it, and to Communism also.'[165]The chiastic opening emphasised the connection between politics and the life that it offered.

Immediately after Woman One confirms her commitment to co-operative living and communism, she clarifies that she was 'absolutely against it' before trying it: 'I declared that I

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personal histories.' Walker's and similar sentiments are commonplace in Third Wave scholarship. Third Wavers claim a version of Feminism that 'that addresses their different societal contexts and the particular set of challenges they face.' 'Intersectional Feminism' as a concept has also been attributed to Kimberlé Crenshaw who coined the term to describe a much needed change in the legal system in the USA that acknowledged the 'multidimensionality of Black women's experience.' The history of Intersectional Feminism differs depending on who is writing about it. What most agree on is that it is a concept that originates towards the end of the 20th Century. This is arguably not the case evident in that many Socialist Feminists were thinking along these lines even before the shift to Second Wave Feminism. R. C. Snyder, 'What Is Third-Wave Feminism? A New Directions Essay', *Signs*, vol.34, no.1, 2008, pp. 176-178, K. Crenshaw, 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics', *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, vol. 1989, no.1, 1989, p. 139.

[163] Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement,* p. 523

[164] Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, 1932, p. 523

[165] S. Pankhurst, 'Co-Operative Housekeeping', *Woman's Dreadnought*, 21 August 1920, p.5, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0002236/19200821/021/0005, accessed: 16 October 2023.

would never submit to it. Indeed, I was quite prepared to resist and to persuade all the women in the street where I lived, to resist with me – really, I was quite militant about it!' The first question is then put forward by Woman Two:

> "And now you've settled down to it?"
> "Oh, no! I'm an enthusiast! I didn't just submit – all I did was quite voluntary. I only took part in it, gradually, as I discovered its advantages."
> "How did you begin?"
> "Well I shall tell you."[166]

From here, the story begins. The women are not named. Woman Two poses questions that a reader might ask if she was interested in the social system that Woman One is enthusiastically promoting. The reader is invited to assume the position of listener.

Pankhurst takes this further when Woman One begins the story-proper with a reference to the reader's lived reality: 'Of course, you know that before the Revolution, this was a very poor and overcrowded district. It is quite transformed now, but the streets that used to be here were nothing but slums.'[167] Most of the East End working-class women that Pankhurst was writing for resided in, as she described them, 'hideously unsavoury tenements' and 'Hidden dwellings… so much built round that many of their rooms were as dark as night all day. Exorbitant rents were charged in wretched barracks for so-called "furnished rooms," containing nothing but a dilapidated bedstead with the poorest of covering, and a couple of chairs.'[168] By mentioning the reader's circumstances, Pankhurst captured her attention with the promise of an alternative.

What follows is a detailed account of how Woman One was moved to go to the 'Soviet Health Office' when someone in her house contracted smallpox. She finds herself in the isolation home where she had 'the first country holiday' she had had in years, with friendly people and 'excellent food' that she did not have to pay for. From there, she decided to try to find housing. She was initially reluctant to move to a Soviet cooperative but eventually relented.[169] Pankhurst outlined the entire process from how the narrator navigated the Soviet Housing Bureau where the 'Secretary…was most obliging,' to a meeting with the Secretary of the Housing Committee, who offered her the option of redecorating her home with new

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[166] Pankhurst, 'Co-Operative Housekeeping', p.5
[167] Pankhurst, 'Co-Operative Housekeeping', p.5
[168] Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement,* pp. 418-419
[169] S. Pankhurst, 'Co-Operative Housekeeping', p.5.

furniture. The instalment ends with 'So I found myself in a Co-operative house.'[170] The end of the first part promised a description of co-operative living in part two, enticing readers to return to *The Dreadnought*.

In the second and final instalment, published on 28 August, Woman One describes life in her co-operative home. The house is built around a garden (unheard of in the East End) and domestic labour including childcare, cooking, and cleaning is divided equally among the women in the community. Each contributes according to her abilities, each receives according to her needs. Without the burden of taking on all of the domestic labour in the home, Woman One finds herself with time to pursue her interests, and rest. When she arrives in her new home, she finds it difficult to settle in to the new way of doing things, but does so quickly. She concludes her story with:

> That evening, I threw all my reserves away. I went with my children to supper in the Household Common Room, played tennis with some of the other inmates, and finished up, with a dance on the roof. Since then, I have tried to be a Communist and to help the Communists in every way that I can. I am so fortunate in my work; I do enjoy it! I like the Communist life in every way, and I'm anxious to see it made more complete. I hope it will soon spread all over the world.[171]

Three years before writing 'Co-Operative Housekeeping', marking a connection between her fiction and non-fiction, Pankhurst had outlined co-operative living in *Housing and the Workers' Revolution - Housing in Capitalist Britain and Bolshevik Russia* (1917). It was a pamphlet published by the Workers' Socialist Federation (WSF) that asked its readers to 'imagine' a different way of life.[172] She used real-world examples of the conditions in the East End, and in mining communities where 'at the best, the houses are small and ugly; at worst, they are unfit for cattle.' Pankhurst placed the blame at the doors of the directors and shareholders of mining companies who if they 'had been forced to live with their families amongst the miners, or if the mining industry had been managed by the workers in it, communities would not have been housed like this, and their surroundings would have been different.'[173] Although it still called for a degree of imagination, the pamphlet was based on the

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[170] S. Pankhurst, 'Co-Operative Housekeeping', p.5
[171] S. Pankhurst, 'Co-Operative Housekeeping', K. Dodd (ed), *A Sylvia Pankhurst Reader*, Manchester, UK, Manchester University Press, 1993, p. 108
[172] S. Pankhurst, *Housing and the Workers' Revolution - Housing in Capitalist Britain and Bolshevik Russia*, London, UK, The Workers' Socialist Federation, 1918, online: https://www.marxists.org/archive/pankhurst-sylvia/1918/housing.htm, accessed: 18 October 2023.
[173] Pankhurst, *Housing and the Workers' Revolution*

housing co-operatives – an extension of a larger co-operative plan for social reform – that the Bolsheviks had included in an economic policy implemented in June 1918. Lynne Attwood's summary of the workings of Soviet co-operatives aligns with the society that Pankhurst was advocating in 'Co-Operative Housekeeping' and her pamphlet:

> [Housing cooperatives] had concerned themselves with a range of domestic needs. They had procured foodstuffs for their members; they had helped them sell their own produce, such as home-grown vegetables; and they had set up sewing and knitting cartels through which members could produce and sell clothes. They had also played a part in the organisation of social services such as crèches, kindergartens, dining rooms and laundries.[174]

These tasks traditionally fall within the realm of women's work. Scholars have used Pankhurst's pamphlet alongside other works that focus on women in the private space to question her commitment to abolishing inequality between men and women. Mary Davis, surprised by her 'acceptance of the traditional sexual division of labour,' claimed that 'at worst [Pankhurst] regarded work outside the home as primarily a masculine undertaking and at best she paid insufficient attention to the particular issues of segregated female labour.'[175] Davis goes on to claim that there is no evidence to suggest that 'feminism was central to her thinking in [the post-war] period.'[176]

Romero[177] went so far as to suggest that while Pankhurst appeared to conduct herself as a Feminist in public, her private life 'presented a succession of dependencies on men.'[178] Taken at face value, Pankhurst's focus on the domestic space in her fictional and non-fiction outline of co-operative living does appear to reinforce the gender divide. However, when her fiction is analysed through the lens of cultural materialism, it sheds new light on her non-fiction, and why she chose to approach co-operative living in this way. Placed in context, and in congress with the other reforms that she was championing, there is strong evidence to

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[174] L. Attwood, *Gender and Housing in Soviet Russia: Private Life in a Public Space*, Manchester, UK, Manchester University Press, 2010, p.61
[175] M. Davis, *Sylvia Pankhurst: A Life in Radical Politics*, London, UK, Pluto Press, 1999, p. 92
[176] Davis, *Sylvia Pankhurst: A Life in Radical Politics*, p. 92
[177] Anyone familiar with Pankhurst's life and work can easily attest to the absurdity of Romero's statement. It doesn't warrant further engagement.
[178] P. Romero, *E. Sylvia Pankhurst: Portrait of a Radical*, New Haven, US, Yale University Press, 1987, p. 287

suggest that feminism *was* central to her thinking, as was segregated labour and the concerns of working-class women.[179]

In working-class communities domestic labour was embedded in socio-cultural practices. The domestic space was one of the few arenas where women could exercise agency and power. In an interview conducted in 1911, Anna Martin explained that 'women have a vague dread of being superseded and dethroned. Each of them knows perfectly well that the strength of her position in the home lies in the physical dependence of her husband and children upon her and she is suspicious of anything that would tend to undermine this.'[180] Men were permitted to learn some household skills, but only insofar as they did not threaten the domestic hierarchy.[181] Suggesting a society in which this power was suddenly stripped away would have alienated the majority of Pankhurst's readers. She addressed this in 'Co-Operative Housekeeping' when the narrator's house is cleaned for her, and she is left 'feeling a fool.'[182] Her anxiety is relieved when she finds a way to contribute to the collective effort by mending clothes. She eases into her new life 'gradually', which speaks to understanding on Pankhurst's part that the transition would be difficult.[183] To avoid inciting suspicion, she focused her story solely on women's experiences in what can only be described as a matriarchal Utopia.

Pankhurst took a more creative approach to a co-operative community in 'Utopian Conversations'(1923). The protagonist Gilgil's world is a technologically advanced Utopia. Her morning bath fills at her touch, and her daily tasks are recorded in a 'calendar remembrancer' which informs her that it is her turn to work on the roads. The women she lives with have been tasked with collecting mushrooms for the evening meal. The members of the community take turns performing labour, manual and domestic, to maintain the town. They are aided by different kinds of technology, including the motor road-sweeper and sprinkler that Gilgil uses to clean the roads. Technology makes the work easier and faster, and because the tasks change daily, labour remains stimulating. No one is trapped doing work that they do not find fulfilling.[184]

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[179] Anyone familiar with Pankhurst's life and work can easily attest to the absurdity of Romero's statement. It doesn't warrant further engagement.
[180] Qtd in: J. Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960: Gender, Class and Ethnicity*, London, UK, 1994, p.57
[181] J. Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960: Gender, Class and Ethnicity*, London, UK, 1994, p.57
[182] Pankhurst, 'Co-Operative Housekeeping', 1993, p.106
[183] Pankhurst, 'Co-Operative Housekeeping', p.5
[184] S. Pankhurst, 'Utopian Conversations', *Germinal*, vol.1, no.1, London, UK, Agenda Press, 1923, np., State Library Victoria, Melbourne, RARES; 821.912 G3179.

Pankhurst saw the benefits of co-operative living long before the interwar period, and did what she could to implement some version of it within the constraints of the capitalist system in Britain. In 1914, to counteract the extreme poverty at the onset of World War I, the ELFS opened a chain of centres and cheap restaurants in the East End. *The Eastern Post and City Chronicle* (3 October 1914) covered the opening of a centre in Bromley which provided meals for a penny (or at no charge in cases of destitution). The premises were 'also used as a pure milk depot and babies' clinic, and as an agency for providing women with adequately remunerated employment in the form of needlework.' Plans for the building included 'a crèche where young children of women at work may remain during the day.'[185]

In the same year, Pankhurst responded to the 'gross underpayment of women's labour' with a campaign for a fair minimum wage for housewives (supplied by the State) and 'women wage-earners' alike.[186] Her campaign reflected the outline of the problems faced by women in the workplace in 'What are the Aims of Feminism?'[187] Woman, she wrote, 'is not placed on an equality with man in business life. Even if she does equal work, she does not receive remuneration as man, and finds it more difficult to make her way.'[188] Pankhurst defined feminism as, first and foremost, the 'complete equality of rights for women and men' and the 'abolishment of all the evils and restrictions belonging to the present conditions of the feminine sex.'[189]

Davis' claim that after World War I Pankhurst's 'feminism was entirely engulfed by the all-consuming tide of revolutionary politics on the national and international stage' doesn't take into account why communist revolutionary ideology appealed to her.[190] When she travelled to Russia to attend the Second World Congress of the Communist International in 1920, she found that the Comintern was advancing policies that addressed many of the concerns that she had put forward in 'What are the Aims of Feminism?' regarding the 'position of the woman in family life.'[191] Far from promoting traditional gender roles, she was critical of the

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[185] 'Cheap Meals for East End Poor', *Eastern Post and City Chronicle*, p.4, 3 October 1914, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0004650/19141003/063/0004, accessed: 19 October 2023.
[186] S. Pankhurst, 'A Minimum Wage for Women', *The Woman's Dreadnought*, 12 September 1914, p.2, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0002235/19140912/012/0002, accessed: 18 October 2023.
[187] What are the Aims of Feminism' was written as an open testimonial to Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy. The document, which can be found at the International Institute of Social History is not dated, but it's safe to assume that it was written sometime between 1907 and Wolstenholme Elmy's death in 1918.
[188] S. Pankhurst, 'What are the Aims of Feminism?', N.d., Estelle Sylvia Pankhurst Papers, International Institute of Social History Archives, Amsterdam, folder 129, ARCH01029.129
[189] Pankhurst, 'What are the Aims of Feminism?'
[190] M. Davis, *Sylvia Pankhurst: A Life in Radical Politics*, p. 92
[191] Pankhurst, 'What are the Aims of Feminism?'

knock-on effects of marriage: 'The man is the head of the family. The woman who, before marriage, in most countries was free and man's equal before the law, by marriage loses this equality of rights essential to the honour of her sex and guaranteed to her in principle.'[192] In short, once married, a woman 'loses her right of citizenship.'[193] Taking the husband's name, and being unable to pass their names on to their children deprived women of their identities.

Women risked losing their children if the marriage was dissolved, had limited access to legal rights, had to move with the man to his place of residence, and weren't free to decide how their children were raised and educated.[194] In 'Soviet Russia as I saw it in 1920' she reported that as part of efforts to abolish the 'legal ties and basis of marriage', divorce would be easily obtainable, women could retain their names, and children could take the father's name, the mother's name, or both.[195] Couples could remain together and have children without the formalities of a contract. Wives and mothers would no longer be economically dependent on their husbands, and both parents would be held accountable for the care of children inside and outside the bounds of marriage.[196] Economic equality would abolish the wage gap, and free childcare would allow women to work if they chose to. According to Pankhurst, some of these policies had already been implemented in Russia, and apart from some minor resistance, were 'becoming obsolete' because 'the steady disappearance of private property…and the assumption of the Soviet community of the duty of maintaining the children' had made it unnecessary to enforce them.

The clinics that Pankhurst and the ELFS had opened in the East End spoke to her commitment to ensuring that all women and children had access to healthcare. The free healthcare that she mentioned in 'Co-Operative Housekeeping' was based on the rest houses, and the 'House of the Mother and Child' in Russia where mothers could live with their babies. Laundresses were employed to wash the children's clothes (provided free of charge), and nurses were available to assist if a child fell ill. There were still some rules that Pankhurst 'thought a mistake' - mainly the need for working mothers who were still nursing to participate in housework – but the women appeared to be 'satisfied.'[197] In Moscow, she visited a 'large Infant and Maternity Clinic and Babies' Home and Hospital.' 300 babies were accommodated

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[192] Pankhurst, 'What are the Aims of Feminism?'
[193] Pankhurst, 'What are the Aims of Feminism?
[194] Pankhurst, 'What are the Aims of Feminism?'
[195] S. Pankhurst, 'Soviet Russia as I Saw It In 1920', *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 7 May 1921, p. 5, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0002236/19210507/018/0005?browse=true#, accessed: 16 October 2023.
[196] S. Pankhurst, 'Soviet Russia as I Saw It In 1920', p.5
[197] Pankhurst, 'Soviet Russia as I Saw It In 1920', p.5

at the Home, 'and a large number of women attended the Clinic, obtaining without charge, advice, treatment, medicine, milk and foods.'[198] There were problems at the Home. They were battling a fly infestation because of inadequate infrastructure for waste disposal in the surrounding areas. Still, Pankhurst was assured that there were plans to provide a solution. She was impressed with the Kolomna Babies' Home that had been set up in a 'large country house,' with 'its exquisite cleanliness and management'[199]

Reforms for mothers and children remained necessary in Britain well into the interwar years. In 1930, Pankhurst wrote in *Save the Mothers* that mortality rates for mothers and babies were rising. The lack of resources available to working-class mothers meant that they came to their 'travail worn with toil,' becoming 'increasingly unfit for the daily round,' and unable to rest because of the overwhelming needs of her family.[200] In 'Women's Citizenship' (1934) she looked back on the hope that securing the vote would 'sweep away poverty and the slums; transform education and ethics; place everything affecting the home and the family on a surer and lovelier basis; cherish maternity, infancy and old age.' She concluded that 'between that tremendous hope and the state of the world today how terrible the gulf.'[201] Socialism provided solutions to the inequalities between men and women. Pankhurst did not abandon feminism in favour of revolutionary socialism. In her mind, they were inseparable.

As the years went on, the systems of socialist healthcare and relief that she had wanted to see in effect remained elusive – so elusive that Mannin included similar systems in the Utopia that she imagined for the 'citizens of the future' in *Women and the Revolution* – almost a decade after Pankhurst wrote 'Save the Mothers'. There were some State funded clinics in 1939, but Mannin was quick to point out that nobody would 'pretend that the number of clinics is anything like adequate, or that the hospital treatment for the ordinary working-woman who can pay little or nothing is anything like that provided by Harley Street gynaecologists in expensive nursing homes for "ladies".'[202] In the society that she imagined would arise out of a revolution there would be pre-natal clinics, accessible to all women regardless of class, in 'wide gardens full of flowers and lawns and trees and fountains; they will be fine, airy, modern buildings, beautiful and efficient.'[203] The State would,

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[198] Pankhurst, 'Soviet Russia as I Saw It In 1920', p.5
[199] Pankhurst, 'Soviet Russia as I Saw It In 1920', p.5
[200] S. Pankhurst, 'Save the Mothers', K. Dodd (ed), *A Sylvia Pankhurst Reader*, Manchester, UK, Manchester University Press, 1993, p. 145
[201] S. Pankhurst, 'Women's Citizenship,' N.d., Estelle Sylvia Pankhurst Papers, International Institute of Social History Archives, Amsterdam, folder 131, ARCH01029.131
[202] Mannin, *Women and the Revolution*, p.243
[203] Mannin, *Women and the Revolution*, p. 244

> not care only for mothers during their pregnancies and confinements, and leave them to manage as best they can afterwards; crèches and nursery-schools and child-welfare and mother-craft clinics will be as abundant as pre-natal clinics, with the dual object of making motherhood as easy as possible for women, and ensuring that the children are properly cared for, in their own homes by mothers educated in modern mother-craft, and out of it, when their mothers are away at work, by women who have made child-welfare their vocation.[204]

In the same year that Pankhurst was an honoured delegate at the Second World Congress of the Comintern, Mannin was newly married, heavily pregnant, and struggling financially. She met the rent by writing novelettes that she sold for a guinea per thousand words. Writing took her mind off the 'worrying business of having a baby that [she] did not want.' [205] Her concern for the well-being of working-class mothers was born out of her own experiences: growing up working-class, the worry of being pregnant with very little financial stability, and her reluctance to become a mother – a role that she never fully settled into. These experiences filtered into her fiction in the early 1920s.

Andy Croft, one of only a few scholars to consider Mannin's fiction as an extension of her politics, dismissed her early novels including *Martha* (1923), *Hunger of the Sea* (1924), *Sounding Brass* (1925), and *Pilgrims* (1927) as 'unremarkable…generic and conventional.'[206] Croft subscribes to the widely accepted misapprehension that Mannin only wrote worthwhile socialist fiction in the 1930s when she joined the ILP and committed herself publicly to Internationalism. He is familiar with her early work. He included a summary of *Martha* in 'Ethel Mannin: Red Rose of Love and the Red Flower of Liberty' (1993). In his brief reference to the novel he does not take into account the timely social and political significance of a story that engages directly with motherhood, class disparity, poverty, gender-based violence, and the stigma associated with illegitimate children. *Martha* not only launched Mannin's career as an author, it was her first work of socio-political commentary in novel form.

Martha is born in a workhouse infirmary to an unmarried woman who dies in childbirth. At 16, she is sent to work as a scullery maid for a doctor, whom she marries for companionship. When he wants more, and she refuses, he rapes her and she runs away. She meets a young

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[204] Mannin, *Women and the Revolution*, pp. 244-245
[205] Mannin, *Confessions*, p. 69
[206] A. Croft, 'Ethel Mannin: Red Rose of Love and the Red Flower of Liberty', A. Ingram and D. Patai (eds), *Rediscovering Forgotten Radicals, British Women Writers, 1889-1939*, North Carolina, US, University of North Carolina Press, 1993, p. 209.

Irishman, David, and lives with him in Bloomsbury until she falls pregnant, and he leaves her to fend for herself. The baby makes it difficult for her to work, and she finds herself on the poverty line. What follows is Martha's struggle to survive, the death of her child, and attempts to escape cruelty at the hands of her aunt and sister. When things seem the most dire, she finds a play about the tragedy of illegitimate children among her dead mother's belongings, and manages to have it produced. It is well received; she becomes a famous dramatist, meets Allan Fayne (a farmer), and marries him.[207]

Mannin's message was not lost on readers when the novel hit the stacks. A reviewer for the *Pall Mall Gazette* ('New Novels', 20 June 1923) wrote that *Martha* 'smack[ed] of propaganda.' The book closed with something resembling a happy ending, but left her 'by no means certain that Martha [had] come to the end of her adventures in the world.' She was certain that the book would have the mass appeal necessary to spread its propaganda, which she concluded was 'very badly needed.'[208] Richard King ('With Silent Friends', *The Tatler,* 25 July 1923) called it a 'plea for the illegitimate child and a protest against the absurd stigma which even now is attached to the "unwanted baby" whose parents are unmarried…this is a story with an idea behind it – and for a writer with ideas there is always a welcome.' Referring to the play that Martha stages, King titled his review, 'Propaganda in the Limelight'.[209] The ease of tone with which reviewers spoke about *Martha* as propaganda says something about how literature was perceived in the interwar period. Readers identified it as a medium for education.

Marriage, motherhood, and reproductive labour were of great concern to working-class women. When Mannin and Pankhurst addressed these concerns in their fiction, they were not abandoning politics (Feminist or Socialist); they were framing it in a way that spoke to the real-world experiences of their readers. Weaving socialist ideology into their narratives introduced it into established contexts, transforming those contexts, and in doing so inviting readers to rethink their lives. Mannin found Bertrand Russell's thoughts on marriage and morality instructive. In 1929, he attributed the reluctance of men to adapt to a 'woman's right to her own individuality' to a hankering for old traditions, and the problem of infidelity:

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[207] E. Mannin, *Martha*, London, UK, Leonard Parsons, 1923.
[208] 'Martha by Ethel E. Mannin', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 20 June 1923, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001947/19230620/129/0010, accessed: 26 September 2023.
[209] R. King, 'With Silent Friends: Propaganda in the Limelight', *The Tatler*, 25 July 1923, pp.136, 138, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0001852/19230725/013/0012?browse=true, accessed: 21 October 2023.

> In old days the husband was occasionally unfaithful, but as a rule his wife did not know of it. If she did, he confessed that he had sinned and made her believe that he was penitent. She, on the other hand, was usually virtuous. If she was not, and the fact came to her husband's knowledge, the marriage broke up.[210]

Mannin expanded his argument by advocating a new moral code, freed from the Church, which would only be possible through social revolution. Without it, love would be 'trapped in legal bonds, and outlawed and persecuted outside of them, and human happiness – in a rational state so simple of achievement – sacrificed or thwarted at every turn.'[211] In 'What are the Aims of Feminism?', Pankhurst wrote that 'another slight put upon the woman is incarnated in the moral code of private life, in particular with regard to her right to love.'[212] Both saw the benefits of eradicating the idea that morality, marriage and motherhood were linked, not only because it would benefit mothers and married women, but because abolishing these moral codes would allow women the freedom to reclaim and transform their bodies from sites of labour into sites of pleasure.

How Pankhurst and Mannin's fiction worked in tandem with their non-fiction clearly shows why their creative work should not be viewed as independent of their activism, or the communities for which it was written. Croft, Romero, Davis, and others that focus exclusively on overtly political fiction side-line potentially significant texts. When periods of literary production are dismissed – Mannin's early work, Pankhurst's creative work after the Russian Revolution – the likelihood that archival research will be undertaken to rescue lost texts becomes less likely. When texts are ignored, or remain hidden, it impacts the ongoing project of uncovering literature, moreover women's literature, that has been lost to history amounting to significant gaps in scholarship on authors' lives and creative work.

Books did not just house stories. The stories they housed had the potential to effect change. Fiction had real-world consequences. 'Co-Operative Housekeeping' and *Martha* are examples of texts that addressed the politics of motherhood, marriage, economic inequality and the concerns of working-class women. The former highlighted these concerns by proposing utopian solutions. The latter called attention to the dystopic reality of a society that necessitated

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[210] B. Russell, *Marriage and Morals*, New York, US, Routledge, 2009, p.48
[211] Mannin, *Women and the Revolution*, p. 227
[212] S. Pankhurst, 'What are the Aims of Feminism?', N.d., Estelle Sylvia Pankhurst Papers, International Institute of Social History Archives, Amsterdam, folder 129, ARCH01029.129

change. Motherhood and marriage were products of a more extensive system of control that used morality to police the bodies and minds of women.

## The Politics of Pleasure

No biography of Nancy Cunard seems to be complete without an enthusiastic and detailed account of her sexual activity. Lois Gordon wrote that 'Nancy would be sexually promiscuous – with a vengeance. While presumably in love with one man, she would run off with another, sometimes for an afternoon.'[213]Anne de Coursey claimed that she was addicted to sex[214] – a disorder widely contested in scientific circles, and out of place in 2022 when *Magnificent Rebel: Nancy Cunard in Jazz Age Paris* was published.[215] De Coursey's throwaway diagnosis is reminiscent of the moral scrutiny that Cunard was subjected to when she was alive. Judith Mackrell explained that she was 'dogged with the reputation of a nymphomaniac.'[216] Anne Chisholm nuanced discussions of her sexuality in *Nancy Cunard: A Biography* (2007) by analysing how she was portrayed in novels by male authors who used her as a muse.

Michael Arlen wrote her into *The Green Hat* (1924) as Iris March. Her presence can be felt in several works by Aldous Huxley, who was by all accounts infatuated with her. In *Antic Hay* (1923) 'Huxley gave Myra-Nancy extraordinary allure; but he also made her sad and empty, incapable of love, and contemptuous of the passions she arouses in the men she gathers around her.'[217] Cunard appears as Lucy Tantamount in *Point Counter Point* (1928) – 'rich, arrogant, sexually powerful, promiscuous, and destructive.'[218] Chisholm's biography is widely acknowledged as the definitive text on Cunard's life, but Marcus' *Nancy Cunard: Perfect Stranger* is arguably the most significant contribution to recent scholarship. As promised in her introduction, she takes Cunard 'seriously,' down to the smallest detail – she refers to her as 'Cunard' throughout.[219] Most scholars, including Chisholm, Gordon, Mackrell, and de Coursey call her 'Nancy', while the men featured in her story – Huxley, Eliot, Arlen, Beckett, and so on – are extended the courtesy of academic convention.

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[213] Gordon, *Nancy Cunard: Heiress, Muse, Political Idealist*, p. 5
[214] A. de Courcy, *Magnificent Rebel: Nancy Cunard in Jazz Age Paris*, New York, US, St. Martin's Press, 2022 (eBook)
[215] D.J. Ley, *The Myth of Sex Addiction*, New York, US, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012, p. 3
[216] J. Mackrell, *Flappers: Six Women of a Dangerous Generation*, New York, USA, Sarah Crichton Books, 2013 (eBook)
[217] A. Chisholm, *Nancy Cunard a Biography*, Middlesex, UK, Penguin Books, 1981, p.113
[218] Chisholm, *Nancy Cunard a Biography*, p.117
[219] J. Marcus, *Nancy Cunard: Perfect Stranger*, South Carolina, US, Clemson University Press, 2020, p. 12

Sasha Colby touches on the root of the problem in the critical introduction to 'These Were the Hours' in *Staging Modernist Lives* (2017).[220] In a reflexive analysis of how she chose to depict Cunard in her play, she notes that 'the idea of Cunard that circulated in her own time and our own has exceeded the woman in terms of both sensation and circulation.' The *idea* of Cunard, her 'motives, activism, and lifestyle have been performed and re-performed on various platforms.'[221] She has been created and recreated in the same way a novelist or playwright might conceive of a character. The socialite doesn't always sit well with the Socialist, so it has become practice to choose one over the other or attempt to combine the two by analysing her way of life as a form of feminist protest.

In truth, Cunard very rarely spoke about sex and gender. The intent was there – in the notes for an autobiography that never reached fruition, she wrote 'When of SELF writing: Re the three main things. 1. Equality of races 2. Of sexes 3. Of classes.' [222] Apart from this note, she wrote two literary works – an unpublished short story, 'A Lost Night' (c.1920-1921) in which she touched on social inequalities between men and women, and a poem, 'Answer to a Reproof'(1921) that speaks back to the way that she was treated as a woman who stepped out of bounds.[223] These works, one of which was never read by the public, are not substantial enough to justify calling her an activist for women's rights.

The lack of textual evidence to support the idea that Cunard was openly railing against the patriarchy has given rise to a trend in scholarship that frames her feminist activism as implicit in the way that she conducted herself. Jacqueline A. Hurtley and Elizabeth Russell claimed that 'her transgression in terms of gender may be viewed semiotically by focusing on her bearing and dress, which came to break with the conventionally feminine.'[224] For Maureen Moynagh, 'the particular kinds of issues she took on in her work were in fact a means of grappling head-on with contemporary constructions of gender, even though she did not often speak of them.'[225] Maroula Joannou, expanding on Moynagh's argument, claimed that 'the

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[220] *These Were The Hours* is included in Colby's *Staging Modernist Lives* - a collection of three plays that dramatize the lives of Hilda Doolittle, Mina Loy, and Nancy Cunard.
[221] S. Colby, S., *Staging Modernist Lives*, London, UK, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017 (eBook)
[222] From a notebook dated 1956, qtd in: M. Moynagh, *Political Tourism and its Texts*, Toronto, US, University of Toronto Press, 2008, p. 34
[223] I engage with the poem and short story in detail in 'She Can be so Clever When She Does Not Try Too Hard to be Modern'.
[224] J.A. Hurtley, and E. Russell, 'Women Against Fascism: Nancy Cunard and Charlotte Haldane', *Bells: Barcelona English Language and Literature Studies*, vol. 7, 1996, p.46
[225] N. Cunard, *Essays on Race and Empire*, M. Moynagh (ed), Ont. , Canada, 2002, p. 11

inference to be drawn from Cunard's own independence was that women should be free to choose how they lived and with whom they wished to associate.'[226]

These arguments are essential in that they take Cunard and the difficulties that she faced as a woman into account, moving away from portraits of her that focus on her social life, her sex life, and romantic relationships with famous men. That said, a deep dig for gender politics in Cunard's writing, or constructing her way of life as another text in her body of work (constructing and reconstructing her *body* as *work*) feeds the impulse to close a gap in her activism by completing the holy trinity of race, class and gender. And in doing so, posthumously writing the section on the equality of the sexes in her unwritten autobiography. Underlying the need to frame Cunard as a feminist, although well-intentioned, is the dangerous idea that because she was a woman, she was somehow obliged to engage with gender politics. Male Socialists who chose to focus solely on class and/or race have not received the same treatment regardless of evidence – take August Bebel, for example – that they were quite capable of forming an opinion on the subject.

Bebel wrote one of the most influential and radically socialist feminist texts of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. *Woman Under Socialism* (*Die Frau und der Sozialismus*, 1883) reached 50 German editions, and was translated into at least 15 languages before Bebel's death in 1913. To the contemporary reader, many of his views come across as archaic. He repeated the idea shared in his time that women were predisposed to irrational impulsivity, believed that contraceptives ('a public calamity') had lowered the birth rate, and was opposed to chemical abortions.[227] Lewis Coser took all of this into consideration when he accounted for the importance of the book and its popularity in his introduction to Schocken Books' reprint of the Daniel De Leon translation:[228] 'Bebel, writing in what was still the Victorian age, pleaded with conviction and sustained passion for the moral and legal equality of men and women.'[229]

Bebel was convinced that women should be freed from the 'narrow sphere of strictly domestic life to a full participation in the public life of the people.'[230] His ideas were controversial in 1883, and remained controversial at the turn of the century, even in socialist circles. Bebel was at the centre of 'The Connolly-De Leon Controversy' – a notorious

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[226] M. Joannou, 'Nancy Cunard's English Journey', *Feminist Review*, no. 78, 2004, p. 147
[227] A. Bebel, *Women Under Socialism*, trans D. De Leon, New York, US, Schocken Books, 1971, pp. 110, 111, 121.
[228] The 1971 Schocken Books edition was a reprint of the 1904 New York Labor Press edition.
[229] L. Coser, 'Introduction to the Paperback Edition', Bebel, A., *Women Under Socialism*, trans D. De Leon, New York, US, Schocken Books, 1971, p.vii
[230] Bebel, *Women Under Socialism*, p. 187

discussion between De Leon and James Conolly in 1904. Conolly, a member of the SLP, was opposed to *Woman Under Socialism*:

> When touring [America] in 1902, I met in Indianapolis an esteemed comrade who almost lost his temper with me because I expressed my belief in monogamic marriage, and because I said, as I still hold, that the tendency of civilisation is towards its perfection and completion, instead of towards its destruction. My comrade's views, especially since the publication in *The People* of Bebel's *Women*, are held by a very large number of members, but I hold, nevertheless, that they are wrong, and, furthermore, that such works and such publications are an excrescence upon the movement.[231]

He argued that the book was only popular because of 'its quasi-prurient revelations of the past and present degradation of womanhood.' [232] Rather than attracting women to the socialist cause, it would repel them. De Leon replied that his claim that 'the popularity of the book is due to such pruriency [was] an infelicitous statement,' before pointing out that 'there are men of the Comstock make-up who can see in the shape of the Venus de Milo only prurient nudity.' The 'preposterous sweepingness' of Connolly's statement made him 'question the coolness of [his] judgement.' In defence of *Woman Under Socialism,* he made clear that the 'whole work abounds with illustrations…that the tenderest affections and sentiments – physical, sexual and mental – have developed along the line of and in the measure that material conditions made them possible.'[233]

De Leon wasn't alone in seeing the benefits of Bebel's book, and the connections that he made between Capitalism and women's oppression in the legal and social sphere. The Bolsheviks referred to it when they created the policies that governed marriage, childcare and social relations after the Revolution. The ideas outlined in Part III of the book are strikingly similar to, and possibly informed how Pankhurst, Mannin and other socialist women approached questions of sex and love well into the interwar period. Bebel began the distinctly utopian chapter, 'Woman in the Future' with a summary of his central argument: 'The woman of future society is socially and economically independent; she is no longer subject to even a vestige of dominion and exploitation; she is free, the peer of man, mistress of her lot.'[234] Part

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[231] J. Connolly, and D.De Leon, 'The Connolly-De Leon Controversy: On Wages, Marriage and the Church, Cork, IE, Cork Workers' Club, 1976, online: https://www.marxists.org/archive/connolly/1904/condel/index.htm, accessed: 23 October 2023.
[232] Connolly and De Leon, 'The Connolly-De Leon Controversy'
[233] Connolly and De Leon, 'The Connolly-De Leon Controversy'
[234] Bebel, *Women Under Socialism*, p. 343

of that equality included 'the satisfaction of the sexual instinct' as a private affair that would be achieved when 'all bashful prudery and affectation of secrecy regarding natural matters' had vanished, amounting to a 'more natural intercourse of the sexes.'[235] In pursuing love, the woman of the future is 'like man, free and unhampered. She woos or is wooed, and closes the bond from no considerations other than her own inclinations.'[236]

Utopian Socialist, poet, and philosopher Edward Carpenter shared similar ideas about sex and love in his essay collection *Love's Coming of Age* (1896). 'The Sex Passion' was a plea for the recognition that 'passion is a matter of universal experience; and speaking broadly and generally…it is a matter on which it is quite desirable that every adult at some time or other *should* have actual experience.'[237] Carpenter wanted to eliminate the stigma associated with desire, passion, and personal sexual gratification. Bebel and Carpenter naturalised the pleasure drive by comparing it to hunger. If neither was satisfied, it impaired the development of the individual. Pankhurst used the same logic in 'What are the Aims of Feminism':

> To possess erotic freedom is of the utmost importance for every human being:
>
> 1) Because it means happiness. There is no greater bliss for a human being than union with the beloved.
> 2. Because it means fitness of mind and body. As little as a human being can develop without satisfying his hunger, can he develop satisfaction of the sexual impulse.
>
> As long as the man enjoys erotic freedom and woman does not, the conditions of development are not equally favourable for both sexes; a fact which again influences their activities in business and professional life.[238]

Equality of the sexes also meant equality in the enjoyment of sex. Morality and sex were inseparable in the Victorian society that Bebel and Carpenter addressed; in the early 20th Century when Pankhurst compiled her manifesto; and well into the interwar period when Mannin wrote that 'morality is exclusively concerned with sex; when we talk of "immorality" we mean a deviation from the sex code.'[239]

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[235] Bebel, *Women Under Socialism*, pp. 343-344
[236] Bebel, *Women Under Socialism*, p. 343
[237] E. Carpenter, *Love's Coming of Age*, London, UK, A. E. Allen and Company, 1911, p.2
[238] S. Pankhurst, 'What are the Aims of Feminism?', N.d., Estelle Sylvia Pankhurst Papers, International Institute of Social History Archives, Amsterdam, folder 129, ARCH01029.129
[239] Mannin, *Confessions*, p. 90

The ‘sex code’ was a complex web of laws, taboos and social conditioning which Mannin illustrated with the example of a man and a woman trying to book a hotel room. The only way that they could secure one was to take ‘baggage and pretend to be married before the English puritanical conscience will give it to them. The assumption is that they might go to bed together – which is a dreadful thing because it might be pleasurable; in this country you must have a licence for love, just as for a dog, or a wireless set, or a car. The English conscience works on the principle of, “There are some people trying to be happy – go and stop them; better don’t let them begin”.’[240] The ‘sex code’ was an extension of the ‘moral code’, which in Michel Foucault’s formulation, is a set of values presented through the intermediary of the Church, the Family, the State, and education. The code is either clearly stated, or ‘transmitted in a diffuse manner, so that, far from constituting a systematic ensemble, they form a complex interplay of elements that counterbalance and correct one another.’[241]

In Britain, it was a combination of the two. Culturally, sex wasn’t a subject that was freely spoken about in the home. Norman, a working-class man who grew up in Islington, described a situation where ‘certain things were considered taboo...the sexual, sex education knowledge was nil. Anybody who discussed it was accused of being dirty and filthy and, you know, crazed, that sort of thing.’[242] Mannin learned about reproduction in bits and pieces, first from friends, then dirty rhymes, books, and finally from moths. She had refused to believe that men were involved in making a child until she saw moths mating, and the silk-worms that followed soon after.[243]

Sexuality was seen as something shameful, and deviating from the respectable path of abstinence had the potential to bring disgrace to the person who had premarital sex, and their family. Heather, a factory worker, was terrified of the consequences of falling pregnant: ‘if a girl went home and said they was pregnant nine times out of ten they was slung out the house... automatically be slung out.’[244] Pankhurst’s proposed solution was to establish ‘motherhood without marriage,’ which would secure ‘erotic liberty as well as every other kind of freedom.’[245]

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[240] Mannin, *Confessions*, p.90
[241] M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol.2: The Use of Pleasure*, trans. R. Hurley, New York, US, Vintage Books, 1990, p.25
[242] S. Szreter, and K. Fisher, *Sex Before the Sexual Revolution Intimate Life in England 1918–1963*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 103. (punctuation and grammar as in original)
[243] E. Mannin, *Confessions and Impressions*, London, UK, Penguin Books, 1936, p.43
[244] S. Szreter, and K. Fisher, *Sex Before the Sexual Revolution Intimate Life in England 1918–1963*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 122 (punctuation and grammar as in original)
[245] Pankhurst, ‘What are the Aims of Feminism?’

Mannin saw two intersecting paths to sexual freedom, both of which would be natural in a socialist society. The first was the abolishment of religion:

> What today passes for Christianity frowns upon sex except as a means of reproduction, is puritanical about pleasures of the flesh, and patronises the poor. It teaches human beings to be ashamed of their bodies (supposed to be made in God's image) and to regard sexual relations as something shameful and unclean.[246]

The second was free and equal access to reproductive healthcare, including birth control 'for women who wish to lead natural healthy lives, but, for one reason or another, to have no children, and for women who wish to space their families as best suits them from the point of view of health, or simply of preference.' In her mind, a rational State would provide all women with 'clinics for the dissemination of contraceptive advice and the proper surgical fitting of suitable contraceptives.'[247] The first contraceptive clinic, Marie Stopes' Mothers' Clinic for Constructive Birth Control in London, opened in 1921. Stopes' clinic, and the clinics that followed were necessary interventions in the healthcare system, but they were too few to solve the problem of access.

During the 1920s, the government did not allow the distribution of information about contraceptives through the public health service. In 1930, a small concession was made that authorised healthcare providers at maternal and child welfare clinics, and special gynaecology clinics where women could receive contraceptive advice, but only on medical grounds.[248] Women not attending these clinics couldn't access information unless they were referred to a private general practitioner or voluntary hospital. The problem, as Jane Lewis outlined it, was that 'this often meant travelling a long distance to an alien environment. It also often involved expense, if indeed the information was made available at all.'[249] The literature available outside of the clinics was only effective if it was taken up by a public open to talking and/or thinking about sex. The widespread aversion to discussing anything sex-related often meant that the methods of controlling reproduction remained as mysterious as the mechanics of the reproductive act itself.[250]

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[246] Mannin, *Women and the Revolution*, p. 209
[247] Mannin, *Women and the Revolution*, p. 245
[248] J. Lewis, 'The Ideology and Politics of Birth Control in Inter-War England', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, vol.2, 1979, p.34
[249] Lewis, 'The Ideology and Politics of Birth Control', p.34
[250] K. Fisher, *Birth Control, Sex and Marriage in Britain 1918–1960*, Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press, 2006, p.37

The government's interference in knowledge distribution was pervasive in all sectors of society. A private cupboard at the British Museum held books that while not considered obscene were deemed inappropriate for the general public. It could only be accessed by those who had achieved a higher education.[251] Marie Stopes famously stated that it was only after countless hours spent in the British Library that she realised that 'despite being married, she was still a virgin.'[252] She annulled her marriage in 1916 on grounds of non-consummation.[253] Fiction was regulated by the Obscene Publications Act of 1857 which was brought into effect to ensure that moral standards were maintained amidst increasing access to different types of literature across class lines.

It became commonplace in the following years for articles to appear periodically in papers about the dangers of reading. The 17 April 1908 edition of *The Heywood Advertiser* carried a short jarring column on 'Immoral Books', lodged between instructions on the best way to wash wool shawls, and a recipe for stew. 'Shawls of knitted Pyrenean wool should be washed carefully in a lather made with good yellow soap'; 'There is an evil that is continually increasing, the effects of which are as fatal as they are insidious, that is the reading of books of an immoral nature'; 'Three pounds of shin of beef, four carrots, four onions, one head of celery…'[254] The obsession with reading habits only intensified as the century progressed, culminating in a fear that readers might succumb to the madness experienced by Cervantes's Don Quixote, who 'so buried himself in his books' that he believed that the 'impossible nonsense' and 'fanciful stuff he read was true.'[255] The State felt the need to play the niece, the housekeeper, and the parish curate, sealing the library and burning the books.

Three novels famously shook the foundations of British morality in the interwar period: James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), and D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928). *Ulysses,* released first as a serial, maps the activities of three central characters, Stephen Dedalus, Leopold Bloom, and Molly Bloom, for a single day (16 June 1904, celebrated annually as 'Bloomsday' by Joyceans worldwide). It

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[251] P. Edelberg, *Play the man! Men and Masculinities in Interwar Britain*, Saarbrücken, GER, Dr. Muller Aktiengesellschaft & Co., 2003, p. 78

[252] S. Szreter, and K. Fisher, *Sex Before the Sexual Revolution Intimate Life in England 1918–1963*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p.66

[253] K. Fisher, *Birth Control, Sex and Marriage in Britain 1918–1960*, Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press, 2006, p.26

[254]'Immoral Books', *The Heywood Advertiser*, 17 April 1908, p.7, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0002441/19080417/149/0007, accessed: 3 November 2023.

[255] M. de Cervantes Saavedra, *The Adventures of Don Quixote,* trans. J.M. Cohen, New York, US, Penguin Books, 1950, pp. 32–33

was already under attack in Britain and the United States when Paris bookseller Sylvia Beach published it as a novel in 1922. In a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver (25 February 1920), Joyce expressed concern that a 'U.S.A. censor had burned the entire May issue [of the *Little Review*] and threatened to cancel their licence if they continue to publish *Ulysses*.' 'This', he wrote, 'is the second time I have had the pleasure of being burned while on earth so that I hope I shall pass through the fires of purgatory as quickly as my patron S. Aloysius.'[256] He told Valery Larbaud (n.d, 1921) that a section of the novel had been destroyed before it could be fully typed up: '*Outre ça et outre l'incident de la chasse (hue and cry) détruit par M. Harrison de l'ambassade brütannique et maintenant remplacé j'ai ajouté à Circe une scène messianique avec une litanie…*' (Besides that – *Je travaille dix jours* [sic] *par jour* - the 10 hours a day that Joyce spent writing – and besides the hunting episode, destroyed by Mr. Harrison of the British Embassy, now replaced, I have added a messianic scene to *Circe* with a litany…').[257]

An employee of the British Embassy, Mr Harrison, had snatched a section of the 'Circe' episode of *Ulysses* from his wife who was typing it out, and thrown it into the fire. The litany parodied the end of the Catholic *Confiteor*: 'I ask the blessed virgin Mary, all the angels and saints, and you my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.'[258] Joyce's version begins 'Kidney of Bloom, pray for us, Flower of the Bath, pray for us, Mentor of Menton, pray for us,' and ends 'Potato Preservative against Plague and pestilence, pray for us.'[259] His irreverent attitude to the Church contributed to the outrage that *Ulysses* generated. Explicit descriptions of sex, and his liberal use of expletives added fuel to the flames. Mannin recalled that '*Ulysses* was touted round the Left Bank cafés in Paris and your copy was seized by Customs at Dover if you were not careful.'[260] The chapter where Molly is 'fucked yes and damn well fucked too up to my neck nearly not by him 5 or 6 times handrunning theres the mark of

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[256] J. Joyce, 'To Harriet Shaw Weaver 25 February 1920', S, Gilbert (ed), *Letters of James Joyce*, London, UK, Faber and Faber, 1957, p. 137
[257] J. Joyce, 'To Valery Larbaud n.d. 1921', S, Gilbert (ed), *Letters of James Joyce*, London, UK, Faber and Faber, 1957, p.169 (trans. Mine)
[258] 'I confess to the almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned, through my own fault, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done, and in what I have failed to do. I ask the blessed virgin Mary, all the angels and saints, and you my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.' I have transcribed the Confession as I remember it. It has changed periodically over the years in accordance with instructions from the Vatican, including in some versions the repetition of 'through my own fault' three times.
[259] J. Joyce, *Ulysses*, Middlesex, UK, Penguin Books, 1960, p.468
[260] E. Mannin, *Young in the Twenties*, London, UK, Hutchinson, 1971, p.53

his spunk on the clean sheet'[261] was 'almost required reading for anyone with pretensions to modernity.'[262]

She took a more serious approach to the banning of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, and Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover.* In her words, they were 'the test of the English people,' and 'what emerged from that test was nauseating, prurient curiosity on the one hand, and an exhausting, life-sucking puritanism on the other.'[263] Lawrence completed the final draft of his novel on 8 January 1928. Secker and Knopf would only publish a sanitised version, so he published it independently with the help of a Florentine bookseller. Hundreds of copies were sent to Britain and the United States, some of which were confiscated by customs authorities.[264] When word of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* spread in England, it attracted the attention of right-wing periodicals. The painfully patriotic *John Bull* dedicated more than half a page to explaining why the novel and its author should be removed from society:

> There has been brought to our notice within the last few weeks a book which we have no hesitation in describing as the most evil outpouring that has ever besmirched the literature of this country. The sewers of French pornography would be dragged in vain to find a parallel in beastliness. The creations of muddy-minded perverts, peddled in the back-street bookstalls of Paris are prudish by comparison. The book is by one of the best known of modern English novelists, Mr D.H. Lawrence. It is entitled "Lady Chatterley's Lover." Mr. Lawrence is a man of genius. As a psychologist he is in the front rank of living writers; as a stylist, he stands supreme. Unfortunately for literature as for himself, Mr. Lawrence has a diseased mind.[265]

The disconsolate journalist, clutching his pearls in one hand, the Union Jack in the other, was forced to acknowledge that there were no laws 'to prevent a man shutting himself up in an English study and creating an English cesspool with an English pen on English paper.'[266]

There *were* laws that could be used to prevent a man from reading an English cesspool, printed on English paper at an English press, which is why Charles Lahr's The Progressive Bookshop Blue Moon Press, and 'the cluster of small presses around it played an important

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[261] J. Joyce, *Ulysses*, Middlesex, UK, Penguin Books, 1960, pp. 490, 701 (spelling and punctuation as in original).
[262] Mannin, *Young in the Twenties*, p.53
[263] Mannin, *Confessions*, p.161
[264] M. Squires, and D. Jackson 'Introduction', M. Squires, and D. Jackson (eds), *D.H. Lawrence's 'Lady': A New Look at Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Georgia, US, University of Georgia Press, 1985, p. ix
[265] 'Famous Novelist's Shameful Book A Landmark in Evil', *John Bull*, 20 October 1928, p.11, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0003234/19281020/045/0011, accessed: 25 October 2023.
[266] 'Famous Novelist's Shameful Book A Landmark in Evil', p.11

role in disseminating work that could be seen as "dirty books".'[267] Lahr was an eccentric German anarchist who sold first editions, Leftist literature, experimental literature, pamphlets and the occasional catalogue which he printed by hand on a press formerly owned by William Morris.[268] He was one of the booksellers in Britain that Lawrence trusted to distribute his novel.

After its release, forgeries were sold in the United States and elsewhere. Without a publisher to protect copyright, he could not collect the proceeds. Around the time that *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was in circulation, a sign appeared in The Progressive Bookshop, presumably propped up against a grubby book, warning clientele that: 'THIS IS THE ONLY DIRTY BOOK WE HAVE. PLEASE DONT WASTE TIME ASKING FOR OTHERS.'[269] Christopher Hilliard suspects it was 'a coded invitation to do business' when 'procuring a dangerous book was a service to be undertaken only for trusted clients.'[270] The article in *John Bull* was written after its editors learned of illicit sales in London bookstores, more specifically, 'one Oxford Street shop…which denied with a show of indignation that it stocked the novel, but when the customer was leaving he was approached by a salesman who whispered to him that he could get a copy privately and purely as a personal favour if twelve guineas were paid on the spot and no receipt were asked for!'[271] The Home Secretary Sir William Joynson-Hicks placed the novel on the Customs secret banned list but could do nothing to stop its publication in Italy, or the following year in France.

In *These Were the Hours* Cunard mentioned reading the novel en route to France just after Orioli published it, but makes no further mention of the book. In correspondence, Aldous Huxley mentioned her as a possible publisher for *Lady Chatterley,* but her Press never produced a run.[272] She did not specify the titles, but Cunard did have some books on her bookstore shelves that she felt might attract unwanted attention. She encountered the same tactics employed by the moral police in Britain at her small press and bookshop at 15 rue Guenegaud on the Left Bank in Paris. A nervous man entered the shop while she was tidying up and asked for books in French for his 'waiting room.' The Hours mainly carried English books, so Cunard handed him the only French book she had: Louis Aragon's translation of Lewis Carroll's *The Hunting of the Snark* (1876, trans. 1929). The man responded, 'No, no, no, not that sort of thing…The

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[267] C. Hilliard, 'The Literary Underground of 1920s London', *Social History*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2008, p. 166.
[268] C. Munro, 'Lady Chatterley in London: The Secret Third Edition', M. Squires, and D. Jackson (eds), D.H. Lawrence's 'Lady': A New Look at Lady Chatterley's Lover, Georgia, US, University of Georgia Press, 1985, p. 223
[269] Punctuation and emphasis as in original.
[270] C. Hilliard, 'The Literary Underground', p.164
[271] 'Famous Novelist's Shameful Book A Landmark in Evil', p.11
[272] Chisholm, *Nancy Cunard a Biography*, p.119

*salle d'attente* is…er…in rather special taste, you see.' Cunard's confusion was cleared up when her printer explained the situation:

> "What did he mean by 'waiting room' and 'special taste'?" "Oh Madame," said the printer, "could you not see that man is a common detective? He hoped you would fall into his trap, although why did he come here? Through some jealousy of the neighbours perhaps, in denouncing a foreign person at work on a press, which is not a very usual thing? He was posing as the owner of a brothel. Hence the 'waiting room' and 'the special taste in books – for people to warm up on while waiting. He wanted pornography – what else? So as to able to arrest you for selling it!"[273]

Following the incident, Cunard reluctantly removed 'the erotic books,' and 'there were no more visitations from agents whose aim is to hunt down the authors, producers and sellers of such works, making no difference between what is erotic art and what is fifth-rate smut.'[274]

The trial to halt the publication of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in Britain took place in 1960, more than 30 years after it was first released, when Penguin Books was accused of violating the revised Obscene Publications Act of 1959. A jury of three women, and nine men at Old Bailey decided that 'the publication of the full text…was for the public good.'[275] After the trial, Penguin sold millions of copies. In the late 1920s, the scandal surrounding the novel only increased its notoriety. Banning Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* had the same effect.

Mannin found *The Well of Loneliness* 'profoundly moving and beautiful, a delicate and lovely and sensitive piece of work,' but preferred *Adam's Breed* (1926) which 'in the rarity of its literary quality and imaginative insight into ordinary everyday human nature, is amongst the finest things which have yet been achieved in contemporary fiction.'[276] While she did not want to minimise the importance of the banned book, she was as frustrated with its reception as she was with the reception of Lawrence's novel:

> One got so tired of being asked if one had read *The Well of Loneliness*, just as now one gets tired of being asked if one has read *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, so that one ached to

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[273] N. Cunard, *These Were the Hours: Memories of My Hours Press Reanville and Paris 1928-1931*, Illinois, US, Southern Illinois University Press, 1969, p. 85
[274] Cunard, *These Were the Hours,* pp.85-86
[275] F. Becket, 'The Law and the Profits: The Case of D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's* Lover', J. Morrison, and S. Watkins (eds), *Scandalous Fictions: The Twentieth-Century Novel in the Public Sphere*, New York, US, Palgrave MacMillan, 2007, p. 70
[276] Mannin, *Confessions,* p.231

> cry out: "But by God, the woman wrote something altogether bigger!" One began to resent that persistent Well. One found oneself wondering how many of all the people clamouring for it out of prurient curiosity realised that here was something that literally *bled*…so that the clamour and the curiosity became an outrage, indecent...[277]

The Obscene Publications Act for the 'Suppression of the Trade in Obscene Books, Prints, Drawings, and other Obscene Articles' did not specify what constituted obscene content. Instead, 'any Metropolitan Police Magistrate or other Stipendiary Magistrate, or any Two Justices of the Peace' had the power to determine whether or not a complaint was legitimate.[278] On 16 October 1928, *The Halifax Daily Courier and Guardian* published the criterion Joynson-Hicks used to classify 'immoral books.' At a meeting of the London Diocesan Council of Youth at the Central Hall in Westminster on 15 October 1928, he presented himself as a victim of 'every kind of attack':

> I am attacked by those people who put freedom of thought and speech and writing before everything else in the world, as if there was freedom in God's world to pollute the young generation growing up. There must be some limit to the freedom of what a man may write or speak, in this great country of ours.[279]

The criteria he outlined were even more vague than the criteria in the Act. Whether or not a book could be considered immoral was determined by 'whether what is written or spoken makes 'one of the least of these little ones [the younger generation] to offend.' He said that it was only with the 'force of the Christian Churches' that he would 'be able to deal with these matters fairly and honestly.'[280] Church and State were inseparable when determining what was morally acceptable in British society. The open-endedness of the Act allowed whoever was charged with enforcing it to make his individual, impartial, and personal beliefs law.

*The Well of Loneliness* was initially well-received by critics. Arnold Bennet wrote that it was 'honest, convincing and extremely courageous', *The Times* called it 'sincere, courageous, high-minded, and often beautifully expressed', and *The Nation* described it as 'a study of psychology which is neither as uncommon nor as abnormal as many people

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[277] Mannin, *Confessions,* pp.231-232
[278] Obscene Publications Act 1857, *The Statutes Project*, online: https://statutes.org.uk/site/the-statutes/nineteenth-century/1857-20-21-victoria-c-83-obscene-publications-act/, accessed: 10 July 2023.
[279] 'Immoral Books: Home Secretary on the Criterion', *The Halifax Courier and Guardian,* 16 October 1928, p.7, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0003295/19281016/153/0007, accessed: 3 November 2023.
[280] 'Immoral Books: Home Secretary on the Criterion', p.7

imagine…written with understanding and frankness, with sympathy and feeling.'[281] In *The Yorkshire Post* (18 July 1928), Havelock Ellis was quoted saying that 'apart from its fine qualities as a novel by a writer of accomplished art…it possesses a notable psychological and sociological significance…we must place Radclyffe Hall's book on a high level of distinction.'[282]

Then on 18 August 1928, editor of *Sunday Express* James Douglas – the 'Sanitary Inspector of Literature' – launched a campaign to have it quashed.[283] In 'A Book That Must Be Suppressed' he wrote that he 'would rather give a healthy boy or a healthy girl a phial of prussic acid than this novel. Poison kills the body, but moral poison kills the soul.'[284] Radclyffe Hall responded with a statement in *Reynolds's Illustrated News* (26 August 1928). She called the campaign an 'unjustified attack' on 'a subject that calls for attention.' She had received letters of support from fellow authors and members of the public – the same public that she saw as victims of a system in which they found their 'liberty as adults ruthlessly suppressed, their chance of improving their knowledge slain, their intelligence insulted, their good will questioned, their mental progress abruptly interfered with.'[285] The obscenity trial was held at Bow Street on 9 November 1928. Less than a month prior at the meeting in Central Hall, Joynson-Hicks had hinted that 'it may possibly be that in the near future' he would 'have to deal with immoral and disgusting books.'[286] The meeting was not just a call for support, it was a pre-emptive strike against Radclyffe Hall, and her publisher. During the trial it quickly became apparent that *The Well of Loneliness* – about a love affair between two women – had been declared obscene for no other reason than it depicted a same-sex relationship.

In the 1920s, homosexual relationships between women were not criminalised in the same way that they were for men, but this did nothing to stop discrimination on a grand scale with the Church leading the charge. While editing *Nightwood* (1936), T.S. Eliot told Djuna

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[281] ''What the Critics Say', *Reynolds's Illustrated News*, 26 August 1928, p. 5, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001034/19280826/069/0005, accessed: 25 October 2023.
[282] H. Ellis, 'Radclyffe Hall's The Well of Loneliness', *The Yorkshire Post*, 18 July 1928, p. 4, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000687/19280718/135/0004, accessed: 25 October 2023.
[283] D. Bradshaw, 'James Douglas: The Sanitary Inspector of Literature', D. Bradshaw, and R. Potter (eds), *Prudes on the Prowl: Fiction and Obscenity in England, 1850 to the Present Day*, Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press, 2013, p.90
[284] J. Douglas, 'A Book That Must Be Suppressed', *Sunday Express*, 19 August 1928, p. 10, online: https://www.infotextmanuscripts.org/prudery-archive/prudery_archive_well_of.html, accessed: 30 October 2023
[285] M. Radclyffe Hall, 'Miss Radclyffe Hall on Why She Wrote the Suppressed Novel', *Reynolds's Illustrated News*, 26 August 1928, p. 5, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001034/19280826/069/0005, accessed: 25 October 2023.
[286] 'Immoral Books: Home Secretary on the Criterion', p.7

Barnes that 'the English are against Lesbianism particularly.'[287] Douglas accused Radclyffe Hall of advancing a doctrine of 'pseudo-scientific' thought that 'cannot be reconciled with the Christian religion or with the Christian doctrine of free-will.'[288] In his judgement, Chief Magistrate Sir Chartres Biron wrote that it wasn't the 'unnatural offences between women' that made the book obscene; it was the way that the affair was portrayed:

> It is not the tragedy of people fighting against horrible instincts and being unable to resist them; but, on the contrary, the tragedy as presented here is that people who indulge in these vices are not tolerated by decent people; they are not received in society and they are ostracized by decent people; and the whole note of the book is a passionate and almost hysterical plea for the toleration and recognition of these people who, in the view presented in this book, are people who ought to be tolerated and recognized, and their practices tolerated and recognized, in decent society.'[289]

The judgement was unsurprisingly in step with Douglas' description of the book as 'a seductive and insidious piece of special pleading designed to display perverted decadence as a martyrdom inflicted upon these outcasts by a cruel society.'[290] The homophobia that informed the judgement did not escape Mannin who recognised that 'in spite of the "unprecedented" immorality, the nineteen-twenties was not a "permissive" decade; for all the gin-and-sin…homosexuals could be and sometimes were send to prison.' Radclyffe Hall's 'perfectly decent novel of homosexual female love' was a casualty of these prejudices.[291]

After the trial, Douglas continued in his role as Witchfinder General with 'Women Novelists Who Go *Too* Far' (*Sunday Express*, 10 February 1929). This time, he attacked Mannin, and Margery Lawrence. In his opinion, Mannin was 'wilier' than Lawrence because she 'peppers and spices her novels with sensual sauces of all sorts, but in her attacks on marriage she does not advocate libertinism for women. She merely belittles marriage as an old institution that has lost its prestige in feminine life.'[292] Mannin and Lawrence responded to Douglas's 'very eloquent (if somewhat wordy)' article with an invitation to lunch, so that they

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[287] Djuna Barnes qtd in: R. Potter, *Obscene Modernism Literary Censorship and Experiment, 1900–1940*, Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 176
[288] Douglas, 'A Book That Must Be Suppressed', p. 10
[289] C. Biron, 'Judgement (1928)', L. Doan, and J. Prosser (eds), *Palatable Poison: Critical Perspectives on The Well of Loneliness*, New York, US, Columbia University Press, 2001, p. 42
[290] Douglas, 'A Book That Must Be Suppressed', p. 103
[291] Mannin, *Young in the Twenties*, pp.52-53
[292] J. Douglas, 'Women Novelists Who Go *Too* Far', *Sunday Express*, 10 February 1929, Qtd. In: D. Bradshaw, 'James Douglas: The Sanitary Inspector of Literature', D. Bradshaw, and R. Potter (eds), *Prudes on the Prowl: Fiction and Obscenity in England, 1850 to the Present Day*, Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 105

could take him to task in person (*Sunday Express*, 17 February 1929).[293] In the same edition of the *Sunday Express,* Mannin published 'I Criticise Marriage – But I Believe in It', in which she doubled down on her view that while it had its benefits, matrimony was no longer a woman's only higher calling.

In *Ragged Banners* (1931) she incorporated Douglas into the narrative. Mary (a character loosely based on Mannin) tells Lattimer that her new novel has been called 'a saga of sex, and a sink of Salacity,' so scandalous that it moved 'James Douglas…to write a powerful article on Women Novelists Who Go Too Far.'[294] Towards the end of the novel, Mary sits down to type up a commissioned piece for a magazine, 'one of those dreary exhausting jobs that wear one out so much more than really hard work. Two Thousand words on What are Women Really Interested In – and you can say it all in three words – clothes and love.'[295] Although she has written countless formulaic pieces like this, she finds it difficult to follow the script:

> Mary lit a cigarette and began to type, and all the time at the back of her mind something detached itself from the flow of her thoughts and made a running commentary. "Every woman when she is honest with herself," she typed, and the thing at the back of her mind amended (which is the hardest thing in the world to be), "knows that fundamentally, over and above everything else (cliché, said her mind) is interested in love (degrading passion of, as per George Moore's priest and Mr James Douglas). In spite of this modern preoccupation with careers (Oh, Christ!) love is still the most important part of a woman's existence; it is her ultimate fulfilment (sob-stuff, mocked her mind).[296]

The intrusive thoughts disrupt the script, exposing the absurdity of articles designed to keep women in line. Douglas is placed in the same camp as the fanatical priests in Moore's collection of short stories, *The Untilled Field* (1903).[297] In an underhanded jab, Mannin wove a subtle reference to how puritanical ranting did nothing but alert the public to what they were missing by associating Douglas with the degrading passion of love that a woman wants, if she is honest

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[293] 'Challenge to Mr. Douglas', *Sunday Express*, 17 February 1929, qtd. In: D. Bradshaw, 'James Douglas: The Sanitary Inspector of Literature', D. Bradshaw, and R. Potter (eds), *Prudes on the Prowl: Fiction and Obscenity in England, 1850 to the Present Day*, Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 105
[294] E. Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, London, UK, Penguin Books, 1940, p.92
[295] Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, p.247
[296] Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, p.248
[297] G. Moore, *The Untilled Field,* London, UK, Heinemann, 1914.

with herself. Adding insult to injury, Mary has casual sex with Lattimer after she finishes the article.

In *Young in the Twenties* (1971) Mannin looked back on her battle with Douglas, expressing her confusion as to what he was trying to achieve. She mused that 'what he can have had in mind is difficult to say, as I had written no "obscene" novel, and up to that time had not even published the *Confessions.* Perhaps it was because I wrote "immoral" articles championing what were then called "companionate marriages" or "trial marriages".'[298] David Bradshaw attributed Douglas' fanaticism to a preoccupation 'with what he saw as the menace of modern woman writers, in particular, at this time,' so all-consuming 'that he was largely inattentive to anything else.' He used the example of the 'rancorously anti-feminist rhetoric' in Douglas' 'The Rights of Man' as evidence of the 'sanitary mania and extravagant homophobia' that had 'raged within [him] for many a year' laying the groundwork for his vicious attack on *The Well of Loneliness.*[299]

Radclyffe Hall's novel doesn't contain any explicit sexual imagery, and nothing close to what Lawrence wrote in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* where the protagonist orgasms a few descriptive lines after feeling Mellor's 'penis risen against her with silent amazing force and assertion.'[300] Most of the supposedly 'seductive and insidious' sex scenes were confined to single sentences. When Stephen is 21 she falls in love with Angela Crossby. In the closing line of chapter 18, 'Stephen took Angela into her arms, and she kissed her full on the lips as a lover.'[301] An erotic encounter between Mary and Stephen is described simply as 'That night they were not divided.'[302] In Radclyffe Hall's words, those 'who hoped, because of its subject, to find anything salacious upon [the novel's] pages, were doomed from the first to bitter disappointment.'[303] The level of intimacy in her book was on par with what a reader might find in the average romance novel. In some cases, it was far tamer.

Edith Maud Hull's *The Sheik* (1919) was one of the most-read romance novels of the 1920s. In the four years following its publication it was reissued in 108 editions in Britain

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[298] Mannin, *Young in the Twenties*, p. 55
[299] D. Bradshaw, 'James Douglas: The Sanitary Inspector of Literature', D. Bradshaw, and R. Potter (eds), *Prudes on the Prowl: Fiction and Obscenity in England, 1850 to the Present Day*, Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 101
[300] D.H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Florence, ITLY, Orioli / International Collectors Library reprint, 1928, p. 172
[301] Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, Ontario, CA, Pembroke Publishers, 1961, p.146
[302] Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, p.313
[303] M. Radclyffe Hall, 'Miss Radclyffe Hall on Why She Wrote the Suppressed Novel', *Reynolds's Illustrated News*, 26 August 1928, p. 5, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001034/19280826/069/0005, accessed: 25 October 2023.

alone. In Hull's 'desert romance' the aristocratic virgin, Diana Mayo, is captured by a Sheik, Ahmed Ben Hassan, who rapes her repeatedly. In the first instance, 'the boyish clothes that covered her slender limbs' are 'stripped from her, leaving the beautiful body bare under his passionate stare,' before he draws 'her shaking limbs closer and closer' against his 'pulsating body,' crushing her 'in a sudden access of possessive passion.'[304]After months of resisting his sadomasochistic attacks she falls in love with him, accepting 'an end to all individualism, a complete self-abnegation, an absolute surrender to his wishes, his moods and his temper.'[305] The novel was adapted into a film in 1921starring Rudolph Valentino and Agnes Ayres. In 1926, Valentino and Ayres reprised their roles in the adaptation of Hull's equally successful sequel, *The Sons of the Sheik* (1925). Hull enjoyed her success unfettered by the Obscene Publications Act and its enforcers. In general, romance novels were left to circulate freely. There was no need to regulate them – the industry was regulated from within.

A section on prostitution in Henry Mayhew's *London's Underworld* (1861) credited the halfpenny romance with the 'ruin of many girls commenced by…devouring the hastily-written, immoral, stereotyped tales about the sensualities of the upper classes, the lust of the aristocracy, and the affection that men about town…are in the habit of imbibing for maidens of low degree "whose face is their fortune".' Among those destined for a life of ruin were 'shop girls, very often dressmakers and the rest of the tribe who may perhaps feel flattered by reading about absurd impossibilities that their untutored and romantic imaginations suggest may, during the course of a life of adventure, happen to themselves.'[306]

By the late 1800s, literary commentators had become wise to the ways that the genre could be harnessed to influence its readers. In 1898, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* published 'Penny Fiction' in response to lingering concerns about the genre's popularity among working-class women. 'The seamstress, the shopgirl', and 'the domestic servant' were singled out again, only this time the author claimed that reading the romance should be embraced as an antidote to radical left politics: 'as long as to be happily married and to "get on in the world"

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[304] E.M. Hull, *The Sheik*, New York, US, A.l. Burt Company, 1921, pp. 56-58
[305] Hull, *The Sheik*, p.166
[306] H. Mayhew, *London's Underworld*, London, UK, Spring Books, 1965, pp.101-102
The Spring Books edition is comprised selections from 'Those That Will Not Work' in the fourth (extra) volume of *London Labour and the London Poor* (1861) which was co-written with Bracebridge Hemyng, John Binny and Andrew Halliday.

are the secret or avowed ideals of what are called, for convenience sake, the working classes, so long will any dangerous and far-reaching scheme of communism remain an impossibility.'[307]

By the time that Douglas and others commenced their literary witch hunt, most popular fiction was overseen by conservative publishers like Mills & Boon, with Charles Boon – a 'dyed-in-the-wool Tory' – at the helm. The stories that Boon saw fit to publish, 'however fantastic, were designed to promote the status quo, as well as the institutions of marriage and motherhood.'[308] Mills & Boon capitalised on Hull's success with their own line of desert romances, beginning with Louise Gerard's *A Sultan's Slave* in 1921. The system was so effective that Paul Grescoe credits British woman authors with fine tuning the marriage plot that became a staple of the genre.[309] In short, two people meet and develop a romantic attraction, face obstacles to their love (one of which is often a second love interest), overcome their obstacles, and end up married. The formula, which relied on stock scenes, and repetitions of themes and motifs shared characteristics with oral literature, was easy to mass produce and appealed to an audience seeking escapism and familiarity. In other words, the defining features of the romance aligned with the story-telling techniques used in politics to disseminate propaganda, making it the perfect vehicle for conservative ideology.

Berta Ruck, whose popularity was on par with Mannin, wrote stories that met Boon's criteria long before she signed with the publisher in 1939. *Her Pirate Partner* (1927) chronicles the misadventures of 17-year-old Dorothea who is rescued from the 'flapper' lifestyle by a 'masterful young Canadian who gives her a better measure of manhood than anything she had met in her dangerous excursions in Bohemia.'[310] Susan Inglis, one of the publisher's most-read authors, wrote cautionary tales about the dangers of becoming too self-reliant. Karen Winters, the protagonist in *Uncertain Flame* (1937), would like to have 'a job with a salary that would keep her free from worry, and allow her to spread her wings.'[311] Shortly after she begins work as a typist, she finds herself caught between two men at the office. Barry Gage is kind and dependable, but she rejects him for Steven Hallet because he promises excitement. Predictably,

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[307] 'Penny Fiction,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, no. 164, 1898, p. 811, online: https://archive.org/details/blackwoodsmagazi164edinuoft/page/219/mode/1up?view=theater#page/n5/mode/1up, accessed: 22 September 2023.
[308] J. McAleer, *Popular Reading and Publishing in Britain 1914–1950*, New York, US, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 146
[309] P. Grescoe, *The Merchants of Venus: Inside Harlequin and the Empire of Romance*, Vancouver, CA, Raincoast Books, 1996, p. 2
[310] 'Her Pirate Partner by Berta Ruck', *The Scotsman*, 31 January 1927, p. 2, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000540/19270131/167/0002, accessed: 26 September 2023.
[311] S. Inglis, *Uncertain Flame*, London, UK, Mills & Boon, 1937, p. 15

this ends badly, and she loses her job. She realises her mistake but thinks she has lost her chance with Gage, who vanishes on a trip to France for a while. At the novel's end, she meets him again, and tells him that her 'career as a business woman's had a bit of a set-back.' He offers her a new job, the 'same old job' he'd always wanted her to take – 'Being Mrs. Barry Gage!'[312]

In *The Sheik*, Hull avoided the scandal of depicting premarital sex by replacing it with rape, and moreover rape by an Arab man who can be excused for lacking the social graces of an Englishman. Towards the end of the novel, when Diana submits to his will, it is revealed that he is not an Arab but the son of a British aristocrat. In this moment, the brutish Arab vanishes, the gentlemanly Englishman takes his place, Diana's upper-class respectability is restored, and their union is legitimised. *Her Pirate Partner* and *Uncertain Flame* lack the exotic location, racism, and violence of *The Sheik*, but the outcome is the same. An independent woman is punished for her independence. She is rewarded with a marriage proposal when she realises that submission is the path to happiness. To paraphrase Hull's protagonist, her happy ending requires an end to all individualism, a complete self-abnegation, the absolute surrender to a man's wishes, and the acceptance of a new identity as his wife. The pleasure of the union is derived from pleasing the man.

In interwar Britain, pleasure was political. Biron's judgement on *The Well of Loneliness* expressed outrage that 'the actual physical acts…are described in the most alluring terms; their result is described as giving these women extraordinary rest, contentment… and not merely that, but it is actually put forward that it improves their mental balance and capacity.'[313] His concern does not appear to be the sex itself but the pleasure that the women derived from it. In Foucault's historical study of desire, pleasure and morality, *The Use of Pleasure* (*Histoire de la sexualité, Tome II: L'usage des plaisirs*, 1984) he outlined how the body performs morality by regulating pleasure and desire. By exercising restraint, the body enacts the precepts of the moral code (an ethopoeic construct) the individual identifies as an 'ethical subject.'[314] Power is exerted on the body from *outside* through 'subtle coercion [and] obtaining holds upon it at the level of the mechanism itself - movements, gestures, attitudes, rapidity: an infinitesimal power over the active body' that renders it docile.[315] It is politically inscribed, socially shaped and regulated through processes of control and containment.

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[312] Inglis, *Uncertain Flame*, p. 254
[313] Biron, 'Judgement', p.43
[314] M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol.2: The Use of Pleasure*, trans. R. Hurley, New York, US, Vintage Books, 1990, p. 13
[315] M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. A. Sheridan, New York, US, Vintage Books, 1995, p. 137

Controlling women's bodies required an enclosure in which 'each person has his own place; and each place is individual.'[316] If the woman's domain was the private space of the home, and the man's the public sphere of politics, then women were not only confined but forced to participate in their confinement. By barring them from engaging in civil matters, they were unable to contribute to the shaping of society. To occupy a place in society, and the only place available to them, they were reliant on men to provide them with stability, a home, and purpose in exchange for unpaid reproductive labour – emotional, physical, and sexual. The changes that came about in the 1920s, including voting rights for all women in 1928, chipped away at the enclosure and the control that men had long exercised over women's bodies. Mannin wrote that for those who were able to break free from the moral and sex code,

> the [sexual] emancipation of women was a big thing, important to women of all social classes and all degrees of intelligence…Women discovered that for them, too, the "weaker sex", the "second sex", life was made for living. It was a dangerous discovery, with contraception offering a challenge to chastity – "love without fear" – and freedom in terms of "free love" opposing marriage. It was a moral revolution, nothing less, and therefore destructive of the traditional conventions of premarital chastity, and even of married love itself.[317]

A body engaged solely in the pursuit of pleasure was a body liberated from both labour and the master who reaped its benefits. Mannin blamed the moral panic about pleasure for turning England into a country in which 'most people are dead, for all they move about the face of the earth. The women for the most part are not merely dead like the men, but buried as well. See them rushing to buy the banned book, to get hold of it by hook or crook, to see the risqué play, the substitute for the sexual satisfaction they have never known.'[318] The substitutes that she listed were literary because literature was one of the key ways that women could make the dangerous discovery that life was for living, by reading about lived lives.

The fear that readers might be swayed by fiction was at the core of what drove Douglas, Joynson Hicks, and Biron to double down in their efforts to determine what was read and by whom. There is nothing in Mannin's work to suggest that she viewed the job of 'wife' as preferable to financial independence. The marriage at the end of *Martha* did not leave readers with the satisfaction of a cut-and-dry happy ending. In *Crescendo* (1929), she subverted the

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[316] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.142
[317] Mannin, *Young in the Twenties*, p.56
[318] Mannin, *Confessions*, pp. 89-90

cautionary tale by placing a man, Gilbert Stroud, in the position of a protagonist choosing between two lovers. Stroud (the embodiment of misogyny) meets his match in Mary Thane. He doesn't want to marry her (an intelligent and independent woman); instead, he chooses the unassuming Lady Isabel, who ultimately denies him children, respect, and fidelity.[319] Mary returned in *Ragged Banners* – a novel that openly encouraged sexual freedom. The high degree to which Mannin's fiction contributed to her activism, and its effectiveness has been overlooked. The same applies to Pankhurst and Cunard.

Breaking with the norm, and omitting her from a discussion of sexuality, pleasure, and morality in interwar Britain, frees Cunard from the scrutiny that she is still subjected to almost 60 years after her death in 1965. As mentioned, when well-intentioned scholars ascribe meaning to Cunard's body (how she dressed, carried herself, and chose to live) they inadvertently convert it into a site of labour. Cunard may have been claiming her body as a site of pleasure but without evidence to confirm that she was doing so in deliberate and calculated defiance of the moral code, all of this is pure conjecture. Cunard's comical encounter with the undercover policeman in her Paris bookstore is a far more interesting addition to a discussion of how morality pervaded the literary industry than, for example, her relationship with Louis Aragon – the Surrealist novelist and poet who helped her run her Hours Press for a time.

Pankhurst's views on morality and sexual freedom extended her views on motherhood and marriage. The extent to which she was committed to sexual freedom, breaking with traditional marriage structures, and promoting equal wages in the workplace, contradicts claims that she was secretly harbouring a fondness for traditional gender roles. Her and Mannin's approach to erotic freedom was grounded in socialist politics. The ideas that they promoted could also be found in Soviet Policy, and books about gender equality under socialism written by the likes of August Bebel, and Edward Carpenter.

The gender equality that socialism promised contrasted starkly with the gender inequality pervasive in interwar Britain. Tracing how this inequality, and its moral value filtered into the literary industry is helpful for three reasons. First, it further highlights the power attributed to literature and the written word accounting for why fiction was considered a powerful tool for conscientizing, and why it was so heavily policed. Second, the centrality of female sexuality in value-judgements on what could and could not be considered morally sound literature, and the politics behind it, becomes apparent when books like Radclyffe Hall's *The*

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[319] E. Mannin, *Crescendo*, London, UK, Jarrolds, 1929.

*Well of Loneliness* are placed side-by-side with books like Hull's *The Sheik*. Despite the latter containing erotic content that far outstripped anything that Radclyffe Hall wrote into her narrative, it was left alone because it ultimately promoted traditional values, and enforced them through scenes of violence and submission. Finally, how morality was policed in the romance industry is an essential example of how form and content could be co-opted, and used to spread propaganda in left and right-wing politics. Mannin used the romance to sell socialism, while writers for Mills & Boon used the same techniques to promote the very ideology that socialist women were resisting.

# Part II: Writers of the Revolution

Politics and art were intrinsically linked. The policy of direct action adopted by the WSPU beginning in 1905 was enacted with purpose. They chose their targets with the intent to draw attention to what society considered more important than women's equality. One of those targets was the masculine world of art and culture. In 1909, a 'Votes for Women' poster was fixed to J. Solomon's portrait of Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith. The minutes of the 4 March 1912 meeting of the Royal Academy Council recorded the decision to close the Winter Exhibition early as a safety precaution.[320] In April 1913, a group of suffragettes broke the glass protecting a series of paintings at the Manchester Art Gallery. The attacks escalated on 10 March 1914 when, as reported by *The Daily Mail* (11 March 1914), Suffragette Mary Richardson entered the National Gallery and 'took her stand before the "Venus", drew a brand new meat cleaver from beneath her coat, and viciously attacked Velasquez's painting.'[321] Velázquez's *Rokeby Venus* was severely damaged.

In a letter sent to the *Daily Telegraph,* Richardson claimed that she 'tried to destroy the picture of the most beautiful woman in mythological history as a protest against the Government for destroying Mrs Pankhurst.' Emmeline Pankhurst had been arrested earlier in the week. Richardson wrote that the response to her crime was evidence of 'the thorn of artistic as well as moral and political humbug and hypocrisy.'[322] On 4 May 1914, another Suffragette armed with a cleaver, Mary Wood, made a similar attack on J.S. Sargent's portrait of Henry James at the Royal Academy. In a statement, she said 'Government rests upon the consent of the governed…I want to say to the public, You shall not live in safety and peace until women have the vote. I have said it through destroying this picture.' In reply to the formal charge against her she remarked that 'if a woman had painted it, it would not have been worth so much.'[323]

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[320] H. Bonett, 'Deeds not Words: Suffragettes and the Summer Exhibition', *Royal Academy*, 19 June 2018, online: https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/article/deeds-not-words-suffragettes-and#:~:text=But%20it%20was%20the%20famous,other%20suffragettes%20to%20follow%20suit., accessed: 2 January 2024.
[321] 'The Slashed Venus', *The Daily Mail*, 11 March 1914, p.3, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000324/19140311/007/0003, accessed: 2 January 2024.
[322] 'The Slashed Venus', p.3
[323] 'Mrs. Wood Sent for Trial', *The Suffragette*, 8 May 1914, pp.88-89, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0002188/19140508/077/0012?browse=true, accessed: 2 January 2024.

Responses to the action taken in art galleries were varied. The weekly *London Opinion* announced their intent to hold a 'Laughter Show,' or 'Humorous Art Exhibition' on 11 May 1914 to encourage the appreciation of art by satirists and cartoonists such as Tony Sarg, Hilda Cowan, and Hassal. *The Central Somerset Gazette* reported that the venue, Holland Park Rink, would 'exhibit a ticket requesting all suffragettes to deposit hatchets, butcher's cleavers and other lethal weapons in the cloak room before entering.'[324] The advert for the exhibition was followed by a short article about a statue of Diana with a stag in Vivary Park which had been tarred with the word 'votes' graffitied on the pedestal. The humour in the *London Opinion* was missing entirely from Modernist Wyndham Lewis' 'word of advice' to suffragettes in his Vorticist literary magazine *BLAST* (8 May 1914):

**TO SUFFRAGETTES.**

**A WORD OF ADVICE.**

**IN DESTRUCTION, AS IN OTHER THINGS,**
**Stick to what you understand.**
**WE MAKE YOU A PRESENT OF OUR VOTES.**
**ONLY LEAVE WORKS OF ART ALONE.**
**YOU MIGHT SOME DAY DESTROY A**
**GOOD PICTURE BY ACCIDENT.**

**THEN! –**

**MAIS SOYEZ BONNES FILLES!**
**NOUS VOUS AIMONS!**

**WE ADMIRE YOUR ENERGY. YOU AND ARTISTS**
**ARE THE ONLY THINGS (YOU DON'T MIND**
**BEING CALLED THINGS?) LEFT IN ENGLAND**
**WITH A LITTLE LIFE IN THEM.**

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[324] 'Humour and Art', *The Central Somerset Gazette*, 8 May 1914, p.7, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0002470/19140508/136/0007, accessed: 2 January 2024.

**IF YOU DESTROY A GREAT WORK OF ART you**
**Are destroying a greater soul than if you**
**annihilated a whole district of London.**

**LEAVE ART ALONE, BRAVE COMRADES!**[325]

Lewis' patronising tone was fraught with anxiety and misogyny. The offer of 'votes' was not a reference to civil matters, but a reminder that men oversaw who should and shouldn't have access to the masculine space of the modernist avant-garde. Women were destroying canonical works of art, and making political statements far more effective than the (male) artists who were challenging conventional forms with 'good pictures'. When Lewis advised them to 'stick to what [they] understand,' he was exemplifying the attitudes prevalent in modernist circles about intelligence, and the role of women in society.

Mannin, Pankhurst, and Cunard were writing at a time when the growth industry of literary criticism, becoming prominent in the 1920s, and growing in strength and influence in the years preceding World War II, placed strict delineations on what should be considered high, low, and middlebrow art. This was significant in that these delineations, while presenting themselves as merit-based were arguably also determined by class and gender. How certain types of literature and their readers were critiqued and categorised was political, marking the literary industry as another battleground in the war against class and gender disparity. In this sense, writing for women and the working and underclasses was an act of resistance at a time in British history when the country was undergoing rapid changes, grappling with the aftermath of World War I, and unknowingly on the brink of World War II.

When World War I ended in November of 1918, men returning to Britain were confronted with a jarring shift in gender dynamics - including The Representation of the People Act, passed earlier that year granting women over the age of 30 the right to vote. For the first time (some) women had a more active role in the public realm of politics, formerly the domain of men. The literary industry reflected the anxieties that this shift in dynamics produced, becoming a microcosm of broader social conflicts. Woman writers were navigating an industry run predominantly by men and policed by male reviewers and literary critics who determined

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[325] W. Lewis, 'To Suffragettes', W. Lewis (ed), *Blast*, no.1, London, UK, John Lane, 1914, pp. 151-152

access. According to Jane Dowson, 'resistance to professional women writers was partly a nostalgia for the pre-war ideals of femininity (and presumably of masculinity).'[326]

Simply put, longed-for pre-war social structures placed men as the head of the household, its finances, and matters in civil society. Women were confined to the private space of the home where they were expected to fulfil the Victorian ideal of the Angel of the House epitomised in Coventry Patmore's verse-novel by the same name written about his wife, Emily. While it did not receive much attention when first published in 1854, the verse-novel grew in acclaim as the century progressed, sustaining its popularity well into the 20th Century.

The Angel in the House was a primarily middle, and upper-class archetype of femininity manifested in unquestioning devotion as a wife and mother who did not have to work outside the home. Patmore's poem encouraged the idea that, 'Man must be pleased; but him to please / Is woman's pleasure; down the gulf / Of his condoled necessities / She casts her best, she flings herself.'[327] Woman writers unsettled the status quo by flinging themselves at occupations that took them outside of their assigned roles. In a speech delivered to the Women's Service League in 1931, Virginia Woolf remarked that 'Killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of the woman writer.'[328]

Women had the vote, and some ground had been gained towards the equality of the sexes. However, society was still imposing expectations on them that aligned with archaic ideas about the gendered division of labour. With the right to participate in civil society, and more opportunities for women to gain financial independence, they had entered the formerly masculine public sphere. Woman writers found that instead of freedom from the expectations, biases and gender divisions imposed on them in the private space, they were subject to the same inequality in the publishing industry, where men still held a great deal of power.

Mere months before the implementation of The Representation of the People Act, Frederick Banbury, MP for the City of London, declared that women were likely to be 'affected by gusts and waves of sentiment' and that 'their emotional temperament makes them liable to it.' Sir John Rees, MP for Nottingham East, said that women were 'tremendously accessible, extraordinarily impressionable,' while Arthur Beck, MP for Saffron Walden, was emphatic that the 'idealism of the feminine mind and its deadly logic which we have all experienced in private

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[326] J. Dowson (ed), *Women's Poetry of the 1930s: A Critical Anthology*, London, UK, Routledge, 1996, p. 14
[327] C. Patmore, *The Angel in the House*, London, UK, Cassel & Company, 1887, p.74
[328] V. Woolf, 'Professions for Women', *Collected Essays*, vol.2, L. Woolf (ed), London, UK, Chatto & Windus, 1966, pp. 285-286

life… is not valuable, but destructive.'[329] The emotional temperament and deadly logic of the feminine mind were of equal concern for literary critics. One critic described it as an 'anarchy of instincts' in a review of the collection 'The Poetry of Women' for *The Times Literary Supplement* (1920): 'As we contemplate the profusion of modern fiction with women's names on the title page, we may reasonably fear for the welfare of art smothered between the smatterings of science and the anarchy of instincts.'[330] The critic placed firm boundaries between the novel, which 'we allow…to be abused in the interest of sex propaganda,' and lyrical poetry, which 'by the very limits of its constitution, will permit no such transgression.'[331] The use of the collective *we* who *allow* these transgressions is telling.

Critics were aware of the power and authority that they wielded in literary circles. The same authority emboldened them to gender literary forms. To compound the problem, some women poets struggled to disengage from the idea that poetry was inherently masculine. Edith Sitwell, in 'Some Observations on Women's Poetry' (1925), wrote:

> Women poets will do best if they realise that male technique is not suitable to them. No woman writing in the English language has ever written a great sonnet, no woman has ever written great blank verse. Then again, speaking generally, as we cannot dispense with our rules, so we find free verse difficult.[332]

Sitwell appeared to have forgotten to give due credit to poets like Christina Rossetti and Elizabeth Barrett Browning when making her broad claims about sonnets, blank verse poetry and 'the male technique.' By characterising poetry by women in this way, and situating herself in the inner circle of male critics, she appropriated the same misogynistic attitude as the critic in *The Times Literary Supplement*. Woolf, at times a reviewer herself, would likely have associated Sitwell's remarks with failure to kill the Angel. She recalled her own struggles overcoming the Angel when reviewing a novel by a 'famous man':

> she slipped behind me and whispered: 'My dear, you are a young woman. You are writing about a book that has been written by a man. Be sympathetic; be tender; flatter;

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[329] F. Gillett, 'Women's Suffrage: 10 Reasons Why Men Opposed Votes for Women', *BBC News*, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-43740033, accessed: 24 May 2021
[330] Qtd. in: J. Dowson, and A. Entwistle (eds), *A History of Twentieth-Century British Women's Poetry*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 14
[331] Dowson and Entwistle, *A History of Twentieth-Century British Women's Poetry*, p. 14
[332] E. Sitwell, 'Some Observations on Women's Poetry', Salter, E., and Allanah, H. (eds), *Edith Sitwell: Fire of the Mind*, London, UK, Michael Joseph, 1976, pp. 187–92, qtd. in Dowson, and Entwistle (eds), *A History of Twentieth-Century British Women's Poetry*

> deceive; use all the arts and wiles of our sex. Never let anybody guess that you have a mind of your own.[333]

Finding an assertive voice in a decidedly masculine literary scene was difficult if women writers and reviewers wanted to avoid alienation, and more so if an author or poet wrote in line with the radical avant-gardism at the crux of modernism which, as Rita Felski frames it, was 'often codified as masculine.'[334] Additionally, its other, mass culture, was often codified as 'sentimental, feminine, and regressive.'[335] Felski suggests that the feminine anarchy of instincts associated with women's poetry was likewise associated with popular literature, films and media – including the novels that were allowed, per the critic in *The Times*, to be 'abused in the interest of sex propaganda.' [336]

By refusing modernist women poets and authors access to the masculine space of the literary elite, critics were forcing them into the relative anonymity of a feminised mass culture despite producing experimental work that would have been out of place under that banner. In addition, Felski identified a division that, if we take it further, suggests something more sinister than a simple longing for pre-war ideals. The feminisation of mass culture was a reaction to a rise in women's professional writing, and the belief that men were intellectually superior to women. This was a centuries-old belief, but until the latter half of the 19th Century the idea that women were irrational and emotional was based on prejudice, religious teachings, personal opinions, and superstition.[337] Beginning in the mid-19th Century, the differences between the sexes became the subject of scientific enquiry. The most influential study from this period was Charles Darwin's *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871). Women, according to Darwin, were not as evolved as men:

> It is generally admitted that with woman the powers of intuition, of rapid perception, and perhaps of imitation, are more strongly marked than in man; but some, at least, of these faculties are characteristic of the lower races, and therefore of a past and lower state of civilisation. The chief distinction in the intellectual powers of the two sexes is shewn by man attaining to a higher eminence, in whatever he takes up, than woman can

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[333]Woolf, 'Professions for Women', pp.285-286
[334] R. Felski, *The Gender of Modernity*, Cambridge, US, Harvard University Press, 1995, p.29
[335] Felski, *The Gender of Modernity*, p.29
[336] Dowson and Entwistle (eds), *A History of Twentieth-Century British Women's Poetry*, p.14
[337] H. L. Smith, 'Women Intellectuals and Intellectual History: Their Paradigmatic Separation', *Women's History Review*, vol.16, no. 3, 2007, p.6

> attain – whether requiring deep thought, reason, or imagination, or merely the use of the senses and hands.[338]

Darwin attributed the higher evolution of man to natural selection and rivalry between men, which forced them to persevere. Their success in this regard instilled in them qualities like rationality and ambition. In a bizarre footnote, he backed his claim with a misreading of a line from John Stuart Mill's feminist text, *The Subjection of Women* (1869). Mill, he said, 'remarks "the things in which man most excels woman are those which require most plodding, and long hammering at single thoughts." What is this but energy and perseverance?'[339] He conveniently omitted the rest of Mill's argument that it is impossible to determine whether 'there is any natural difference at all in the average strength or direction of the mental capacities of the two sexes, much less what that difference is.'[340]

Mill, who wrote his book while campaigning for women's suffrage, emphasised that any study conducted on intelligence would need to consider the effects of unequal power relations on personal development. In the first paragraph of his book, he wrote that 'the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes…is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other.'[341] Darwin did not see fit to follow Mill's advice, producing a text that coupled with Thomas Malthus' theories on reproduction, contributed to gender inequality and the rise and justification of social eugenics. Malthus advanced the idea that the poor were underdeveloped, and prone to an 'oblivious tendency…to increase the population' because they lacked the moral restraint of the upper classes.[342] Darwinism and Malthusianism appealed to eugenicists because social eugenics divided society in strongly biological terms.

The idea that there were innate genetic differences between men and women, and between different classes was used to bolster claims that women and the working classes were incapable of making rational decisions, and therefore incapable of participating responsibly in decision-making processes. One of the most active societies promoting birth control in the 1920s was the Malthusian League, formed in 1877 to spread information about limiting family

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[338] C. Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, Princeton, US, Princeton University Press, 1981, pp. 326-327
[339] Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, p.328
[340] J.S. Mill, *On Liberty and the Subjection of Women*, London, UK, Penguin Books, 2006, p. 204
[341] Mill, *On Liberty and the Subjection of Women*, p.133
[342] T. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press, 1993, p.39

size. Activists and Malthusians Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant established the organisation after they were arrested for publishing a pamphlet on techniques to prevent pregnancy. The organisation was instrumental in distributing information about, and de-stigmatising birth control in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries.[343]

At the same time, like Malthus, they believed that poverty was a result of working-class overpopulation, and most of their efforts targeted working-class women. They petitioned doctors to provide information about contraceptives to couples that they thought were unfit to procreate – a campaign that was wholeheartedly supported by the eugenics movement, which advocated selective breeding, and traditional gender roles. The spectre of Darwinism was starkly reflected in pamphlets like *Feminism and Sex Extinction*, published in 1920 by eugenicist and Anti-Feminist Arabella Kenealy, in which she proclaimed that if men and women were made to compete for the same roles, it would interfere with the natural order of things: 'Nature, marvellously prescient in all her processes, has provided that the sexes, by being constituted wholly different in body, brain and bent, do not normally come into rivalry and antagonism in the fulfilment of their respective life-roles.'[344]

While woman writers were stepping out of bounds and defying nature, the so-called masses were gaining access to education, which was equally concerning for the literati. The idea of the masses, the ordinary consumers of popular culture, was indelibly tied up with anxiety surrounding the reading habits and education of the middle, lower-middle, and working classes. Interwar Britain was rife with class-based political and social conflict. Multiple depressions, the rise of the Labour Party and trade union activism (including the General Strike of 1926) the birth of the welfare state, and the labour college movement which increased education for the working classes, all contributed to the formation of a new class sensibility.

This sensibility was partly informed by the variety of literatures made available through a combination of advancements in print technology and an ever-expanding reading public which created class tension between the gatekeepers of culture, those highly educated critics and literary scholars, and the common reading public. John Carey has gone so far as to suggest that 'modernist literature and art can be seen as a hostile reaction to the unprecedentedly large reading public created by late nineteenth-century educational reforms.' 'The purpose of modernist writing,' Carey writes in *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (1992), 'was to exclude

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[343] K. Fisher, *Birth Control, Sex and Marriage in Britain 1918–1960*, Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press, 2006, p.28

[344] Qtd in J. Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society*: *The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800*, London, UK, Routledge, 2012, p. 208

these newly educated (or "semi-educated") readers, and so to preserve the intellectual's seclusion from the "mass".'[345] While Carey's claim speaks to the class conflict that arguably cannot be ignored when discussing literature in the interwar period, it is not necessarily accurate.

Myriad factors contributed to the inaccessibility of modernist art and experiments in language and form. For one, as Jonathan Rose has noted, the reading tastes of the working class 'lagged well behind those of the educated middle classes.'[346] In addition, they were not incapable of understanding more modern works. They couldn't afford them. New books were expensive – modernist books were expensive – so much of what they read was found in secondhand bookstalls housing a variety of publications spanning everything from philosophy to popular fiction. When literary modernism was gaining traction, working-class autodidacts 'had only just mastered the great English classics.'[347] By the time the masses caught up with post-Victorian writers, literary elites had moved on to more modern authors.[348] Reading for the working classes had nothing to do with rising in intellectual status or conforming to the ideals of the elite. It was improving, entertaining, and a way to keep the mind active. They read across genres broadly and widely, with little concern for whether something was considered low- or highbrow literature. The Literati, fainting at the idea of a mass reading public, was confronted with a readership that was not affected by or interested in the critic's authority.

Trials to ban books, hypocrisy in the publishing industry, Suffragettes who noticed and reacted to the idea that art was treated with more respect than women, misogynist responses from the avant-garde that perfectly illustrated their point – there is overwhelming evidence that in Britain the world of art and literature was fraught with gender and class politics. Women and the lower classes were subjected to archaic ideas about differences in intelligence. The Battle of the Brows reinforced these divides. Taking all of this into account, Mannin, Pankhurst, and Cunard's use of fiction and poetry as mediums for socialist conscientizing was politically astute on multiple levels. It provided an accessible entry point into complex political ideology by reframing it in ways that would have been entertaining, emotive or with plots and settings that were recognisable to readers, provoking a connection between idea and material reality. It was also ideal for advancing utopianism because Utopia as a concept is a type of fiction unto itself

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[345] J. Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice Among the Literary Intelligentsia*, London, UK, Faber and Faber, 1992, p.1 (Preface).
[346] J. Rose, 'A Conservative Canon: Cultural Lag in British Working-Class Reading Habits', *Libraries & Culture*, vol. 33, no.1, 1998, p.100
[347] Rose, 'A Conservative Canon', p. 100
[348] Rose, 'A Conservative Canon', p. 100

– a place that is no place according to its Ancient Greek etymology – but with the potential to become material given the will to do the work to realise it. Utopian socialism combined art (working-class literary forms, recurrent iconography, themes, tropes, metaphors, and fictional utopian narratives) with politics (activism that challenged the artworld, literature that challenged the elitism of the avant-garde).

The fiction of differing degrees of intelligence was fought with the invention of a future-perfect society in which equality was recognised. The latter was designed to displace the former as material reality. The Angel of Freedom supplanted the Angel of the House in socialist ideology. Act I outlined the ideas that foregrounded utopian socialism, the centrality of literary form in conveying socialist doctrine, and how the law and society policed literature and morality to control women's bodies and sexuality. This set the scene for a more detailed investigation of class and gender disparity in the literary industry, and a critique of high art. What follows explores in more detail how Pankhurst, Mannin, Cunard, and other authors – modernist and socialist – responded to race, class, gender, and global concerns like Empire in their creative work.

## Betwixt the Brows

In the interwar period, socialist women produced literature outside the modernist project by reclaiming and repurposing the fixed novelistic and poetic forms that modernism sought to challenge. To the literary critic, work like this would have appeared out of time, the language and form archaic or outdated. Still, it was precisely this language and form that would have been familiar to the average working-class reader. In addition to this, socialist authors wrote within popular middlebrow genres like the romance, using its mass appeal to promote socialism. In the battle of the brows, the middlebrow reader and their indiscriminate reading habits posed the most significant threat to high culture.

Woolf provided something close to definitions of highbrow, middlebrow, and lowbrow in 'Middlebrow' written for, but not sent to the editor of *The New Statesman*. Her focus on the types of people that fit into these categories, not the categories themselves, is more informative than any formal definition of the brows because she inadvertently illustrated the connection between class conflict and culture. According to Woolf, the highbrow (the true artist, the literary elite) was 'a man or woman of thoroughbred intelligence who rides his mind at gallop

across country in pursuit of an idea.'[349] By lowbrows, she meant 'a man or a woman of thoroughbred vitality who rides his body in pursuit of a living at a gallop across life.'[350] The claim that highbrows and lowbrows hated each other was, according to her, 'malicious gossip' spread by the middlebrow: 'a man, or woman, of middlebred intelligence who ambles and saunters now on this side of the hedge, now on that, in pursuit of no single object, neither art itself nor life itself, but both mixed indistinguishably, and rather nastily, with money, fame, power, or prestige.'[351]

Highbrows were the thinking classes which, if we take lowbrows as their opposite, positioned them as the *unthinking* classes – they were bodies destined for labour. To draw on Jacques Rancière's proposition in *The Philosopher and his Poor* (*Le philosophe et ses pauvres*, 1983), philosophy begins by positing a distinction between those presumed capable of genuine thought, and those who presumably lack the ability and time required for genuine thought.[352] Woolf argued that the relationship between highbrows and lowbrows was symbiotic. Lowbrows were too busy 'riding full tilt from one end of life to the other in pursuit of a living' to think about or see what they were doing.[353] Seeing their lived reality was, as she put it, 'one of the prime necessities of life to them,' and 'the highbrows, of course, [were] the only people who [could] show it to them.'[354]

Middlebrows could not be reduced to a single occupation, nor did they offer anything of value to the highbrows. The middlebrow was aware of high culture, and ventured into it occasionally, but preferred the emotive, formulaic and sentimental novels, films and other media that fell within the purview of popular culture (also called mass culture). Lowbrows, as highbrows *imagined* them, produced the sort of work that wasn't difficult to understand or particularly sophisticated, but reflected the lives of 'people who seemed to offer an earthier sensibility, a more honest morality, a fascinating potential for violence and revolution.'[355] Woolf was concerned that the middlebrows and their literature were corrupting the earthier sensibility of the lowbrows. 'How,' she asked, 'can you let the middlebrows teach you how to

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[349] V. Woolf, 'Middlebrow', *Collected Essays*, vol.2, L. Woolf (ed), London, UK, Chatto & Windus, 1966, p.196
[350] Woolf, 'Middlebrow', p.197
[351] Woolf, 'Middlebrow', pp. 178, 199
[352] J. Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor*, trans. J. Drury, C. Oster and A. Parker, London, UK, Duke University Press, 2004, p. 6
[353] Woolf, 'Middlebrow', p.198
[354] Woolf, 'Middlebrow', p.198
[355] J. Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, New Haven, US, Yale University Press, 2001, p. 439

write? – you, who write so beautifully when you write naturally, that I would give both my hands to write as you do – for which reason I never attempt it but do my best to learn the art of writing as a highbrow should.'[356]

The relationship between the highbrows and lowbrows was not symbiotic. It was exploitative. Keeping lowbrows in their place was necessary for artistic production. Poet Angela Rodaway described a disturbing trend in Bloomsbury where artists deliberately went on the dole for half the year while they followed vocations as writers, painters, composers, or while studying for external degrees. She wrote, 'I found this shocking. I lived in much the same way, going in and out of jobs, which I despised, and writing during the "rest" periods but I would not go on the dole. I had lived on it for too long in my childhood and I could not dissociate it from the means test.'[357] Poverty tourism was rife in Bloomsbury, and Woolf like many Modernists was impervious to the insidiousness of studying people, and especially working-class people, so that their lives could be used as fodder for art:

> I love lowbrows; I study them; I always sit next to the conductor in an omnibus and try to get him to tell me what it is like – being a conductor. In whatever company I am I always try to know what it is like – being a conductor, being a woman with ten children and thirty-five shillings a week, being a stockbroker, being an admiral, being a bank clerk, being a dressmaker, being a duchess, being a miner, being a cook, being a prostitute. All that lowbrows do is of surpassing interest and wonder to me, because, insofar as I am a highbrow, I cannot do things myself.[358]

She tried to steer her 'friends the lowbrows' away from reading middlebrow literature, attending middlebrow lectures, and reading middlebrow reviews. 'Why,' she asked them, 'are you so damnably modest? Do you think that a description of your lives, as they are, is too sordid and too mean to be beautiful? Is that why you prefer the middlebrow version of what they have the impudence to call real humanity? – this mixture of geniality and sentiment stuck together with a sticky slime of calves-foot jelly?'[359] According to Woolf, only highbrows could fully capture the beauty of the lowbrow experience.

The lowbrows, responding to Woolf's question about their modesty, said that 'they consider themselves to be common people without education…And after all… middlebrows,

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[356] Woolf, 'Middlebrow', pp. 200-201
[357] Qtd in: J. Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, New Haven, US, Yale University Press, 2001, p. 445
[358] Woolf, 'Middlebrow', pp.197-198
[359] Woolf, 'Middlebrow', p.200

like other people, have to make money.'[360] She was evidently oblivious to the reality, economic and social, that her lowbrow friends and middlebrow enemies were navigating. Woolf quite agreed with the lowbrows when they reminded her that 'we all have to earn our livings' – even she had to earn a living! Indeed, her annual income had been reduced 'thanks to the war and other luxuries, to little more than two hundred odd.'[361] She claimed to have learned about 'being a woman with ten children and thirty-five shillings a week.' If she had learned anything, she may have reconsidered implying that her struggles were the same as those she was interrogating in their homes, and on public transport.[362]

Woolf was 'proud to be called a highbrow.'[363] Mannin called herself a 'Philistine,' and by Philistine, she meant middlebrow.[364] Having broken into Bloomsbury while working in advertising, she quickly lost patience with the highbrows who cluttered 'up their lives with a lot of ideas about themselves, wallowed in 'the muck of idealism,' spelled 'art with a capital A,' and 'beauty with a capital B,' and spoke in terms of 'higher and lower natures.' [365] Middlebrows, as she understood the cultural category, 'do not fit into any of the class distinctions; they are the real people…their common denominator is their authenticity; they are Philistines and proud of it.'[366]

Woolf defiantly continued to refer to her 'friends the lowbrows' as 'lowbrows' even after they made clear that they identified with the books written by middlebrow authors who needed to earn a living. Her notion of authenticity was tied to a particular class experience. Mannin associated authenticity with agency, and the rejection of definitive categories. The middlebrow was,

> not literary; they strike no mental attitudes. They do not say, "This is good; this is bad; this is ugly." They say, "If you like that sort of thing, that's the sort of thing you like," and "that's all right for you; this is all right for me." They do not attempt to establish criteria; they are not concerned with accepted standards. They are Philistines, and do not care…They are no respecters of persons; they like what and whom they like, and have no views on the matter. They do not go about the world being Broad-minded about

[360] Woolf, 'Middlebrow', p.201
[361] Woolf, 'Middlebrow', p.201
[362] Woolf, 'Middlebrow', p.197
[363] Woolf, 'Middlebrow', p.196
[364] Mannin, *Confessions,* p.16
[365] Mannin, *Confessions*, p. 15
[366] Mannin, *Confessions*, p.15

> this and that…They are neither Highbrows nor Lowbrows, for they know that a Lowbrow is merely a Highbrow gone wrong and become an intellectual pervert.[367]

When Mannin called lowbrows intellectual perverts, she was not referring to the actual people or the 'natural writing' that Woolf and other Modernists found fascinating. She was talking about the *idea* of the lowbrow, the image repertoire,[368] that the elites projected onto them, and in some cases, tried to emulate. She found 'the affectation of the Lowbrow…as tiresome as the affectation of the Highbrow.'[369] The absurdity of the war between the middlebrows and highbrows was perfectly captured in the 22 July 1925 edition of *Punch, or the London Charivari,* which featured a satirical public service announcement informing readers of 'a new type, the "middlebrow", which 'consists of people who are hoping that some day they will get used to the stuff they ought to like.'[370]

Jack Lindsay and P.R. Stephensen responded to the Battle of the Brows by establishing *The London Aphrodite* with the intent to 'equally [outrage] the modernist and the reactionary.'[371] In an 'Editorial Manifesto' they included a long list of Modernists coupled with reactionaries, including 'J.C. Squire and T.S. Eliot,' 'Wyndham Lewis and Dean Inge,' and 'Maritain and James Douglas' who 'would if compelled by force to read [their] magazine, heartily (or at least irritatedly) dislike it.'[372] Lindsay ended the first volume with an 'Ex Cathedra' that the magazine is 'epoch-marking because it has nothing whatever to do with the *Zeitgeist*.'[373] Lindsay and Stephensen invited 'contributions from the world at large outside the lunatic asylums of the abstract and other official cliques.' The criteria for submissions were set out in a single line borrowed from Greek playwright Terence's *The Self-Tormentor* (Ἑαυτὸν

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[367] Mannin, *Confessions*, pp. 15-16
[368] The 'image-repertoire' is Roland Barthes' term for a construct that is projected onto the other. *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* (*Fragments d'un discours amoureux*, 1977) comprises a set of fragments, or figures, that represent the discursive and physical acts of one in love, the Lover, performed outside of any formal structure of behaviour. The Lover creates the other, the Loved Object, as perfect, infallible – an ideal is projected onto them. The Loved Object is constructed by the Lover. He or she is an object, not a speaking subject. In the context of poverty tourism, the highbrows were Lovers projecting an image-repertoire, an ideal of what constituted a lowbrow, onto the lower-classes, lower-middle-classes, and working classes. The highbrow was the speaking subject (the man or woman of ideas), the lowbrow was the unspeaking object (the vital body). R. Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. R. Howard, London, UK, Random House, 2002.
[369] Mannin, *Confessions*, p.16
[370] 'Charivari', *Punch, or the London Charivari*, 22 July 1925, p.673, online:https://archive.org/details/punchorlondoncha0000unse/page/6/mode/2up, accessed: 9 November 2023.
[371] J. Lindsay, and P.R. Stephensen, 'Editorial Manifesto', *The London Aphrodite*, J. Lindsay, and P.R. Stephensen (eds), no.1, London, UK, The The Fanfrolico Press, August 1928, p.2
[372] Lindsay and Stephensen, 'Editorial Manifesto', p.2
[373] J. Lindsay, 'Ex Cathedra', *The London Aphrodite*, J. Lindsay, and P.R. Stephensen (eds), no.1, London, UK, The The Fanfrolico Press, August 1928, p. 64

τιμωρούμενος, 163BC): '*Nihil humani alienum a me puto*' ('there is nothing human that is foreign to me').[374] The writers of the 'Charivari' pages in *Punch,* and the editors of *The London Aphrodite* made light of the conflict in literary circles, and the attempts of the elite to parcel the public off into categories based on their taste in art.

Pankhurst responded to the elitism of high art with *Germinal*, a short-lived international literary magazine for the working classes that she edited alongside Silvio Corio. Only two volumes of the magazine were released in 1923 and 1924 respectively. She advertised the magazine in the 4 August 1923 edition of *The Workers' Dreadnought* as a 'unique production': 'There is no magazine like it. It begins a new phase in the world of literature and thought. It creates a new school of literary and artistic enterprise with a purpose. It costs only a sixpence. Just the right magazine for all workers. Good stories, pictures, poetry and reviews.'[375]

The authors and artists who contributed poetry, short fiction, and art to *Germinal*, a truly international publication, ran the gambit from Bloomsbury to Russia, and beyond:

> With the appearance of this, the first issue of "Germinal," a new field is opened up, that you would do well to watch. Germinal has a public: from its inception a steady circulation was assured: its readers take a keen interest in everything that expresses Beauty, Modernity and Progress. Readers of "Germinal" are to be found in places as far apart as Gower Street, London, and Santiniketan, India.[376]

In her introduction to the magazine, Pankhurst emphasised that *Germinal* had a public, and that public comprised readers with a 'keen interest in everything that expresses Beauty, Modernity and Progress.' Beauty, modernity, and progress are words that have often been associated with the avant-garde and modernism. She situated her readership, 'workers', in a global context, and made it clear that they had the same interests as readers of more elite publications. They were thinking people who could, and did appreciate art.

The progress that she described was grounded in socialism. 'Utopian Conversations' was one of her contributions to the first issue. It appeared alongside stories by Maxim Gorky, L.A. Motler, and Marius Lyle; poetry by James Waldo Shaw, Clara Cole, Anna Akhmatova and Lionel Grant; a portrait of Bernard Shaw by Ludovic Rodo; and drawings and woodcuts by Joseph Southhall, Maurice Beeker and Marcel Vertes. Gorky's story, 'Comrades', is set in

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[374] Lindsay, 'Ex Cathedra', p. 64 (trans. Mine)
[375] 'Germinal', *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 4 August 1923, p.7, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0002236/19230804/025/0007, accessed: 1 January 2024.
[376] S. Pankhurst, 'Editorial', *Germinal*, vol.1, no.1, London, UK, Agenda Press, 1923, np., State Library Victoria, Melbourne, RARES; 821.912 G3179.

a dystopian city where under Capitalism the destitute poor are at the mercy of the rich. They do not know better, and despite their unhappiness, strive to become like the rich in a bid for power. They are awoken to the possibility of a new future by a single word: 'Comrade!' Although not a new word for them, it takes on new meaning with its promise of a world united by a single purpose – equality for all.[377]

Woolf's definitions of highbrow, middlebrow, and lowbrow are a good indication of the class-based undertones embedded in these categories. The highbrows, like Woolf, and other Modernists engaging in poverty tourism, displayed a tone-deafness to class disparity that dehumanised the lower classes by fictionalising and romanticising their lives. Herein lies the necessity of not doing away with these categories in literary criticism. Instead, they should be viewed not as a guideline for ascertaining literary merit, but as a framework for understanding how class conflict factored into literary production. Highbrow, middlebrow and lowbrow categories are as politically charged as social categories like upper-class, middleclass and working-class. Publications that challenged the elitism of highbrow literary circles like *The London Aphrodite* and Pankhurst's *Germinal* were not products of petty squabbles between artists trying to claim territory in a culture war. They were assaults on the divisiveness and absurdity of how literature and its readers were classed. For socialist authors like Mannin and Pankhurst, the Battle of the Brows in interwar Britain was another site of class conflict.

## Love in the Time of Communism

In 1930, there was an essential shift in how the working classes accessed literature. The advent of the twopenny library – purveyors of middlebrow bestsellers and popular fiction – offered readers an alternative to newspaper serials and second-hand bookstalls.[378] Booksellers and libraries initially met the trade with consternation but it posed little threat to them financially. Twopenny librarians were quickly dismissed as peddlers of what Chief Librarian at Croydon W.C. Berwick Sayers called 'light literature.'[379] One such peddler, Mc Mechan's twopenny library posted an advertisement in the 20 February 1937 *Wigton Advertiser* announcing 50 new

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[377] M. Gorky, 'Comrades', trans. J. Sutton Paterson, *Germinal*, vol.1, no.1, London, UK, Agenda Press, 1923, np., State Library Victoria, Melbourne, RARES; 821.912 G3179.
[378] For a masterfully concise overview of the rise and cultural impact of the twopenny library in Britain, see: Christopher Hilliard, 'The Twopenny Library: The Book Trade, Working-Class Readers, and 'Middlebrow' Novels in Britain 1930-42', *Twentieth Century British History*, vol.25, no.2, 2014, pp. 199-220.
[379] Qtd in: C. Hilliard, 'The Twopenny Library: The Book Trade, Working-Class Readers, and 'Middlebrow' Novels in Britain 1930-42', *Twentieth Century British History*, vol.25, no.2, 2014, p.201

additions to their range of 'Love, Romance, Detective and Western' offerings, including Mannin's *Love's Winnowing*.[380] Outside of circles fixated on preserving high culture, light literature, and the romance in particular was treated as innocuous or useful for conservatives like Charles Boon, and critics who saw the romance as a distraction from communist politics. Those like James Douglas targeted more literary authors like Radclyffe Hall and Lawrence. Home Secretary Joynson-Hicks, in partnership with magistrates like Chartres Biron, sought to suppress literature that challenged the moral code. A critical oversight on their part was that if the romance could be used to maintain the status quo, it could also be used to disrupt it.

The romance was one of the most feminine of popular genres, typically written by women for middleclass, lower middleclass, and working-class women. Socialist authors, including Mannin, Ethel Carnie Holdsworth, Sheila Kaye-Smith, and Ellen Wilkinson recognised its mass appeal and potential for political conscientizing. Wilkinson told Mannin that she had written a novel, and wanted to write more 'but mainly as a vehicle for her political views.'[381] Mannin produced a substantial body of work that wove political ideas into fictional narratives, which has mostly been set aside in favour of her political non-fiction and travel writing. The majority of works that mention Mannin only refer to her fiction as adjunct to her activism.

There are exceptions worth mentioning. Croft is often cited as the first to bring her politics into conversation with her fiction in *Red Letter Days: British Fiction in the 1930s* (1990), and chapter, 'Ethel Mannin: The Red Rose of Love and the Red Flower of Liberty' in *Rediscovering Forgotten Radicals: British Women Writers 1889-1939* (1993). In his 2016 article, 'The Post-Colonial Novels of Desmond Stewart and Ethel Mannin', Ahmed Al Rawi analysed two of Mannin's late novels, *The Road to Beersheba* (1963) and *The Night and Its Homing* (1966). Nick Hubble credits Croft with providing the most comprehensive overview of Mannin's work. He builds on it with a revisionist reading of literature and politics in the 1930s in '"You're not in the Market at Shielding, Joe": Beyond the Myth of the Thirties' (2017). Virginia Nicholson's *Among the Bohemians* (2002) contains analyses of *Sounding Brass* (1925) and *Ragged Banners* (1931), but she glosses over the implications of poverty tourism and class conflict in Bloomsbury, and her limited depiction of Mannin's life and work borders on the apolitical. Renewed interest in Mannin's work is apparent in essays like

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[380] '50 New Additions to Mc Mechan's Library', *Wigton Advertiser*, 20 February 1937, p.1, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0002280/19370220/013/0001, accessed: 3 June 2022.
[381] Mannin, *Confessions*, p.174

Newsinger's 'Ethel Mannin, Women and the Revolution' in the 10 January 2022 edition of *The International Socialist* in which he situates novels like *Comrade O Comrade* within the context of her political activity, makes the connection between *Darkness My Bride* (1938) and the Spanish Civil War, and briefly analyses *Cactus* (1935). Eve Patten's recently published *Ireland, Revolution and the English Modernist Imagination* (2022) speaks to how Mannin's fiction, specifically *The Blossoming Bough* (1943), *No More Mimosa* (1944) and *Comrade O Comrade, or, Low Down on the Left,* relate to British modernism, Ireland's revolutionary era and Mannin's International Socialist politics. Her focus is primarily on novels written in the 1940s.

Patten's book shows the merits of bringing Mannin's fiction into conversation with her politics, and is testimony to the fact that if it is taken separately from her politics studies on her activism will remain incomplete. Indeed, the lack of attention paid to this crucial intersection is astounding because those who have written about her often reference it. In *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow* (2006) David Goodway refers to Mannin's treatment of anarchist Emma Goldman in *Comrade O Comrade* and *Lover Under Another Name* (1953) but does not elaborate.[382] Rose (2001) identifies the 1930s as the decade in which she 'turned to producing novels of social significance… using her old reliable romantic devices to sell Socialism.' He doesn't provide examples of the novels that he refers to, weakening his claim.[383] According to Phyllis Lassner (2004), during this period Mannin was exploring 'the intersection and impact of political and social systems on people around the globe.'[384] Michael Schmidt (2014) has attempted a more precise estimation of Mannin's turn to political fiction. In his brief mention of Mannin, he wrote that while her 'early works [were] politically alert but not programmatic,' it was in 1932, 'with *Love's Winnowing* [that] she became a frankly political writer.'[385] The only other mention that Schmidt makes of *Love's Winnowing* is in his Index.

There are two problems with Schmidt's framing of the 'novel'. First, it is not a novel. 'Love's Winnowing' is a novelette written in the 1920s before Mannin established herself as an author. It was later republished in a collection of three stories, *Love's Winnowing*, by Wright

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[382] D. Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow: Left-Libertarian Thought and British Writers from William Morris to Colin Ward*, Liverpool, UK, Liverpool University Press, 2006, p. 133
[383] Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, p. 446
[384] P. Lassner, *Colonial Strangers: Women Writing at the End of the British Empire*, London, UK, Rutgers University Press, 2004, p.60
[385] M. Schmidt, *The Novel: A Biography*, London, UK, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014, p. 891

& Brown who advertised it in the 17 March 1932 edition of the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* as the third 'volume' in a series by the 'author of "Bruised Wings" and Other Stories; "The Tinsel Eden" and Other Stories' (*Bruised Wings* and *The Tinsel Eden* were published in 1931).[386] The title of the collection doesn't include the explainer 'and Other Stories' which could account for some of Schmidt's confusion. He also did not specify which edition of the book he was referencing. The title page in the 1944 A. HALLE LTD. edition features a disclaimer that 'All characters in this Novel are entirely imaginary.' A single turn of the page, however, takes the reader to the 'Contents' of the book listing three independent novelettes: 'Love's Winnowing', 'Her Friend's Lover', and 'Hetty of the Hills'. [387]

Secondly, there is little to support Schmidt's claim that the novelette is *frankly* political. Mannin made no direct references to socialist politics, nor did she situate the love story in the context of a socially or politically significant event like the General Strike of 1926 in Wilkinson's semi-autobiographical *Clash* (1929). Ethel Carnie Holdsworth left her readers with little doubt that she was championing socialism in *This Slavery* (1925). The story revolves around Lancashire working-class sisters Hester and Rachel Martin, their mother Mary, and maternal grandmother, who are left destitute after a fire at the cotton mill. At the novel's start, both sisters are devoted to socialist politics, and avid readers of Marx and Morris. One night, Hester falls ill, and develops a bad fever. Mary finds her reciting Morris' 'The Day is Coming' from *Chants for Socialists* (1885) in her sleep:

> "And the painter's eye of wonder, the marvellous fiddle-bow,
> These shall be ours, and all men's, and none shall lack a share,
> In the wonderful days that are coming, the days when the world grows fair."
>
> It was the dream – the dream of Morris and Marx, Carpenter and Liebknecht, Wat Tyler and John Ball, Ernest Jones and Robert Owen, Shelley and Heine, and William Blake. It was the old imperishable, immortal Dream, singing itself on the lips of a feverish girl-woman, caught in the trap of Capitalism.[388]

Hester's social status is elevated when she marries a local yarn agent. The price she pays is alienation from her community and her politics. The reality of her situation becomes painfully

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[386] Wright & Brown, 'Love's Winnowing', *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 17 March 1932, p.3, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000250/19320317/318/0003, accessed: 21 September 2023.
[387] E. Mannin, *Love's Winnowing*, London, UK, A. HALLE, LTD., 1944
[388] E. Carnie Holdsworth, *This Slavery*, Nottingham, UK, Trent Editions, 2011, p.88

clear to her when she is asked her opinion on the strike: 'She blanched, a trembling Ambassadress of Capital, having to speak from "outside" the mill conditions, having to speak from the point of view of financial interests, not human conditions.'[389] Hester realises that through marriage, and what is expected of her as a wife, she has 'entered the cage of the bourgeois world, and a new slavery, a new servitude.'[390] Rachel remains in poverty with her mother and grandmother. Hester redeems herself by joining her 'Brothers in bondage, comrades of poverty' in the battle at the end of the novel. She is shot, and Rachel hunches over her body, 'weeping without a rifle.'[391] Carnie Holdsworth concluded the narrative with a call to move on from old revolutions and begin new ones:

> 'forget us, quickly, the Shadows of Yesterday. Make us no altars. Worship us not. Such is of the Past. March on triumphant, and forget the echoes of our strife. For in all that we were – and we were very human – we had but one glory…We are but the Shadows of thy Yesterday. March on – electric with Love. Serve – as we have served.'[392]

To the unassuming reader, 'Love's Winnowing' – and especially when placed side-by-side with *This Slavery* and *Clash* – is nothing more than a typical romance that hits all of the formulaic plot points: a woman and a man meet, overcome obstacles, and eventually get married. A closer reading of 'Love's Winnowing' reveals something very different. When read in context, taking the politics of the early 1920s and Mannin's readership into account, it is an ideal example of how her early fiction worked to bring socialism into the homes of her readers. At various points in the story the protagonist, Diana, takes on roles that require her to navigate the internal politics of working-class communities, and class conflict more broadly, bringing the two into conversation.

The consensus that Mannin only wrote political fiction in the 1930s is based on a timeline of worthwhile literary production created by scholars like Croft, Hubble, Rose, and others, which began when she entered a life of public politics. Along with the serials, novels and novelettes that she wrote in the 1920s, 'Love's Winnowing' has been dismissed as a detour on the way to greater things. Croft's work on the intersection of politics and literature in Mannin's work is based mainly on this assumption. His discussion of 'Love's Winnowing' in 'Ethel Mannin: The Red Rose of Love and the Red Flower of Liberty' is brief, and dismissive

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[389] Carnie Holdsworth, *This Slavery*, p. 130
[390] Carnie Holdsworth, *This Slavery*, p. 129
[391] Carnie Holdsworth, *This Slavery*, p.244
[392] Carnie Holdsworth, *This Slavery*, p.245

to the point where he incorrectly cites basic information. He argues that before her first novel, *Martha*, Mannin was writing 'novelettes like *The Road to Romance* at a guinea per thousand words in order to meet the rent.'[393] The quote that follows, allegedly from *The Road to Romance*, is from the second story in *Love's Winnowing*, 'Her Friend's Lover'. He references it in his endnotes as *Love's Winnowing.* Croft based his assertions on Mannin's reflections in *Privileged Spectator* (1939), where she listed the Wright & Brown volumes as '*The Road to Romance*, *Bruised Wings*, and *The Tinsel Eden*.'[394]

She likely misremembered the title. She had not given Wright & Brown permission to publish the volumes, and fought to reclaim the rights to her work – a battle that she ultimately lost. 'The Road to Romance' is not 'Love's Winnowing'. It is one of the novelettes in *Bruised Wings and Other Stories*, and one of Mannin's earliest attempts at a socially conscious novel. The protagonist dresses like a man and chooses a life of vagabondage over the gendered restrictions that society places on her.[395] In Mannin's words, it is 'about a girl who walked out of the suburbs "into the sun".'[396] Croft reasoned in *Red Letter Days: British Fiction in the 1930s* that she was embarrassed by her novelettes. Her attitude towards them in *Privileged Spectator* supports his claim.[397] He goes on to imply that she viewed her early novelettes in the same light as the '"trashy novelette", and Hollywood sentimentalism, sensationalism and "glamour"' that she believed contributed to 'the ideological exploitation of women, preying on their need for "a temporary escape from the drabness of their lives".'[398]

Mannin's concerns, as Croft accurately outlines them, were well founded considering the ways that conservatives exploited popular genres to conservative ends. As a romance author, and a successful one, she would have been acutely aware of the inner workings of the publishing industry. However, I disagree with the idea that she associated her novelettes with those she was critiquing. It is important to note that Mannin's opinions regarding these works were not fixed. In *Confessions and Impressions*, the prequel to *Privileged Spectator*, she wrote that she was *not* 'ashamed of them – they were competently done and more literary than most

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[393] A. Croft, 'Ethel Mannin: Red Rose of Love and the Red Flower of Liberty', A. Ingram and D. Patai (eds), *Rediscovering Forgotten Radicals, British Women Writers, 1889-1939*, North Carolina, US, University of North Carolina Press, 1993, p.208
[394] E. Mannin, *Privileged Spectator*, London, UK, Jarrolds, 1939, p.43
[395] E. Mannin, *Bruised Wings and Other Stories*, London, UK, Wright & Brown, 1931.
[396] Mannin, *Confessions*, p.69
[397] A. Croft, *Red Letter Days: British Fiction in the 1930s*, London, UK, Lawrence & Wishart, 1990, p.198
[398] Croft, *Red Letter Days,* p.198

novelettes.' She found them hard to look at, not because they were poorly written or trashy, but because they reminded her of a difficult period in her life. [399]

To Croft's credit, he is one of only a handful of scholars to recognise that Mannin drew on her 'experience and expertise both to adapt romantic fiction as an effective vehicle for political ideas, and to interrogate the genre, explore its weaknesses and contradictions.'[400] The analyses that he provides of the novels that she wrote in the 1930s, including *Cactus* and *Children of the Earth* (1930) are insightful and compelling. His reading of *Children of the Earth* in particular underscores a method that Mannin used to guide her readers towards the social commentary at the heart of her narratives: 'Having invited her readers into [*Children of the Earth*] by using conventional romantic forms, Mannin firmly scotched the romance of Jersey peasant life, by insisting on its material and economic hardship and its unavoidable involvement in European events.'[401] For him, this was a signature element of her late works, but there is strong evidence suggesting that Mannin successfully utilised this method long before the 1930s. When she wrote 'Love's Winnowing' she anticipated a predominantly working-class audience of women capable of connecting the story's events and their lived experiences without needing to have it explained to them by the author. To borrow Stanley Fish's term, she wrote for an 'interpretive community' of socially situated readers.[402]

In the interwar period, working-class women were reading and reading avidly. Manchester Guild Sectional Council Member Mrs. Woodward wrote for Margaret Llewelyn Davis' *Life as We Have Known It, By Co-operative Working Women* (1931): 'My reading, of course is done in time stolen from my sleeping hours, and , I am bound to confess, any meal times when alone or with my little son, who reads whenever possible.' The substantial reading list that she provided included Bebel's *Woman and Socialism*, Mrs Philip Snowden's *The Feminist Movement*, middlebrow novels like Sylvia Thompson's *The Hounds of Spring*, and more sophisticated works by socialist novelists Rebecca West, and Sheila Kaye-Smith.[403] Mrs Russell from Liverpool said that reading a book was one of the 'great luxuries' that she looked forward to 'with a great longing.' She enjoyed works by George Eliot, Olive Schreiner, and poetry that she picked 'at random.' Former president of the Co-operative Guild, Mrs. Bedhall

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[399] Mannin, *Confessions*, pp. 69-70
[400] Croft, *Red Letter Days*, p.199
[401] Croft, *Red Letter Days*, p.199
[402] S. Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*, Cambridge, US, Harvard University Press, 1980.
[403] M. Llewelyn Davis (ed), *Life as We Have Known It, By Co-operative Working Women*, London, UK, W.W. Norton & Company, 1975, pp.120-121

from Warwick, did not 'get any time for novel reading' but was 'fond of verse', and recommended several non-fiction books about socialism, such as Bruce Glasier's *The Meaning of Socialism*.[404] Mrs. Ferguson 'kept abreast with current topics' by reading newspapers, and anything that she could get her hands on about 'International Matters.' She regretted being unable to 'afford many books which [she] would love to possess.' Morris' *News from Nowhere* was among Mrs Ferguson's favourite books.[405]

Notably, the reading that Mrs. Woodward was slotting into her day was taking place in the privacy of the home. The home, the private site of reproductive labour removed from the public sphere of politics was notoriously difficult to penetrate politically, and more so in a society longing for a return to pre-war ideals of masculinity and femininity. The romance's intimate themes, and focus on female characters provided a unique opportunity to infiltrate an otherwise closed-off space. Additionally, the romance novels that working-class autodidacts were reading were often released first as serials in popular newspapers and magazines before they were compiled into books, which meant that the stories were widely distributed, and easily accessed. However, while the gene was popular, its popularity was a point of contention in working-class communities.

A former domestic worker, Mrs. Layton, recalled being intrigued and fascinated by 'trashy' romance serials. She stopped reading them because her mother pressured her to give them up.[406] This corresponds with what Pamela Fox described in 'The "Revolt of the Gentle": Romance and the Politics of Resistance in Working-Class Women's Writing'(1994). Mothers of young women wanted to ensure that their daughters understood that the romance proffered pure fantasy – not because the plots or characters were unrealistic, but because romantic love had little to do with the everyday experiences of working-class women.[407] Mannin addresses this sentiment in 'Love's Winnowing' when Maurice (the primary love interest) tells Diana that she expresses 'all the women who hunger for love's kisses, and 'all that a captive eagle feels when it beats impotent wings against iron bars.'[408] Diana's response showcases Mannin's ability to introduce subtle textual reflexivity into her narratives:

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[404] Llewelyn Davis (ed), *Life as We Have Known It,* pp. 129, 126
[405] Llewelyn Davis (ed), *Life as We Have Known It,* pp.116-117
[406] Qtd. In: M. Llewelyn Davis (ed.), *Life as We Have Known It By Co-operative Working Women*, London, UK, Hogarth Press, 1931, pp. 26-27
[407] P. Fox, 'The "Revolt of the Gentle": Romance and the Politics of Resistance in Working-Class Women's Writing', *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, vol.27, no.2, 1994, p.141.
[408] E. Mannin, 'Love's Winnowing', *Love's Winnowing*, London, UK, A. HALLE, LTD., 1944, p.18.

> "Don't." She was the old Diana back in the world of realities now. "You mustn't talk to me like that, I'm not any of those things. I'm an ordinary working girl, with old-maidish ideas and a very tired heart." [409]

Mannin's readers were encouraged to identify with Diana as a character that represents them, and their desires. This bond was then strengthened when readers, 'ordinary working girls' were drawn 'back into the world of realities,' and the 'old maidish ideas' that mothers would have passed down to their daughters to discourage them from developing unrealistic notions of romantic love.

The preferred outcome of courtship was marriage, and if all went well, a transactional one that would provide respectability, security and stability, 'adult status, dignity and the satisfactions of a full social and sexual role' – ideals which Judy Giles has noted were circulated widely in publications such as *Red Star Weekly*[410] *and Home Chat* through a variety of mediums from advice columns to romance serials.[411] Diana reminds herself of the limits imposed on her by social expectations when she starts to consider Maurice, an artist ill-thought of in her community, as a romantic prospect: 'She must not let herself think of [Maurice]. If she thought of any man, it must be Jimmy, who wanted to marry her.'[412] The 'proper love' depicted in romance narratives, as Fox observed, was seen as a luxury reserved for the aristocracy and gentry whom working-class women imagined had the time to dedicate to these pursuits.[413]

A final point from Fox provides some critical insight into why these novels and stories appealed to working-class women. It was not, as one might imagine, the desire to enter a higher class or economic bracket, but the freedom to '*privilege pleasure over duty*.'[414] Mannin's awareness of this particular social phenomenon was present in the utopian vision she outlined in *Women and the Revolution* of how a social revolution could impact the lives of women in England:

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[409] Mannin, 'Love's Winnowing', p.18.
[410] A magazine devoted entirely to popular entertainment, from cartoons and advice columns to romance fiction. This is not to to be confused with *Red Star*, a New York based Communist periodical created and published by the Red Women's Detachment in the 1970s.
[411] J. Giles, 'Playing Hard to Get': working-class women, sexuality and respectability in Britain, 1918-40", *Women's History Review*, vol.1, no.2, 1992, p. 245
[412] Mannin, 'Love's Winnowing', p.14.
[413] Mannin, 'Love's Winnowing', p. 5.
[414] P. Fox, 'The "Revolt of the Gentle"', p.141 (emphasis mine)

> With their cooperation, the women of tomorrow will be free…of marriage laws and moral codes; free of the tyrannies and injustices of social snobberies; free of the fear of unemployment…free in the social system of a classless society, and free in their own souls, with time to stand and stare, time to savour life as the vast luxury it is capable of being, not for a privileged and moneyed few, but for the masses.[415]

These ideas mirror statements she that made throughout her career, describing a society that she believed could only be achieved under socialism. Connecting her fiction and non-fiction, the obstacles that the heroine must overcome in 'Love's Winnowing' align almost precisely with the utopian vision outlined in *Women and the Revolution*. In her fiction, Mannin couched these ideas not in a future Utopia but within plausible events, settings and social interactions that referenced those of ordinary working girls. Diana was limited in her pursuit of love by 'self-respect' and pragmatism, heavily influenced by a deep sense of duty to her sister and the moral codes imposed on her by her community. For Mannin, so long as marriage was governed by morality and respectability, 'love [would] be trapped in legal bonds, and outlawed and persecuted outside of them and human happiness…'[416]

Through a series of small revolutions, Diana ultimately resists the marriage laws, moral codes and social snobberies by rejecting two transactional marriages – from Jim Healy, who offered her a life tending his home and rearing his children, and George Fawcett, a caricature of the gentry, with 'suave manners…little leering eyes' and 'flabby hands, too heavily ringed.'[417] She escapes unpaid reproductive labour by freeing herself from duty to her sister Betty, another caricature of the upper classes, who 'had never known the hardness of life as Diana had known it' because she relied on her to meet her every need.[418] She ultimately marries Maurice, not because she has fallen in love with him but because with him she can live in a classless community with people who '…understood, who were companionable….'[419] With Maurice, living in the cottage with his sister and dividing labour between them, she is freed from the burden of unemployment, able to privilege pleasure over duty, with time to stand and stare, or as Diana describes it in the story, 'drink the sweetness of the present to the full. To-morrow – to-morrow was a long way off, as far off as yesterday, with…the stuffy boarding house and the endless routine of work.'[420]

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[415] Mannin, *Women and the Revolution*, p. 300.
[416] Mannin, *Women and the Revolution*, p. 227
[417] Mannin, 'Love's Winnowing', p. 7
[418] Mannin, 'Love's Winnowing', p. 5
[419] Mannin, 'Love's Winnowing', p.35.
[420] Mannin, 'Love's Winnowing', p.30.

The effectiveness of Mannin's political romances lay in the understanding that love and romance were sites of class conflict. The belief, pervasive in working-class communities that there were two different types of love – proper love for the gentry and the love that comes from duty and necessity for the working classes – codified the genre as dangerous, potentially cultivating unrealistic notions of romantic love. As such, the subversive nature of the genre made reading it in and of itself an act of rebellion which primed its readers for conscientizing. Romance serials made this easier to achieve. Released in instalments and hidden amidst other articles, they could be read without detection. The serial, with each instalment ending on a cliff-hanger, also encouraged the reader to keep returning to the story with each new release, ensuring that they worked through it until the end to ascertain its meaning. 'Love's Winnowing' is broken up into sections similar to those found in the type of newspaper serial that would have been familiar to readers like Mrs Layton, who had been introduced to the genre in this way.

The twopenny libraries, and lending libraries which stocked *Love's Winnowing* when it was republished in 1932 were places to re-read a favourite serial in its entirety without having to wait for each new instalment. One of Mannin's most acclaimed novels, *Men are Unwise,* appeared first in *The Daily Mirror* in 1934. The serial/novel was a satirical interrogation of the relationships between men and women that challenged the marriage plot typical of the romance, and in doing so, the complex attitudes to gender and intelligence that permeated British society in the interwar period. It follows Donald Hildred, an insurance office clerk with a 'mania for mountains.'[421] In a typical romance, the marriage plot concludes with something akin to a Barthesian death of the lover. Once the love had been consummated with marriage, the heroine who had occupied a central role in the narrative was domiciled in the private space of the home, and absorbed into her husband's world where her identity was tied to him and her duties as a wife. In *Men Are Unwise* Mannin flipped the script. Donald is absorbed into Kathleen's world, relinquishing his freedom. Her identity remains independent of his and firmly intact.

Mannin continued to take advantage of the accessibility and political affordances of newspaper fiction well into the 1930s. In 1937, she wrote six short stories– 'Revolt of Youth', 'Nigel in Paris', 'Forbidden Love', '"Good Time" Colin', 'Vangie and Bill', and 'Young

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[421] E. Mannin, 'Men are Unwise', *The Daily Mirror*, 23 February 1934, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000560/19340223/145/0019 , accessed: 2 December 2021.

David' – for *The Daily Mirror*, featured over six days from 29 March to 3 April. Mannin wrote them in a way that allowed her readers to choose how they wanted to enjoy them. They could be read as individual stories or as a lengthier newspaper serial because the characters were recurrent. 'Revolt of Youth' (29 March 1937) opens with widower Charles Morton thinking about his children: 'They had charm these children of his, especially the younger ones, Vangie and David and Colin. David would never be as purely physically attractive as Colin, six years his senior, but even at sixteen David was a personality.' Tess, 'who should have taken her mother's place…went her own uncommunicative way where her own life and dreams and aspirations - if she had any – were concerned.' The 'last thing Nigel wanted was to settle down – he fancied himself as an artist.'[422]

The children are restless. Vangie wants to marry Bill, 'a young man of twenty,' Colin intends to leave home, and Nigel intends to quit his job and go to Paris. Their father muses that 'Being fed-up seems to be a disease' in his family. A generational battle ensues at dinner. Charles wants his children to settle down and become respectable. They want to go out into the world and experience it in their own ways. The fight ends with Charles casting them out of the house:

> You can marry your Bill, Vangie – it'll do you good to try marriage on a tuppence a week, and it'll do Tess good to have a taste of being a spinster – bachelor-woman they call it nowadays, I believe – in London, with no one to wait on her, and all her own expenses to pay. You clear out to Paris, Nigel, and stop there, and you needn't write grizzling letters home for cash, for you won't get it – and that applies to you, too, Colin, young man about town.[423]

He tells David, the youngest, to stay with him but he refuses. The Mortons are a well-off family, and Charles is sure that his children will not cope when they no longer have access to the lifestyle that they have become accustomed to. The story ends with Charles alone at the dinner table. '"We'll see!" he said to himself. "We'll see what sort of a job youth makes of shaping its own destiny!".'[424] The reader, who would have noticed the title of the second story, 'Nigel In Paris', was invited to become part of the collective 'we' in Charles' foreshadowing statement.

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[422] E. Mannin, 'Revolt of Youth', *The Daily Mirror*, 29 March 1937, p.21, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000560/19370329/035/0003, accessed: 13 November 2023.
[423] Mannin, 'Revolt of Youth', p.21
[424] Mannin, 'Revolt of Youth', p.21

In ‘Nigel in Paris’ (30 March 1937), Mannin starts to weave class commentary coupled with a critique of the Moderns and Modernists into the narrative. Nigel, who forgot that food, board, paint and canvas cost money, finds that ‘the Paris you play in and work in are two entirely different propositions.’ He isn’t ‘used to having to count the humble ha’pence’, and it ‘irked him, and he was hopelessly bad at it. This careful calculation of every sou was not his idea of life in Paris.’ Nigel is an upper-class ‘fish out of water’ who misses his ‘home comforts.’ [425] He’s incensed that nobody is,

> at all impressed, or even aware of the fact, that here was Nigel Morton, English painter in revolt against English bourgeois life; he had no office and no home in which to air his views on life and art and indulge his egotism; and the French are nothing if not bourgeois; they leave la vie Bohême to romantic foreigners – like Nigel Morton.[426]

Nigel is a caricature of a highbrow who has romanticised being down-and-out, and is disappointed when reality doesn’t live up to his expectations. His ‘revolt against English bourgeois life’ is purely performative. His luck changes when he meets a ballet dancer, Mattie, who introduces him to a more affordable side of living in Paris. What he doesn’t know is that his father sent her. When he writes home that he intends on marrying her, with the intent to shock Charles, ‘his father [doesn’t] turn a hair.’[427]

Tess is the protagonist in ‘Forbidden Love’ (31 March 1937). She moves to Bloomsbury where she rents a cheap but comfortable room. Mannin revealed the real reason that Tess had chosen to remain single. She is in love with a married man, Dennis Peters, who manages the firm where she works as a secretary. With a room to herself, she decides to have him over for dinner, but his wife turns up instead. It is later revealed that the ‘wife’ is Peters’ sister-in-law pretending to be Mrs Peters in a plot he devised to end the relationship. Humiliated, she returns home but not before taking an interest in another man, Richard Gait, who has gone unnoticed until this moment despite his efforts to court her.[428] The plot of Tess’s story is typical of the romance, and reminiscent of Inglis’ *Uncertain Flame.* Like Karen

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[425] E. Mannin, ‘Nigel In Paris’, *The Daily Mirror*, 30 March 1937, pp.20 online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000560/19370330/200/0020, accessed: 13 November 2023.
[426] Mannin, ‘Nigel In Paris’, p.20
[427] Mannin, ‘Nigel In Paris’, p.20
[428] Mannin, ‘Forbidden Love’, *The Daily Mirror*, 31 March 1937, p.21, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0000560/19370331/268/0021?browse=true, accessed: 13 November 2023.

Winters, Tess chooses the more dangerous of two suitors with dire consequences. She is then rescued by the 'attractive, eligible and charming' man that she should have chosen all along. There is one key difference. Mannin's characters are not together at the end of the story. Richard only takes her to dinner, and promises to help her pack her books. In the stories that follow, there are occasional updates on the activities of most of the siblings. Tess is only mentioned again, and only briefly, in the final story, 'Young David', where she is described as having 'known the feeling of toppling worlds.'[429] The marriage plot is cut short – there is no discernible happy ending.

'"Good Time" Colin'(1 April 1937), as the title suggests, is about Colin who 'whilst not stupid' is 'hardly one of the intelligentsia.' Mannin warned that 'those impatient of the follies of youth had, perhaps, better not read this little story, for it is all concerned with that, though some might say that the end is not folly, or, if it was, that it had something gallant about it.'[430] Colin meets Betsy, and decides to educate her in the ways of the world. This mainly entails taking her to parties in Bloomsbury, which she doesn't enjoy. Betsy, whom Colin treats like an ignorant child, tries to get him to face the reality of his financial situation. She mentions that 'he had all sorts of unpaid bills lying around in his room,' and 'she couldn't help noticing [that] he apparently hadn't paid any rent for weeks.'[431] He ignores her until he gets a solicitor's letter threatening him with jail. The absurd solution that he comes up with is to run away to the country and find work on a farm. Betsy, again, intervenes and offers to ask her parents for the money to solve his problems.

Colin is 'forced to admit that there was something to be said for the idea, since he had no taste for going to prison.'[432] When he gets the money, he immediately starts organising a party. At the party Betsy drops her bag. A slip falls out revealing that she did not ask her parents for the money – she pawned a bracelet, a watch and a silver pencil: 'Another young man in like position might well have been touched, but Colin was humiliated and ashamed – and took cover from these uncomfortable sensations in a violent rage.'[433] Colin loses his job and his home. One of his Bloomsbury friends suggests that he 'pack up and go off to Spain':

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[429] E. Mannin, 'Young David', *The Daily Mirror*, 3 April 1937, p.20, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000560/19370403/191/0020, accessed: 13 November 2023.
[430] E. Mannin, '"Good Time" Colin', *The Daily Mirror*, 1 April 1937, p.21, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000560/19370401/174/0021 , accessed: 13 November 2023.
[431] Mannin, '"Good Time" Colin', p.21
[432] Mannin, '"Good Time" Colin', p.21
[433] Mannin, '"Good Time" Colin', p.21

> Colin's romantic young imagination immediately fastened upon the idea, bethinking him of Byron and of Shelley going off in the heroic manner to fight for foreign causes. Not merely would he at last be doing something worth while, but it was the obvious solution to his problems: he would be running away, but with some sort of saving grace to it…Colin Morton was going off to Spain, and from being a dismal failure he became a romantic hero.[434]

Mannin used Colin's story to draw attention to the Spanish Civil War, which was fought between the left-leaning Republicans and the fascist Nationalists led by General Francisco Franco. Socialists viewed the war, beginning in 1936, as part of a larger global struggle against Fascism, and many of them travelled to Spain to fight alongside the Republicans. Colin's irresponsible actions, inability to recognise Betsy's logic, and care for himself, coupled with his fixation on coming across as a romantic hero, suggests that he was in no way prepared for the reality he would encounter there. Mannin forced her readers to consider the situation in Spain by asking them to imagine how someone as ill-equipped at life as Colin would fare there.

The newly married Vangie and Bill return in 'Vangie and Bill' (2 April 1937), the fifth story in the series. The couple is 'determined to continue with the tradition of independence of their generation.' They do not want children, both work, and go out to parties, together and alone in Bloomsbury. When Bill starts spending too much time with another 'Girl', Vangie 'goes on strike.' She lies in bed all day, and does nothing until Bill reaches his breaking point: 'What point was there in having a wife who merely lay in bed all day and every day and read magazines and ate chocolates, neither making the home home-like nor contributing to their common expenses?'[435] At the end of the story Bill comes home to find the flat clean. Vangie also informs him that she is pregnant:

> For a moment dismay clouded the excited happiness in her eyes, then she saw his face grinning up at her, and knew that he was merely showing the modern reaction. Being a modern young thing herself, therefore, she ruffled his hair, kissed him, then said briskly, "Well, now, what about supper?"[436]

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[434] Mannin, '"Good Time" Colin', p.21
[435] E. Mannin, 'Vangie and Bill', *The Daily Mirror*, 2 April 1937, pp.22-23, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0000560/19370402/198/0022?browse=true, accessed: 13 November 2023.
[436] Mannin, 'Vangie and Bill', p.23

Vangie plans on leaving her job to take care of the home and the child. The implication at the close of the story is that Bill is the one who will benefit most from the new arrangement. Vangie continues to blindly refer to herself as a 'modern young thing,' after having done the housework, and put plans in place to dedicate herself full-time to homemaking. She caps it all off by cooking dinner for her husband.[437]

'Young David' (3 April 1937) brought the series to a close with the youngest, and only reasonable character in the entire saga:

> Long before Nigel had satisfactorily "sorted himself out" in Paris, or Tess in Bloomsbury had known the feeling of toppling of worlds, or Vangie and Bill settled down to a sensible married life, or Colin had gone to Spain, the youngest Morton of all, David, had settled his own destiny.[438]

David is the only one of the siblings who does not set himself up in Bloomsbury, or seek out a life as a Bohemian. Mannin frames the lives that Nigel, Tess, Colin, and Vangie lead as self-indulgent, and inevitably tragic. Nigel's supposed independence is facilitated by his father who employs a woman to keep him in line. Mattie calls her task 'rescue work' in a letter updating Charles on Nigel's affairs.[439] It is unlikely that she accepted his marriage proposal. Tess is naïve, and unable to extract herself from the fantasy that she had constructed around the man that she loved. She ends where she began – at home with her father. Colin is so convinced of his Bohemian 'worldliness' that he takes it upon himself to provide the infinitely more intelligent Betsy with a 'valuable education, for which she ought to be properly appreciative.'[440] He, on the other hand, learned absolutely nothing from his experiences, and ends up fighting in a war that he knows nothing about, and probably won't survive. Vangie and Bill believed that they were the epitome of a modern couple, a delusion that Vangie clings to even after they start slipping into the trap of traditional values. Bill is more self-aware, and his grin at the end of their story is sinister.

David decides that he wants to go to sea. He tries to stowaway on a ship with the intent to present himself for work once it sets sail. Before the ship leaves he meets Rose, the Skipper's wife. He tells her about his siblings, the fight with his father, and the 'monotony and loneliness and dissatisfaction' that he felt since the death of his mother. Rose's thoughts while listening

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[437] Mannin, 'Vangie and Bill', p.23
[438] Mannin, 'Young David', p.20
[439] Mannin, 'Nigel In Paris', p.20.
[440] Mannin, '"Good Time" Colin', p.21

to David reveal Mannin's overarching message: 'Respectable and self-righteous people were apt to declare complacently that life was what you make it; there were others who knew what the Pharisees overlooked – that you were what life made you.'[441] Rose convinces David to leave the ship and return home, learn about the world and be patient, so that when he is old enough to fulfil his dream of going to sea he does so realistically and intelligently. He takes her advice knowing that 'in some foreign port they would meet again as in this dawn, in the shadow of a ship.'[442]

Novelettes, short stories, and newspaper serials were ideal mediums for generating social consciousness because they were not time-consuming. Mannin associated scarcity of time with why women turned to popular fiction instead of more complex literature. They were exhausted after a full day of work. As she put it, in 'what little time they [had] for reading they [were] too tired for anything but the trashy novelette' which offered a 'temporary escape from the drabness of their own lives.'[443] This did not mean that they were incapable of appreciating art. As Mannin explained it, 'in a more leisured society this appreciation [would] be increased, [would] reach out more widely and embrace women who…have no leisure or freedom in which to discover new worlds through intellectual pleasures.'[444] Unlike a full-length novel, it was more likely that a reader would have been able to finish a shorter work in its entirety while cooking, at dinner and in time stolen from sleeping hours.

Mannin is commonly associated with the romance, but she wrote novels that spanned genres and literary forms. *Linda Shawn* (1932) is an aesthetically Realist work complete with a slow-moving plot and detailed descriptions of a close-knit feudal community. In a note at the start of the novel, Mannin reflected that the story was partly constructed from 'the memories of the farm of which [she] wrote in [her] *Confessions*.'[445] She combined her memories with events in her short story *Apple-Christening* in a coming-of-age tale mapping protagonist Linda Shawn's path from childhood to maturity. The cast of characters includes Linda's mother who had hoped for something more than life as a farmer's wife had given her, her lazy unambitious father, her first unrequited love for a domestic worker, Rose, and the loneliness of a small community. There are traces of Mannin's views on marriage, sexuality, and gender in the story: Linda's mother's transactional marriage and subsequent disappointment, the foolishness of

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[441] Mannin, 'Young David', p.20
[442] Mannin, 'Young David', p.20
[443] Mannin, 'Love's Winnowing', p. 262-263
[444] Mannin, *Women and the Revolution*, p. 263
[445] E. Mannin, *Linda Shawn*, London, UK, Jarrolds, 1932.

men set against the rationality of women, and the fluidity and intensity of same-sex attraction similar to what she described in *Confessions and Impressions* when she spoke about her teacher, Miss X. It was a collection of nostalgic impressions transformed into fiction.

Although there has been a steady increase of interest in Mannin as an author and activist, there is still minimal scholarship on her life and work. What exists needs to be revised or expanded. Narrowly focusing on her late fiction has amounted to the neglect of texts that offer critical insight into how she used popular literary forms as vehicles for socialist propaganda, and the concerns of the working-class, and middleclass women that she wrote for. When placed side-by-side with her fiction, her non-fiction, memoirs, and autobiographies are invaluable entry points into the specific politics that she wove into her narratives. This is most evident in the correlation between 'Love's Winnowing' and the Utopia that she imagined in *Women and the Revolution*.

Her romances are important because they do not fit neatly into the genre with its mundane and formulaic plots. They were sophisticated experiments with form and reader reception that promoted utopian socialism. There are benefits to writing about an author about whom little has been written, but who religiously recorded her life in memoirs. There is less need to rely on the scholarship of others, and when what exists falls short, it can be easily debunked. Mannin's fiction is arguably valuable for understanding the interplay of politics and aesthetics, but if it is framed incorrectly, works are omitted, or as previously argued, it isn't read in context, much of that value is lost.

As in the case of Pankhurst's fiction and Cunard's short story, there are also texts in the archives that have not been included in Mannin's oeuvre until now. Further investigation will no doubt reveal more. Her political fiction in the 1930s included work, like the six short stories written for *The Daily Mirror* in 1937, analysed for the first time here. In these stories, she used the same subtle techniques for conscientizing that she used in early fiction like 'Love's Winnowing'. If she carried these techniques over into the decade identified by Croft and others as the one in which she produced political fiction, then it is safe to assume that she was using them in the same way in her early work. In short, a socialist author like Mannin cannot be reduced to her blatantly political work because doing so leaves substantial gaps in scholarship on her and the strategic ways that socialist women writers harnessed forms and genres.

## Modernism for the Masses

The definition of modernism is unstable, or as Andrzej Gąsiorek emphasised in *A History of Modernist Literature* (2015), its 'boundaries are permeable.'[446] In line with most scholars working in literary modernism, Miriam Hansen, Jesse Matz, Gąsiorek, Brigid Cohen, and Vicki Mahaffey all put forward slight variations on the same broad definition: modernism encompasses artistic and cultural processes that respond to a time when 'social distinctions between men and women, imperialist and colonized, lord and servant were breaking down, and, along with them, the standard frameworks for fictional representation.'[447] This definition, with respect to discussions of canonical modernism, hasn't changed much since the Modernists started defining themselves, and their work in line with processes of modernity, and against those who wrote literature that did not meet their criteria. There is evidence of this in Lindsay's 'The Modern Consciousness' (*The London Aphrodite*, 1928) in which he poked fun at the English Modernists' preoccupation with the term:

> Modernity is a smug term, the present vogue of which would seem to imply that we are the first people to be aware that we live in our own portion of Time. This is a pleasant illusion…though it is also obvious that Homer as implicitly as Keats felt the strangeness of Time's contracting bubble.

He found the idea that the British artist, poet or author was somehow experiencing and responding to societal change in a unique way ridiculous. We, he wrote, 'are no more consciously "tendential" than, say, the Romantic Movements in France, and Germany':

> However, under the warring complacencies of the cliques and the official criticism, I think that this vogue does state a peculiar necessity which is defined by another favourite word: Transition. We are intently in movement; so much so, that an expression must be frankly experimental before it can be admitted to have achieved anything, and if every architectonic device does not stick alarmingly into the air out of a minimum of digested material, the work is considered amorphous, reactionary or

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[446] A. Gąsiorek, *A History of Modernist Literature*, Oxford, UK, Wiley Blackwell, 2015, p.3

[447] J. Matz, 'The Novel', D.Bradshaw and Kevin J.H. Dettmar (eds), A *Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture,* Oxford, UK, Blackwell Publishing, 2006, p.215
See also: V. Mahaffey, *Modernist Literature: Challenging Fictions*, Oxford, UK, Blackwell Publishing, 2007, p.3, B. Cohen, *Stefan Wolpe and the Avant-Garde Diaspora*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp.8-12, and M. Hansen, 'The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism', *Modernism/Modernity*, vol. 6, no.2, 1999, pp.59-77

> romantic – unless of course it is genuinely amorphous under the pretence of psychological experiment. [448]

Lindsay challenged the notion that experimental high art was the only legitimate response to progress and modernity. Michael H. Whitworth argues in 'Virginia Woolf, Modernism and Modernity' that 'the aesthetic phenomenon of modernism needs to be understood in its relation to the social and historical phenomena of modernity.'[449] However, the same can be said for all literature in the interwar period. Romance novels, for example, with their formulaic plots that had mass appeal, promoted marriage and traditional values in response to moral panic and a breakdown of the social distinctions between men and women. The socialist short story, poem or novel was an effective vehicle for ideology because authors like Mannin and Pankhurst experimented with form, style, genre, and language. They wove techniques typical of fiction into non-fiction, incorporated elements of oral literatures into written texts, and subverted popular genres. Considering the broader definition of modernism, Mannin experimented with the romance and other novelistic forms, and characters like Diana in 'Love's Winnowing' were confronted with the difficulties of forming an identity independent of the people, politics and social pressures around them.

Pankhurst's *Germinal* was advertised as opening up 'a new field' worth watching for those who 'take a keen interest in everything that expresses Beauty, Modernity and Progress.' These words would not be out of place in the editorial of a highbrow literary journal, manifesto or magazine. That said, the boundaries of modernism are not permeable precisely because they were erected by a literary elite that determined what should and shouldn't be contained within them. Including authors like Pound, Woolf, Eliot, Joyce, and others in the canon was not a retroactive decision in academia. It was a confirmation and continuation of what was already in place. Mannin and Lindsay could identify the obscurity of style associated with highbrow responses to modernity, which suggests that there are specific recurrent characteristics foundational to the movement alongside recurrent themes and tropes that can be traced across canonical modernist works.

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[448] J. Lindsay, 'The Modern Consciousness', *The London Aphrodite*, J. Lindsay, and P.R. Stephensen (eds), no.1, London, UK, The The Fanfrolico Press, August 1928, p.3

[449] M. H. Whitworth, 'Virginia Woolf, Modernism and Modernity', S, Sellers (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 107

What amounted to a breakdown of previously accepted social norms was reflected in characters who were forced to negotiate fractured identities and disrupted processes of identity formation, commonly explored through an emphasis on the progression of time, a multiplexity of encounters with others, encounters with the environment, and the effect of these on individual development. In Joyce's *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom, asking 'Or was that I? Or am I now I?' struggled to consolidate his past and present self.[450] In Woolf's *The Waves,* Bernard grappled with his identity relative to those around him: 'I am not one person; I am many people; I do not altogether know who I am...'[451] Eliot was preoccupied with the fragility of 'the self' which, he wrote, 'seems to depend upon a world which in turn depends upon it…as well upon other selves.' He understood the self as 'an interpretation of experience by interaction with other selves.'[452]

Mannin's most significant experimentation with literary form is arguably *Ragged Banners* (1931) because it responded directly to the highbrow culture that she despised. As if in defiance and mockery of the 'the sacred inner circle of the coterie' which spelled 'art with a capital A,' she composed a modernist novel for the middlebrow reader.[453] She wrote *Ragged Banners* in an 'excited spirit, a kind of creative auto-intoxication' with 'Satire and epigram and the subversive statement, and splashes of purple passage and lyric ecstasy' to indicate that she, a 'diamond-hard young satirist was poet too.'[454] She incorporated modernist themes early in the novel by framing the protagonist, Anthony Starridge, as a man devoid of identity, 'shut off from realities,' and at odds with the world around him. He is a poet described as 'half-genius, half faun' who 'never did know himself' ' and 'never succeeded in finding himself.'[455] When Mannin introduced Starridge as genius and faun – the mythical half-man, half-goat of Greek and Roman mythology – she was directly referring to the Modernists' preoccupation with genius, and their tendency to include classical texts in their work.

In her description of Starridge, Mannin likened him to Vaslav Nijinsky who choreographed and danced the principal role in the ballet *L'Après-midi d'un faune* based on Stéphane Mallarmé's poem by the same name set to Claude Debussy's symphony *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*.[456] Mallarmé began his poem by recomposing the first few lines of

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[450] J. Joyce, *Ulysses*, Middlesex, UK, Penguin Books, 1960, p.167
[451] V. Woolf, *The Waves*, London, UK, Penguin Books, 1992, p. 212
[452] T. S. Eliot, *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley*, New York, US, Columbia University Press, 1989, p. 146
[453] Mannin, *Confessions*, p.15
[454] Mannin, *Privileged Spectator*, p.21
[455] Mannin, *Women and the Revolution*, p.11
[456] Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, p.11

Virgil's first *Eclogue*.[457] Virgil was referenced in work by Woolf, who mentioned him in *The Waves* and *To the Lighthouse* (1927), and Eliot who cited Virgil's *Aeneid* in *The Waste Land* (1922) and in multiple essays and commentaries for the periodical *Criterion*.[458] Starridge as faun (a thing of the past) was set against genius (a thing of the present in modernist ideas about the artist) which evokes the 'historical sense' that Eliot described in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'.[459] The historical sense for the artist involved an awareness of the 'pastness of the past' and 'its presence.' Paradoxically, the artist must be 'in time,' and 'out of time' simultaneously.[460]

Starridge is an extreme manifestation of this idea. He is both 'in time' and 'out of time' to the extent that he exists in a 'space that one could not define and could not find…a living unreality.'[461] Mannin mentioned Eliot twice in *Ragged Banners*, first when Starridge tried to sell his poetry to the socialist newspaper *The Flaming Torch* ('You like T.S. Eliot of course'[462]), and again when Lattimer suggested that he and Starridge stop in at 'Reinhardt's' to mingle with the artists, poets and novelists of bohemia. There were examples of how Mannin integrated her fiction and non-fiction in 'Love's Winnowing' where she repeated ideas about the place of women in Utopia, later outlined in *Women and the Revolution*.

Here again, Mannin's non-fiction came through in Lattimer's description of 'Reinhardt's clientele' who are fixated on '*succès d'estime*', which according to him is 'just as well since so few are ever likely to achieve any other kind – the kind that pays the rent and saves you from becoming a parasite on your fellow-creatures.'[463] To 'become popular with them,' Lattimer tells Starridge, 'you talk about the Bitch Goddess of Success and the prostitution of art. Then you affect an intimate friendship with Aleister Crowly and a deep admiration of the genius of T.S. Eliot…'[464] As Mannin wrote in *Privileged Spectator*, among the bohemians there was 'some virtue in obscurity' and in 'religiously avoiding the vulgarity

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[457] D. Code, 'Hearing Debussy reading Mallarmé: Music "après Wagner" in the Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, vol.54, no.3, 2001, p. 493
p.80
[458] T.S. Eliot, *The Wasteland and Other Poems*, London, UK, Faber and Faber, (publication date for this edition not specified), p. 45
See also: Theodore Ziolkowski, *Virgil and the Moderns*, Princeton, US, Princeton University Press, 1993
[459] T.S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', *Selected Essays*, New York, US, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1960, p.14
[460] Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', p.4
[461] Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, p.12
[462] Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, p.45
[463] Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, p.65
[464] Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, pp.65-6

of success, or even of recognition outside of the immediate circle…your work, it seemed, must be esoteric or you were in the outer darkness of a shoddy fame.'[465]

Referencing the genius of T.S. Eliot cemented the dichotomy that Mannin set up in her description of Starridge. The artist as genius is a concept that predates modernism but was reinvigorated with the drive to create something new by breaking with the past and disrupting fixed literary forms. Cody Delistraty, although writing about visual art, makes an observation that fits with how genius was recognised in literary circles: 'the understanding of artistic genius has been...closely linked to privileges and traits associated with masculinity.'[466] The archetypal artistic genius was elite, white, male, and Eurocentric, enabling him to put his art above all else. Genius was projected onto Starridge by the authors and artists who encountered him. For them, he embodied the qualities typical of the artist. He was unreachable and eccentric, even starving on the street to avoid the trappings of working for his father in a corporate job.

Mannin made a mockery of the Modernist's obsession with genius when Mary Thane and Stephen Lattimer, who credit themselves with discovering Starridge's potential, unquestionably support him financially and emotionally even though he never produced anything of consequence. Lattimer proves to be a fraud in his distaste for Reinhardt's clientele when he enables Starridge to become a parasite on his fellow creatures. Starridge appears to expect treatment like this, showing no trace of gratitude. Despite Mary's devotion to him, his attitude to the 'feminine gender,' which he only ever expresses in his internal monologue, exposes him as a misogynist disgusted by women who, in his estimation 'could be quite dreadful in their terrifying capacity for suffering, and the relentlessness of their desires.'[467] Starridge's opinions recall MP Frederick Banbury's statement that women were 'affected by gusts and waves of sentiment,' and that 'their emotional temperament makes them liable to it' in his argument against granting women the vote.[468]

Mannin, drawing on the familiar modernist trope of how identity formation cannot be separated from others and the outside world, created Starridge as a character who found developing an identity in this way repulsive. His resistance is briefly put aside when he falls in love with Max – one of the *Wander-Vögel* 'carrying rucksacks on their back and the skepticism

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[465] Mannin, *Privileged Spectator*, p.73
[466] C. Delistraty, 'The Myth of the Artistic Genius', *The Paris Review*, 8 January 2020, online: https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2020/01/08/the-myth-of-the-artistic-genius/, accessed: 20 January 2023.
[467] Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, p.179
[468] F. Gillett, 'Women's Suffrage: 10 Reasons Why Men Opposed Votes for Women', *BBC News*, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-43740033, accessed: 24 May 2021.

of modernity in their souls.'[469] In a reversal of his relationships with the other characters in the novel he projects an identity onto Max. Max, in turn, projects nothing onto him. It is precisely Max's aversion to modernity that first attracts Starridge to him. But Max abandons Starridge and his resistance to modernity.

When dancing with Wanda (the woman whom he fell in love with) Max sees himself and her as 'products of their age, symbolic of their generation' who 'belonged essentially to the cities of steel and curved façades of glass, angular, purged of evanescence, de-emotionalised, uncompromising… They were born with a background of "functionalism," and to the tempo of synthetic music.' In resignation to the rapidly modernizing world that he has resisted, he asks: 'How should their souls not bestride the skyscrapers and vibrate to the throb of the machine?'[470] The breakdown of the relationship which forced Starridge to interact with the outside world and the 'emotionalism' that he despised takes place in a chapter titled Intermezzo – a musical term for a short composition played as part of a longer piece or independently of that piece. The synthetic music and 'syncopated rhythm of modernity' that Max describes contrasted with the thread of classical music that Mannin wove through the narrative.[471]

The essays in the edited collections *Essays on Music and Language in Modernist Literature* (2018),[472] and *Music and Literary Modernism* (2009) are indicative of the centrality of music in modernist literature - from Marc Derveaux's 'The Sonority of Language in Literary and Musical Modernity', to Lisa Tyler's 'Opera, Maternal Influence, and Gender in Ernest Hemingway's *The Ash Heel's Tendon*'.[473] Bach, Beethoven, and Wagner feature in Woolf's *The Voyage Out* (1915) as part of Rachel's aesthetic education. In *The Waves,* she wove Beethoven's late *String Quartet in B-flat Major, Opus 13* into the narrative structure of the text,[474] at the same time incorporating Wagner's *Parsifal* into her careful critique of imperialism and British identity. In *Ulysses,* Joyce includes a 'place of worship for music of a sacred character,' and a score for the 'strange legend' which is hand-drawn into the text.[475]

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[469] Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, p199
[470] Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, p.216
[471] Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, p. 216
[472] K. O'Callaghan (ed), *Essays on Music and Language in Modernist Literature: Musical Modernism*, New York, US, Routledge, 2018.
[473] R.P. McParland (ed), *Music and Literary Modernism: Critical Essays and Comparative Studies*, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009, pp.4-11, 136-143.
[474] E. Clements, 'Transforming Musical Sounds into Words: Narrative Method in Virginia Woolf's "The Waves"', *Narrative* , vol.13, no.2, 2005, pp.160-181
[475] Joyce, *Ulysses*, pp. 582, 611

Eliot's *The Waste Land* is widely recognised as a Wagnerian work, and there is strong evidence to suggest the presence of Beethoven and Wagner in the structure of *Four Quartets* (1944).[476] George Painter makes a convincing argument for the influence of Wagner, Fauré, Saint-Saëns, Franck, Debussy, and Beethoven on Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (1913).[477] Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67* appeared in E.M Forster's *Howard's End* (1910), and in Franz Kafka's 'Josefine, die Sängerin oder Das Volk der Mäus' (1924) Josefine is distinguished from the mouse people by her music – '*...eine charakteristische Lebensäußerung*.'[478] To borrow from Kafka, 'music as a characteristic expression of our life' is a fitting way to describe how Mannin used music in *Ragged Banners*. [479] It was a way to represent conflicting experiences of change and the clash between past and present.

Ballet is closely linked to Starridge and his progression through the narrative, which she introduced early with *L'Après-midi d'un faune*. In another instance, Starridge, usually devoid of emotion, attends the ballet and experiences something akin to orgasm while watching, or more accurately *listening* to performances of *Soleil de Nuit 1915* set to Rimsky-Korsakov's music from *The Snow Maiden* and *Les Sylphides,* set to music by Chopin: '…the ecstasy…it couldn't fail one; one knew every note of it, and it gave itself to the last drop, perfectly, and receiving it one was both fulfilled and drained…it was too much, yet one would die if it did not reach completion.'[480] The classical and folk music of the ballets that send Starridge into waves of ecstasy was analogous to Max's ecstasy when he imagined himself and Wanda as children of modernity, which included a reference to Fernand Léger's post-Cubist film *Ballet Mêcanique* (1924) set to a score by avant-garde composer George Antheil.[481]

Using music, Mannin evoked the historical sense in the reader. The reader became aware of the 'pastness of the past' and 'its presence,' and was both 'in time' and 'out of time' as she navigated a novel with a recognizable plot progression interrupted by experimental modernist aesthetics. The effectiveness of Mannin's method, and her clear understanding of literary experimentation, was especially stark in a passage where music was used to frame a description of a crowded bar. After the ballet, Starridge finds himself at Café Royal where he 'saw a sea of faces through a veil of smoke. Some of the faces were turned to him, dim daubs

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[476] A. Virkar-Yates, 'Absolute Music and the Death of Desire: Beethoven, Schopenhauer, Wagner and Eliot's Four Quartets', *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol.40, no.2, 2017, pp. 79-93
[477] G. Painter, *Marcel Proust: A Biography*, New York, US, Random House, 1989.
[478] F. Kafka, 'Josefine, die Sängerin oder Das Volk der Mäuse', *Franz Kafka: Gesammelte Werke*. vol. 4, M. Brod. (ed), Frankfurt, GER, Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1976, p.201 (trans. Mine)
[479] trans. mine
[480] Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, p.46
[481] Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, p. 216

of whiteness, as he entered'[482] – a scene evocative of 'The apparition of these faces in the crowd; / Petals on a wet, black bough' in Pound's *In a Station of a Metro* (1926).[483] Having set the scene, Mannin expanded the sensory plane to include audio:

> Little jabbing spears of repartee and spasmodic remarks imposed upon the unremitting steadiness of the man who was talking about sex, the sombre accompaniment to the allegretto melody; it was the booming of a Bach fugue in a room in which people were fox-trotting to a gramophone record of a popular song. [484]

The jabbing spears of repartee mirrored the 'music' that was 'stabbing [Starridge] like sword-blades, piercing his heart' at the ballet. Here, he likewise experiences it as all-consuming but not in a pleasurable way. In *Composing for The Films* (1947) Theodore Adorno attributed the type of experience that Mannin described to the different ways that ear and eye adapted to the new 'highly industrialised order.' [485] For Adorno, the ear had not adapted 'as readily as the eye, which [had] become accustomed to conceiving reality as made up of separate things, commodities, objects that can be modified by practical activity.'[486] Listening is 'archaic' in the sense that the ear, a 'fundamentally passive organ,' experiences all sounds at once and therefore preserves 'comparably more traits of long bygone, pre-individualistic collectivities than optical perception.'[487] Starridge is able to identify concrete aspects of the room, such as a gramophone and people dancing, but struggles to separate the sound of the room into its individual components.

Past and present collide again with the juxtaposition of the popular song and the man (revealed to be Lattimer) talking about sex. Mannin captured the Bach fugue rising above the allegretto melody in the rhythm and structure of the passage that followed Starridge's initial auditory impressions of the room:

> Spiritual fidelity is the only thing of importance…*so we left her under the table and surged on somewhere else…*all art is sex…*Asked her if she'd heard the hereafter story…*spiritual fresh air and room to breathe essential…*said she hadn't so he told her*…intolerable demands that smother love…*if you're here after what I am here after it's all right…*love should be what Wells calls "a friendship lit by passion"…*but if*

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[482] Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, p. 50
[483] E. Pound, 'In a Station of the Metro', *Selected Poems of Ezra Pound*, Toronto, US, New Directions Books, 1926, p. 35
[484] Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, p.51
[485] T. Adorno, and H. Eisler, *Composing for The Films*, London, UK, Athlone Press, 1994, p.21
[486] Adorno and Eisler, *Composing for Films*, p.21
[487] Adorno and Eisler, *Composing for Films*, p.21

> *you're not here after what I'm here after*…most people are only sure of the passion part, and even that without much guts…*you'll be here after I've gone*…[488]

A fugue is a contrapuntal compositional technique widely considered the 'most intricate expression of the complex language of Western music.'[489] Alfred Mann's framing of the fugue as a 'language' speaks to the structure of the composition, which involves a conversation between two or more voices built on a theme introduced at the start in imitation and recurring throughout the piece. Lattimer's statements are separated by snippets of an exchange in italics that appear to illustrate what he is saying. In keeping with spiritual fidelity as the only thing of importance, the italicized speaker showed no fidelity to the person he left, surging on somewhere else. 'All art is sex', a break in Lattimer's speech, is followed by the question of whether an unnamed woman had heard the hereafter story, bringing the exchange back to the subject. Spiritual fidelity develops into spiritual fresh air and room to breathe. The hereafter story precedes Lattimer's argument about the hereafter effects of intolerable demands on love told to the unnamed woman. Hereafter develops into here after: 'If you're here after what I'm here after' – Lattimer is here after a friendship lit by passion - 'it's all right. If you're not here after what I'm here after' – someone unable to connect passion and friendship without emotion - 'You'll be here after I've gone.' If the two voices are brought together, the passage contains a single subject:

> Spiritual fidelity [is] the only thing of importance so we left her under the table and surged on somewhere else. All art is sex. [He] asked her if she'd heard the hereafter story [that] spiritual fresh air and room to breathe [is] essential. [She] said she hadn't so he told her [about the] intolerable demands that smother love. [So] if you're here after what I am here after it's all right [because] love should be what Wells calls "a friendship lit by passion". But if you're not here after what I'm here after [because] most people are only sure of the passion part, and even that without much guts [then] you'll be here after I've gone…

Lattimer continues in his role as a fugal voice by repeating the Wells quote and variations on spiritual fidelity at intervals throughout the story. The italicised text in the fugal passage takes on a new meaning in a chapter titled 'Fugue' towards the end of Starridge's journey. The italicised text and the progression from 'hereafter' to the final 'here after' foreshadows

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[488] Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, p.51
[489] A. Mann, *The Study of Fugue*, New York, US, Dover Publications, 1987, p.ix

Starridge's death. 'Hereafter' has a double meaning. It refers to something that will happen from now on, or the afterlife. It develops into the antithetical 'here after' repeated to frame a question about whether the speaker and listener share the same intentions. As with 'hereafter', which begins the progression, 'you'll be here after I've gone' can hold two meanings. It could refer to the person left behind (if you're not here after what I'm here after) or the person who remains after the death of another. In the second instance, the progression would be chiastic, going from the 'hereafter' to 'I'm gone.'

In 'Fugue', Starridge comes close to being a protagonist typical of a modernist novel that takes subject formation as its theme when he thinks back on the people that he has met over the course of his life. In an uncharacteristic moment of self-reflection he acknowledges that 'all of these people were part of him, the hidden and denied parts of him.'[490] The people that he recalls become the five voices of a fugue with Starridge as its subject:

> Volsted gave the warm, free friendship he could not give; Mary the peace he needed, but which realities were constantly destroying for him; Lattimer was a symbol of impersonality, intellect divorced from emotionalism; Wanda was all the repressed sexual instinct in himself; Max the gay, irresponsible being he would have liked to be.[491]

Together, Volsted, Mary, Lattimer, Wanda and Max made up a fully rounded person, 'real for Starridge 'inasmuch as they were part of him.' [492] However, before the reader could settle into the idea that Starridge had finally developed a subjectivity in unity with the world around him, Mannin deployed another recurrent characteristic of modernist literature – textual reflexivity. Because Starridge 'was not a real person, he must ultimately deny them all.'[493] With this line, the reader is drawn to the reality that he is a character in a novel, as were the people who were 'part of him.' Mannin was the composer bringing the five voices in the fugue together to create Starridge. He would have remained a poorly rendered sketch of a human being without them.

Mannin's approach was fundamentally anti-modernist. She refused the male Modernists' depreciation of femininity and the elitism of so-called high art. She rejected, in her words, 'language that burns black the tongue of one who speaks it and scars the one who listens,' and the 'obscurity of style' that she associated with the movement.[494] *Ragged Banners*

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[490] Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, p.236
[491] Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, p.236
[492] Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, p.236
[493] Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, p.236
[494] Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, pp.72–73

was a defiant reclaiming of the literary space and proof that the fundamentals of modernist literature were not the product of genius. They could be harnessed by anyone, including an author who wrote popular fiction, and read by anyone, including the char-woman, factory girl and washer woman – 'the satirist could be poet too.' Mannin favoured 'a language that will make meaning clear, that will speak with the tongues of men and of angels, language that does not merely photograph actuality but interprets it.' [495] In this short statement, her method is clear. She chose language that spoke with, in her words, the 'tongues of man and of angels', evocative of the socialist ideology championed by Morris and her father – the Angel of Freedom, waiting to welcome the working classes to a socialist Utopia, and the economic, political, and social freedom that it promised.

By using language that 'does not merely photograph actuality but interprets it,' she resisted overtly describing oppression, and the hardships faced by the working classes (and moreover working-class women) instead writing covertly socialist romance novels that invited the reader to interpret her interpretation of material reality, and to listen to the language of 'men and angels' by making the connection between the events of the story, her readers' lived experiences, and the possibilities of a future not determined by the limitations of capitalism. The language of men and angels was used to speak directly of and to her politics ensuring political intelligibility.

There is a sound argument to be made for retaining the boundaries erected around modernism by the Modernists, and in literary studies more broadly. What needs to change is the idea that what fell within those boundaries was the most culturally significant contribution to artistic production in the 20th Century. The field of modernist studies, not the canon itself, needs to be expanded to include authors who resisted those boundaries, not because they wanted recognition as highbrows, but because they saw the flaws in the ideology foregrounding notions of genius, and what constituted culturally significant literature and art. *Ragged Banners* is an example of a novel that responded to modernism, and did so in a sophisticated way. Including Mannin in the modernist canon would detract from what she was trying to achieve. What she was trying to achieve is only evident because it opposes a predefined literary movement that excluded middle and lowbrow literature. Aside from this, considering her attitude towards the literary elite, she would have opposed being categorised this way.

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[495] Mannin, *Privileged Spectator*, p.73

Considering the class and gender disparity in the literary industry, utopian socialist authors who toyed with form, style and genre were uniquely positioned to challenge cultural elitism.

## She Can Be So Clever When She Does Not Try Too Hard To Be Modern

Although both wrote short stories, Pankhurst and Cunard's preferred medium for literary social conscientizing was poetry. Women writing poetry were often met with the same level of ambivalence or disdain in literary circles as women writing popular fiction. Highbrow periodicals like *The New Statesman,* which prided itself on its intellectual brilliance, rarely featured reviews of or work by women. The romance was dismissed on genre alone, having retained the reputation that George Eliot famously assigned it in 1856 – 'silly novels by lady novelists.'[496] As Pamela Regis' sees it, distaste for the romance was an androcentric distaste for 'the most female of popular genres.' Men 'have traditionally controlled which books get reviewed, and the effort that they must make to read across the gender barrier is very great.'[497]

Dowson makes the strikingly similar claim that the 'degree of respect for women poets was largely determined by the poet critics…male reviewers did not know how to assess poetry by women, so they left it alone, dismissed it, or wrote about it obliquely.'[498] Women's poetry was considered, or rather *expected* to be sentimental. Dowson provides the fitting example of an editor who was more interested in T.S Eliot's introduction to Marianne Moore's *Selected Poems* (1934) than the poems themselves.[499] 'Poetess' was an epithet, a loaded descriptor, meaning something very different from 'poet'. Poetry considered worthy of acclaim was perceived as masculine, making it difficult for the modernist poetess to compete with her poet counterparts. Cunard experienced these difficulties first-hand. She was firmly entrenched in modernist circles, having become a muse to some of the most prominent literary names of the century. Authors based characters on her, she was painted by Wyndham Lewis and Oskar Kokoschka, and photographed by Man Ray and Cecil Beaton.

In 1927, Cunard went to Woolf and her husband Leonard to ask for advice on how to learn hand printing. The following year, she founded The Hours Press. Moore, her first friend, also authored the first book to be published by the press. *Perronnik the Fool* was released in

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[496] G. Eliot, 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists', *The Westminster Review*, London, UK, John Chapman, 1856.
[497] P. Regis, P. *A Natural History of the Romance Novel*, Philadelphia, US, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003, p. xii
[498] Dowson, *Women's Poetry of the 1930s: A Critical Anthology*, p. 18
[499] Dowson, *Women's Poetry of the 1930s: A Critical Anthology*, p. 18

December 1928. In *These Were the Hours*, Cunard wrote that she wanted to publish 'mainly contemporary poetry of an experimental kind – always very modern things, short pieces of fine quality that, by their nature, might have difficulty in finding commercial publishers.'[500] Instead, the press primarily published established authors, including Ezra Pound, Norman Douglas, Arthur Symons, Richard Aldington, and Brian Howard. Most notably, Cunard supported Samuel Beckett's career. In return, Beckett translated an astounding nineteen works from French to English for her *Negro: An Anthology*.

Her poetry was published by Woolf's Hogarth Press. As a muse and socialite, she sustained her standing among the bohemians. As a poet(ess) she had to fight for her place among the literati. Reviews of her poetry were mixed. Edgell Rickword, writing for *The New Statesman,* was critical of some of her stylistic choices in *Outlaws* (1921) but recognised 'the pulse of an original mind beating through a rather uncongenial medium.'[501] In the *Pall Mall Gazette* (13 September 1923), the reviewer of her subsequent volume of poetry, *Sublunary* (1923), congratulated the publishers on the binding of the book before accusing Cunard of not having 'fulfilled her part of the bargain.'[502] He conceded that a few were 'so good that they make us hope for more like them in the future' but that many 'frankly, should never have been called upon to face the cold and unbecoming glare of print.'[503] One of the poems that made him 'hope for more' was 'Spenkler' – 'a perfect sketch of an unpleasant old gentleman in Venice.'[504]

> Spenkler in an overcoat
>
> Perambulates galoshed thoughts
> On little bridges, while we float
> Beneath inquiringly. He sorts
> The best in Venice from second-best;
> 'People are hard to mix,' he fears –
> Dispensing tea at home he'll rest
> From mundane scandals, his only cares.
> I should not wonder, if like the cat

[500] Cunard, *These Were the Hours*, p. 7
[501] E. Rickword, E., *Essays and Opinions 1921-1931*, Manchester, UK, Carcanet, 1974, p. 39
[502] 'Some Vers Libres' Nancy Cunard's Sublunary', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 13 September 1923, p.12, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001947/19230913/159/0012, accessed: 10 September 2021.
[503] 'Some Vers Libres' Nancy Cunard's Sublunary', p.12
[504] 'Some Vers Libres' Nancy Cunard's Sublunary', p.12
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He had nine lives – In every shock
Against decorum I know he sat
More firmly on convention's rock.
Eyes lined with red, a leper's mind
Entrenched beneath the meagre skull,
With crouching hands that have defined
Vicarious joys, and to the full
Pottered obscenely at his own,
Fingering lusts meticulous;
Love's chiffonnier in every town,
Old, unabashed, ridiculous.

I heard this cracked harmonica
Vituperate its tunes, that pass
Like spiders of South America
Dart in the dust to kill. The glass
Eye of his soul looked out at me,
Retreated, and seemed to intimate
No good for youth's futurity…
These days are so indelicate![505]

The poem is a satirical critique of the upper classes, their petty scandals, and mundane concerns which Cunard found hypocritical in the face of the strict rules that she was expected to follow in high society. G.M. wrote in a letter requesting that Cunard write a forward to *Perronnik* recounting her memories of him, that a forward like this would 'cause that cheerless soul, T.S. Eliot, to frown,' but that 'personal literature, as I have often impressed upon you, is the only literature for the age it is written and for the age that follows. It isn't easy, however, and it has to be cultivated.'[506] 'Spenkler' stood out because Cunard was writing about something that she was intimately familiar with. It was personal. Gordon noted that 'as an adult [Cunard] returned to the palatial estate of her youth three times, on each occasion finding it increasingly "dehydrated" of meaning and feeling.'[507] Her distaste for the life that she was born into drove her out of London, moving restlessly from place to place in Europe while she wrote poetry.

There is evidence of only one attempt to write creatively in another medium. Anna Girling retrieved Cunard's short story, 'A Lost Night' (c.1920-1921), from a New York

[505] N. Cunard, 'Spenkler', S. Parmar (ed), *Selected Poems of Nancy Cunard,* Manchester, UK, Carcanet Press, 2016 (eBook)
[506] Cunard, *These Were the Hours,* p. 19
[507] Gordon, *Nancy Cunard: Heiress, Muse, Political Idealist*, p.1

bookseller in 2018 (it came from Venitia Arlen's estate after her death in 2011).[508] The following year, she published it in *The Times Literary Supplement* (11 January 2019). On 1 February 2019, William Kennedy wrote a letter to the editor challenging Girling's attribution of the short story to Cunard.[509] Despite the words 'By Nancy Cunard' on the first page of the typescript he was confident that Arlen wrote it. He did not see the 'self-aware female perspective' that Girling identified in her corresponding article, 'More than a Muse: Reassessing the legacy of Nancy Cunard', or 'judge it impossible that Arlen could have written it alone, with Cunard in mind, perhaps…' Arlen, he believed, likely only kept it for sentimental reasons, 'not thinking it worthy of publication.'[510] Girling responded that Kennedy's letter reminded her of 'Joanna Russ's observation in *How To Suppress Women's Writing* (1983), that the first reaction to a woman writing something has traditionally been "to deny that she wrote it. Since women cannot write, someone else (a man) must have written it".'[511] She went on to debunk Kennedy's claim that the story was wholly characteristic of Arlen's work:

> Kennedy "does not see" the self-aware female perspective of the story, which is a shame; to me it is one of its more distinctive aspects, and one which decisively distinguishes it from Arlen's work. I am not sure if Kennedy has read much by Arlen – if he had, he would realize that, while some of the formal and technical aspects of "A Lost Night" are reminiscent of Arlen's work (as I noted in my accompanying article), its content is so different that it would be a very odd addition indeed to Arlen's oeuvre.[512]

Kennedy, writing 54 years after Cunard's death, was treating her and her work with the same androcentric dismissiveness that she was subjected to when she was alive. His general tone is similar to that of the reviewer for the *Pall Mall Gazette,* who remarked that 'Miss Cunard can

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[508] The typescript has since been archived by the University of Edinburgh Centre for Research Collections.
A Girling, 'More than a Muse: Reassessing the legacy of Nancy Cunard', *TSL*, 11 January 2019, online: https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/reassessing-legacy-nancy-cunard-essay-anna-girling/, accessed: 15 November 2023.
[509] Two women were under attack in Kennedy's letter – Cunard, and Girling, an expert in her field, who wrote the entry on Arlen in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism* (2016). Kennedy does not appear to hold any credentials in the field of literary studies apart from unfounded confidence.
A. Girling,'Arlen, Michael (1895–1956)', *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism*, Taylor and Francis, 2016, online: https://www.rem.routledge.com/articles/arlen-michael-1895-1956. doi:10.4324/9781135000356-REM668-1, accessed: 15 November 2023.
[510] W. Kennedy, 'Letter to the Editor', *TSL*, 1 February 2019, online: https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/limpid-natalia-ginzburg/, accessed: 15 November 2023.
[511] A. Girling, 'Letter to the Editor', *TSL*, 8 February 2019, online: https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/letters-to-the-editor-217/, accessed: 15 November 2023.
[512] Girling, 'Letter to the Editor'

be so clever when she does not try too hard to be modern.'[513] Behind Kennedy's assumption that Arlen did not think 'The Lost Night' was 'worthy of publication' was a poorly veiled expression of his opinion about the literary merit of the short story and its author. On the chance that he was wrong, he included a disclaimer - if Arlen did write it, he must have decided it wasn't very good. If Cunard wrote it, that explains why it wasn't very good. Either way, Arlen comes out on top.

'The Lost Night' is well written with an ease that wasn't always present in the poetry Cunard produced simultaneously. It is also profoundly personal. In her early work, as Pound put it, she was prone to using 'lots of words that do not add anything to the presentation, but tell the reader nothing he wouldn't know if you had left them out.'[514] She had solicited Pound's opinion before publishing *Outlaws*. He discouraged her from using iambic pentameter because it was a 'snare' that 'constantly lets one in for dead phrases like "in this midnight hour"… midnight is midnight, it is not "this midnight hour".' [515]

The short story shares themes with her poem 'Outlaws' (1921). In 'A Lost Night' Leo is described as 'wild', 'hot headed,' and a 'casual loitering adventurer' predisposed to 'fantastic disappearances and innocent returns.' He takes 'for granted one's love. Tolerance, understanding, and all else.'[516] In 'Outlaws' 'Love was too little for [the 'man adventurous and free'], fate too strong… And took in payment from him folly's toll…And yet ['a woman that no fear might quell'] loved him with a patience long…' He is 'an impenitent with ravenous crimes/That will not cry aloud nor mercy seek.' Her love is 'darkened by her lover's wrongs.'[517] The narrator in 'A Lost Night' is concerned about the 'folly's toll' that Leo might pay on one of his escapades. When he returns, sometimes after days, they have arguments that end with the 'feeling that something unpleasant and dangerous for both of [them] had been avoided.' She tells Julia that 'People have strange effects on one; they evoke one's turbulence, the possibility of it – for you know me well enough to agree that my exterior is one of comparative patience and placidity, no matter what may be seething within...'[518]

The short story is narrated by an unnamed woman attempting to answer a question by 'Julia', a listener who doesn't speak until the end:

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[513] 'Some Vers Libres' Nancy Cunard's Sublunary', p.12
[514]Qtd in: Lucas, J., 'Introduction', Cunard, N., *Poems of Nancy Cunard*, Nottingham, Trent Editions, 2005, p. 9
[515] Qtd. in: Lucas, 'Introduction', N. Cunard, N., *Poems of Nancy Cunard*, p.9
[516] N. Cunard, 'A Lost Night', *TSL*, 11 January 2019, online: https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/a-lost-night-cunard-story/, accessed: 14 November 2023.
[517] N. Cunard, 'Outlaws', *Outlaws*, London, UK, Elkin Mathews, 1921, p.7
[518] Cunard, 'A Lost Night'

> "You are asking me why I do not write? I think it is because I do not wish to write about anything but life, and life, to me, always seems very inconclusive – it isn't necessary to add 'now-a-days' – for after all how does one know that life, for people like you and I, was so very different in the past? How shall we say that more adventures and more episodes would have come to us in some previous century, merely because it always pleases us to endow the past with glamour? We lead sheltered lives; perhaps not from within, from our emotions, but certainly from the active expression of them. We hardly make adventures, you and I."[519]

The 'the self-aware female perspective of the story' that Girling mentioned is there from the start. The women conversing, 'people like you and I', are navigating a society where they are restricted in what they can and can't do, and forced to limit how they express themselves. Life is inconclusive for them because it is made of adventures, and they cannot 'make them'. Adventures have a protagonist and a narrative, with a beginning (the events that set it in motion) a middle (the adventure itself) and an end (the story is complete, and a new one can begin).

The narrator cannot write because she wants to write about life, and for her there are no conclusive narratives to draw from in which women are the protagonists. She decides to try by telling Julia a story, 'an anecdote that happened,' or rather that she '*made* happen.'[520] Having become 'disgusted and angry' with herself for loving Leo and getting little in return, she leaves a letter at the desk of their hotel telling him that she will be dining at Le Ciel d'Or, with the threat that she might not be dining alone. She hopes that 'perhaps this will be conclusive and serve its purpose':

> …I sat there at dinner thinking of all this, surrounded by women in bright clothes and jewelled hats, and by men who looked rich and somehow professional, radiating the feeling that they knew what they wanted, and got it. A glow crept over one, a pulsating comfort and happiness in the rhythms of the music. I forgot for some moments why I was there, and looked around with eyes eager for the joy of impressions, those impressions we get from new things when we feel that something is going on all around us, and are impersonally delighted by it.[521]

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[519] Cunard, 'A Lost Night'
[520] Cunard, 'A Lost Night' (emphasis mine)
[521] Cunard, 'A Lost Night'

The description of the restaurant is useful for differentiating Cunard's work from Arlen's. In *Piracy* (1922), written around the same time, Arlen's protagonist, Ivor Marlay, visits the Mont Agel, a Parisian restaurant central to the story:

> It is absurd to suggest that a man sitting at a table, alone with his coffee and his God, and goaded on by no matter how stern a desire to come to some understanding with himself, will anything like consecutively review the dismal pageant of his life; for even as there is no rigid sequence in nature, so there is none in our thoughts. Here and there Ivor Marlay saw pictures, here and there he remembered thoughts, here and there he reheard voices, here and there he relived silences, and here and there an illusion shone wan and faded quickly.[522]

Arlen's prose was overwritten, and he tended to use too many adjectives. The door of the hotel next to the restaurant is 'a sealed and reticent looking door, with a tiny navel through which a worldly eye may judge of your business.'[523] Cunard chose her words carefully, her sentences were clear, and where a simple statement sufficed, she did not labour the point. Her treatment of women in the story also differs from how Arlen typically wrote his female characters. The 'leading beauties' in Mont Agel are 'toying with their food and their poets', and the men are helpless to resist them.[524] At Le Ciel d'Or the 'women were more friendly, the people who came in more diverse.' The men 'knew what they wanted, and got it.' Cunard's narrator feels pressured to 'look, act and try to feel as [the women] feel, do what they do, and in the way they do it' not because they are doing anything out of the ordinary, but because they are performing the roles that they are conditioned to perform.[525] Her impulse is interrupted by anger at herself for giving in to the idea that she should participate in the 'unnecessary comedy' – 'thoughts that sobered by their bitterness' fortify her resolve to continue on her 'self-imposed adventure.'[526]

She spends the evening drinking, dancing and talking to another man before going home to find Leo in bed. He tells her a 'terrible story… an adventure, such as one reads in newspapers, of things that somehow don't happen to people one knows.'[527] He was drugged and robbed after a night of drinking with strange men in bars. She tells him what she did, and

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[522] M. Arlen, *Piracy*, London, UK, W. Collins Sons & Co., 1924, p.13
[523] Arlen, *Piracy*, p.3
[524] Arlen, *Piracy*, p.7
[525] Cunard, 'A Lost Night'
[526] Cunard, 'A Lost Night'
[527] Cunard, 'A Lost Night'

they are 'both very unhappy, each for the other.' The narrative ends with a question put to Julia, of whether the story was successful. Julia responds '"No, it is not conclusive…for it has made no difference, save that in hurting him you hurt yourself; but I think it has neither altered nor lessened the love you have for each-other; how could such an episode be conclusive in a love that was worth while?"'[528] Cunard ends on an anti-climax, highlighting the futility of the narrator's attempts to create an adventure premised on her love for a man. Leo's adventure is full of plot twists, intrigue, and danger, ending with him safely in bed ready to tell it in detail the next morning. The narrator tells him her story in one line: 'Well Leo, I meant what I said in my letter, and I have done what I said I would do…Can you understand that at all?'[529]The love may be 'worthwhile' as Julia romanticises it, but nothing has changed.

The success of 'The Lost Night' lies in textual reflexivity. Cunard, and her narrator try to write/tell a fully-rounded narrative but ultimately fail. In fiction and reality the outcome is the same. Cunard writes about life, but because she is writing about a woman's life the story remains 'very inconclusive.' Chisholm convincingly argues that in *Piracy*, Arlen based the infamous Virginia Tracy on Cunard.[530] Virginia is described as a woman of reputation who 'Suddenly, swiftly, silently' leaves rooms, 'waits for no man', and if her 'departure offends…doesn't care.'[531] 'The Lost Night' reveals something entirely different about Cunard, and her awareness of the difficulties and insecurities of defying social conventions. The narrator tells Julia, 'I try to control my impulses, if only because I have already suffered enough through not doing so.'[532]To the outside world, and especially to men, it appeared as if Cunard couldn't be controlled, and she was reproached for it. She defiantly opposed attempts to contain her, in art and life, in 'Answer to a Reproof'(*Outlaws,* 1921):

> You *shall* not prison, shall not grammarise
> My swift imagination, nor tie down
> My laughing words, my serious words, old thoughts
> I may have led you on with, baffling you
> Into a pompous state of great confusion.
>
> You have been fashioned this or that; and I
> Belong to neither, I the perfect stranger,
> Outcast and outlaw from the rules of life,

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[528] Cunard, 'A Lost Night'
[529] Cunard, 'A Lost Night'
[530] Chisholm, *Nancy Cunard a Biography* , p.95
[531] Arlen, *Piracy*, p.167
[532] Cunard, 'A Lost Night'

> True to one law alone, a personal logic
> That will not blend with anything, nor bow
> Down to the general rules; inflexible[533]

The poem addressed those who had 'fashioned' an image for her as a person and a poet, and their resistance to a woman occupying a space that was traditionally masculine: '*My* trouble is/It seems, is that I have loved a star and tried/To touch it in its progress: tear it down…And own it, claimed a "master's privilege".' She concludes the poem by asking: 'Is this not a world/Proportioned large enough for enemies of our calibre?/Shall we always meet/ In endless conflict?[534]

Cunard's privileged position allowed for travel and the time to write poetry without concern for how she would support herself financially. Mannin addressed the irony of needing wealth to live aimlessly in *Ragged Banners* when Starridge observed that 'You had to be a Lord before you slept in the park for fun.'[535] Cunard's connections and wealth set her apart from woman poets struggling to publish in a male-dominated field. She was able to write and self-publish if necessary. Unsurprisingly, the ease with which she could intervene in the literary sphere was met with resistance, and in the case of Eliot, something bordering on hatred. Although she told Pound that she respected him, their relationship was complicated. After his death in 1965, she wrote a poem, 'Letter', in which she described their first meeting at a society ball in 1922, and plans to meet again: 'So entranced was I by you I suggested 'a tryst'/ For the next night. / You certainly came to it.'[536] In a later stanza she referred to *The Waste Land*:

> Ara Vos Prec – Then The Waste Land
> It put its rightful frenzy into me.
> I do not understand it yet, nor ever shall
> Reach its full import, its span, its entirety.
> (For one who's obtuse, most times, and that is me,
> Count me well in.)
> It changed, however, my life in its own time,
> As it has changed the lives of poets in many lands.
> Indeed, I am one of these too.
> Is it passion and repression, repression as well as passion?

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[533] N. Cunard, 'Answer to Reproof', *Outlaws*, London, UK, Elkin Mathews, 1921, p.57 (emphasis as in original)
[534] Cunard, 'Answer to Reproof', p.58 (emphasis as in original)
[535] Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, p.31
[536] N. Cunard, 'Letter', S. Parmar (ed), *Selected Poems of Nancy Cunard,* Manchester, UK, Carcanet Press, 2016 (eBook).

Yourself, aureoled with visions and with echoes,
That is clear, and also with chosen, well-tried allusions,
But the soul of it all is a mystery to me.
So be it. See, Eliot, how not fully understanding, one can love a thing,
Full far from one's own ways, yet the 'self-of-it' held close?
But why repressions?[537]

She repeated the last line again, reflecting that they must have talked about it when they met, and she must have asked him 'but why repressions?' Repression was a theme in *The Waste Land*, especially for Eliot's cast of female characters including the girls of the upper Thames, a fortune teller, an upper-class Lady, a princess, a priestess, a lower-middleclass girl, and a typist – all of whom are unhappy in some way. In a positive feminist reading of the poem, Shamsi Farzana argued that it is an 'exemplar of a piece of literature which presents the punishing and painful realities of women's life during the twentieth century.' According to her, Eliot set out to alert his readers to 'the realities of sexuality that, during that time, were intentionally taken for granted.'[538] Cunard's repeated question, 'why repressions?' suggests that she was unsure of Eliot's intent, and her confusion remained even after reading the poem.

There is evidence to suggest that Eliot was not, as Farzana claims, concerned with the plight of women. This is especially apparent in the section that featured Cunard, and that Pound encouraged him to remove from the final version (it is therefore unlikely that Cunard would have seen it). The brutal, misogynistic way that he depicted her counters any argument that he was sympathetic to a woman's right to self-determination:

(The same eternal and consuming itch
Can make a martyr, or plain simple bitch);
Or prudent aly domestic puss puss cat,
Or autumn's favourite in a furnished flat,
Or strolling slattern in a tawdry gown,
A doorstep dunged by every dog in town.
For varying forms, one definition's right;
Unreal emotions, and real appetite.
Women grown intellectual grow dull,
And lose the mother wit of natural trull.
Fresca was baptised in a soapy sea
Of Symonds – Walter Pater – Vernon Lee,

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[537] N. Cunard, 'Letter'
[538] S. Farzana, 'The Plight of Women in T.S.Eliot's "The Waste Land"', *Journal of Literature, Languages and Linguistics*, vol.16, 2015, p.62

> The Scandinavians bemused her wits,
> The Russians thrilled her to hysteric fits.[539]

The list of authors that make up Fresca's baptism were all middlebrow writers, falling into the literary category that Modernists were hard set on eradicating. Eliot, having established Fresca among the middlebrows, goes on to disparage her skill as a poet:

> From chaotic misch-masch potpourri
> What are we to expect but poetry?
> When restless nights distract her brain from sleep
> She may as well write poetry, as count sheep.
> And on those nights when Fresca lies alone,
> She scribbles verse of such a gloomy tone
> That cautious critics say, her style is quite her own.
> Not quite an adult, and still less a child,
> By fate misbred, by flattering friends beguiled,
> Fresca's arrived (the muses nine declare
> To be a sort of can-can salonniere.[540]

The most disturbing line in the section sees Fresca 'Aroused from dreams of love and pleasant rapes.'[541] Eliot wrote *The Waste Land* between 1921 and 1922 during which time he would have met Cunard at the party, and for the 'tryst'. Chisholm proposes that apart from his irritation at the 'ease with which the well-connected amateur, Nancy, found publishers and respectful reviewers for her poems,' his 'bitterness might be explained by the contrast between the struggles of Eliot and his wife against illness and poverty, and the affluent, leisured existence of Nancy.'[542] Cunard was not the self-serving dilettante that Eliot made her out to be. She was genuinely committed to helping artists other than herself publish their work. This is evident in that none of her books are listed in the bibliography of Hours Press publications.

Marcus takes the more likely view that 'Cunard excited the poet's disgust, his anger, his fear of female power, and his desire to assert his masculine hegemony in the province of poetry.'[543] When Eliot associated Fresca/Cunard with Vernon Lee and other middlebrows, he was projecting onto her the elitist, and gendered prejudices of the male critic. Eliot's hypocrisy

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[539] T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts*, New York, US, Harcourt, 1971, p.26 (The manuscript is quoted directly, omitting Pound's notes)
[540] Eliot, *The Waste Land A Facsimile,* p.38 (The manuscript is quoted directly, omitting Pound's notes.)
[541] Eliot, *The Waste Land A Facsimile*, p.26 (The manuscript is quoted directly, omitting Pound's edits)
[542] Chisholm, *Nancy Cunard a Biography*, p.444
[543] J. Marcus, *Nancy Cunard: Perfect Stranger*, South Carolina, US, Clemson University Press, 2020, p.85

in his depiction of Cunard as a 'slattern' when he had willingly engaged in a brief affair with her, his aristocratic leanings despite his financial difficulties, literary elitism, and disinterest in politics cast a shadow over his attempts to style himself as a man of the people. Poems like 'Morning at the Window' captured attempts to use the suffering of the lower classes as subject matter, with little understanding of their circumstances:

> They are rattling breakfast plates in basement kitchens,
> And along the trampled edges of the street
> I am aware of the damp souls of housemaids
> Sprouting despondently at area gates.
>
> The brown waves of fog toss up to me
> Twisted faces from the bottom of the street,
> And tear from a passer-by with muddy skirts
> An aimless smile that hovers in the air
> And vanishes along the level roofs.[544]

Eliot wrote from on high, literally and figuratively. The 'twisted faces' are 'tossed *up* to him,' the 'smile' that 'hovers in *the air*' is 'aimless.' He was an outsider arrogantly claiming to understand the lives of working-class women. Cunard, regardless of her socialist leanings, was not immune to the poverty tourism of Bloomsbury, and displayed a similar detachment and naivete in 'Poor Streets':

> They shall not know the tuneful words of love
> Nor the impatience of imagination;
> They shall not see the meaning of the day,
> Nor slip into the comfortable dreams
> Of which we make pleased profitable hours.
> For they shall plod and shudder in the streets,
> Shadowed by poverty's unending sadness;
> Streets that are long and sullen, unrelieved
> By smile of sunlight. Winter is your season
> And all your meaning, suburbs! pale-faced skies
> Shall weigh on you as lead – Oh, hideous poor,
> Accursed of life, there is no explanation
> Of fate incomprehensible! no clue

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[544] T.S. Eliot, 'Morning at the Window', *Collected Poems 1909- 1962*, New York, US, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963, p.19

That I should sit by a secluded fire
And know the ending of your day will be
The desolate despair of public houses.[545]

Cunard's expedition into the lives of the lower-classes caught the attention of high society gossips. Mariegold, the 'social historian' for the illustrated society pages in *The Sketch* (9 February 1921), obtained a copy of *Outlaws*. Making direct reference to 'Poor Streets' she reported that along with sad scenes, 'she even writes of – *the desolate despair of public houses.*'[546] Looking in from the outside, yet confident in their opinions and assessments, Cunard and Eliot described what was unfolding before them from a safe distance. In an uninformed, reductionist way, the poor were depicted as accursed of life. They were consigned *en masse* to desolation, and deprived of private thoughts and imagination. In 'Morning at the Window', even a smile is marked as a thing of sadness. An amusing characteristic shared by both poems is that the poor seem perpetually plagued by bad weather – an obvious and overdone attempt at symbolism reminiscent of the fog that foreshadowed danger for Pip in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1861).

In contrast, Patricia Lynch's poem, published in the 22 May 1915 edition of *The Woman's Dreadnought,* dealt with similar themes but from the perspective of someone familiar with the conditions of the working classes:

In the East there are little children
Whose eyes are sad and old,
Yet whose hands reach out to gather
The dancing sunbeams gold;
Must these tiny hands go empty
Of the magic of childhood's days?
Must these baby lives be trodden
In the dust of sordid days?
In the East there are lads and maidens
Condemned to unending night.
In the gleam of the shop and workroom
Whence banished is joy and light.
In their hands so brave lies the future,

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[545] N. Cunard, 'Poor Streets', S. Parmar (ed), *Selected Poems of Nancy Cunard,* Manchester, UK, Carcanet Press, 2016 (eBook).
[546] 'More About Mariegold', *The Sketch*, 9 February 1921, p.9, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0001860/19210209/011/0008?browse=true, accessed: 14 November 2023. (emphasis as in original)

> In their dreams lies a world so fair;
> We may help them to build or shatter
> Each truth that is dawning there.
> In the East there are women toiling,
> Grown sad and worn with strife
> Whose hearts are tired of hoping
> Whose dreams ne'er come to life;
> Despised as was Christ, and rejected
> By a world that knows not their worth;
> Yet shall they toil that their children's children
> Shall inherit and save the earth.[547]

Lynch was an Irish author, journalist and women's rights activist who contributed regularly to *The Woman's Dreadnought,* and later *The Worker's Dreadnought*. 'In the East' was written from the perspective of someone on the ground in the East End. Cunard's 'hideous poor', 'plod and shudder in the streets / Shadowed by poverty's unending sadness,' and Eliot claimed knowledge of the 'damp souls' of 'housemaids.' Lynch's people of the East End have utopian 'dreams' of a 'world so fair' and – referencing the myth of Eden – toil so that 'their children shall inherit the earth.' She did not document so much as demand the recognition of circumstances that were unjust but not unchanging or unchangeable. Eliot and Cunard inserted themselves into the scenes that they tried to capture by drawing attention to themselves as socially conscious observers. Lynch's poem might have been generic, and more ballad-like than poetic, but the focus was squarely on its subject not on Lynch.

'Morning at the Window' and 'Poor Streets' may have been written with good intentions, and in Cunard's case genuine sympathy for the poor, but they displayed a level of tone deafness typical of the elite. Mannin would have attributed poems like this to attempts to craft personas around political consciousness without engaging in real political action. In *Ragged Banners,* she wrote Lattimer as an extreme example of the ways that politics served the bohemians. Starridge assumes that because Lattimer is the editor of '*The Flaming Torch*', he's enmeshed in socialist politics. In a moment of drunken honesty, he reveals himself to be more interested in using the poor and their concerns as fodder for his periodical:

> when the revolution comes, if it comes in my time, I shall be the first to help smash the proletariat!'...I don't want to fight in a bloody revolution for the sake of the dirty little

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[547] P. Lynch, 'In the East', *The Woman's Dreadnought*, 22 May 1915, p.4, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0002235/19150522/023/0004, accessed: 2 February 2023.

> taxi-driver with the bunion on his neck who brought us here to-night – Damn the poor, drat the poor, blast the working-classes'…I hate your man of property and your Communist equally. And the middle-classes and their disgusting idealism make me vomit.[548]

He exploited socialism and its rise in popularity among the working classes for profit and clout among the artists, poets and authors who made up his social circle. The poetry that Cunard wrote while enmeshed in modernist circles was some of her worst.

Pankhurst, Mannin, and Cunard offer three contrasting, albeit interconnected, experiences of the cultural landscape of interwar Britain. Mannin, who had grown up working-class in a political household, quickly identified and resisted literary elitism. She was also an author who acquired a level of fame, and wrote for a living which situated her firmly within the industry. Pankhurst, whose household was equally political, developed an understanding of how literature and politics intersected through her father, and authors like Morris. Her interests fell in line with her attempts to make the revolution beautiful.

Unlike the elite periodicals claiming to be the last word on art in Britain, *Germinal,* and *The Workers' Dreadnought* offered artists a space to publish their work without the limitations imposed on them by the gatekeepers of culture. Less accomplished poets appeared alongside more accomplished highbrow poets with no marked difference between them. The artists, poets and novelists who wrote for Pankhurst's magazine and weekly paper were diverse in education, nationality, race, class and gender. Although *Germinal* and *The Workers' Dreadnought* were circulated exclusively in Britain, there were contributions in both publications from socialists brought together through transatlantic, collaborative networks. Returning to the idea of Adam toiling and Eve spinning, and the artist as craftsman, Pankhurst wrote in the first issue of *Germinal*:

> I bring you no material gifts; for I have none to give you; all that I have are yours. All things we have are but ours for the using; we use them without stint; but we waste them not; for these fruits of the harvest, these treasures of the earth and sea, are wrought and gathered and grown by the service of comrades, who render their service with love, the love that we also bear them; countless unknown comrades; numberless, skilful, industrious brains and hands that toil for us.[549]

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[548] Mannin, *Ragged Banners*, p. 64

[549] S. Pankhurst, 'The Well-Wishing Adventurer in Setting Forth', *Germinal*, vol.1, no.1, London, UK, Agenda Press, 1923, np., State Library Victoria, Melbourne, RARES; 821.912 G3179.

Her admittedly overwrought and flowery introduction is riddled with utopian socialist ideology. Art is not produced for material gain; it is given with love. The fruits of artistic labour are shared freely. Creativity belongs to the many, not to the few.

Pankhurst did not write poetry, short stories or plays because she sought fame, recognition or financial gain. She wrote because it was an effective and appealing way to speak to social ills, alert people to oppression, and inform them of the alternatives. Although she shared the view that art was a powerful means of conscientizing, Cunard was impeded in her efforts because she situated herself and her work in elitist literary circles. Given what is known about her life and early career it is likely that her upper-class upbringing prevented her from immediately recognising the politics and social inequalities that permeated the literary industry.

Three notable events recorded in *These Were the Hours* contributed to a shift in her thinking, leading to more sophisticated, and socially conscious poetry. First, she met Henry Crowder who expanded her worldview, and introduced her to, in her words, 'the astonishing complexities and agonies of the Negroes in the United States':

> He became my teacher in all the many questions of colour that exist in America and was the primary cause of the compilation, later of my large *Negro Anthology*. But at this time I merely listened with growing indignation to what he had to tell: of the race riots and lynchings, the segregation in colleges and public places, the discrimination that was customary in all aspects of life.[550]

Second, she watched the rise and fall of the Surrealist movement and noted the reasons for its demise. She observed that 'from the start of surrealism in 1925, or so, until the end of 1928, Aragon, Breton and all the rest were one united group.' It ended when Aragon, and 'several of the others who followed him...veered away then definitely towards the political side of Communism, while not at all abandoning their own writing.'[551] Her phrasing is telling. It implies that there was an apolitical side of communism – perhaps the same performative communism that Mannin captured in *Ragged Banners*, and *Comrade O Comrade*.

The extent to which high art was capable of anything other than art for art's sake was called into question for Cunard when Aragon's work, now that it was not definitively tied to the avant-garde, lost its value in the literary circles that she had once respected. To her mind, 'the poet and creative writer' remained in him 'supreme':

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[550] Cunard, *These Were the Hours,* pp. 26,29
[551] Cunard, *These Were the Hours*, p. 43

> Politics have not ousted either and it is good to remember this, faced with those who hold that a creative artist will probably lose himself on account of so thoroughly embracing a political belief and party – "especially *that* party," many will add.[552]

Finally, she found it impossible to remain neutral when confronted with the rapidly rising Fascism of the 1930s. Her prized Mathieu printing press survived the end of The Hours Press in 1931, proving useful when, as she recalled, 'the future that seemed so unpredictable was no longer unpredictable. War would probably come.' [553] The Spanish War followed the Ethiopian War. With Pablo Neruda's help, Cunard produced six pads of poetry sold in Paris to raise money for Spanish Republican relief. This was in 1937, the same year that she sent her survey *Author's Take Sides on the Spanish War* to Britain. At this stage, Cunard had developed a proper understanding of her long-held belief in the 'sacred mission of art to change history.' Her position was reflected in the introduction to the survey:

> The equivocal attitude, the Ivory Tower, the paradoxical, the ironic detachment, will no longer do. Are you for, or against, the legal government and the people of Republican Spain? Are you for or against Franco and Fascism? For it is impossible any longer to take no side. Writers and poets…we wish the world to know what you, who are amongst the most sensitive instruments of a nation, feel.[554]

Cunard had identified, and was actively resisting 'the equivocal attitude, the Ivory Tower' and 'the paradoxical…ironic detachment' that she had once admired in her highbrow friends. At this juncture in her career, she produced some of her best poetry, the majority of which was an extension of her activism.

Woman poets were subjected to similar prejudices as women writing romance fiction. Joanna Russ, in her book *How To Suppress Women's Writing* (1983) provides insight into why men found it necessary to gatekeep literary production. She proffers that 'if certain people are not supposed to have the ability to produce "great" literature, and if this supposition is one of the means used to keep such people in their place, the ideal situation (socially speaking) is one in which such people are prevented from producing any literature at all.'[555] Preventing women

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[552] Cunard, *These Were the Hours*, p. 47
[553] Cunard, *These Were the Hours*, p. 196
[554] N. Cunard, *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War*, London, UK, Left Review, 1937.
[555] J. Russ, *How to Suppress Women's Writing*, Texas, US, University of Texas Press, 2018, p.2

from publishing was a way to keep them in line. Women like Cunard were dangerous because they had the means to sidestep the barriers erected by critics to maintain the status quo.

Unlike Pankhurst and Mannin, Cunard has sustained a notoriety that persists today. Biographies about her are still being written which glamourise her in problematic ways. Outside of academia, she continues in her role as muse. Most recently, she was credited as the inspiration for Saint Laurent's 2022 winter collection with its form-fitting silhouettes and African-inspired bracelets. In 2011, she was included in the design notes for Gucci's winter collection. Kennedy's response to 'A Lost Night' marks a continuation of the male critic's attitude to women's writing, and Cunard's creative work which has been given less attention than her social exploits and relationships with men. More than a century after Eliot's vicious attack in his draft of *The Waste Land*, Cunard's gender and sexuality are still taken as inseparable from her work in other arenas of activism and creative work.

Girling's claim that Cunard, not Arlen, authored the story is justified. Expanding on and affirming Girling's claim, when Cunard's work is placed side-by-side with Arlen's there are stark differences in their writing styles. The story also shares themes with her poem 'Outlaws'. The short story is an invaluable contribution to scholarship considering Cunard's creative work because it is one of the few instances in which she engaged with gender politics, and the only example of any attempt at fiction.

Cunard's transition from a poet with romantic ideas about the avant-garde to an activist critical of the avant-garde contrasts in informative ways with Pankhurst and Mannin's lifelong socialism. Mapping this transition also expands the field of enquiry to include how socialism and politics, gendered and otherwise, played out in elite literary circles. The highbrows rallied against laws that banned books for 'moral' reasons, while at the same time regulating literature, and maintaining the gender divide by erecting barriers to access for women.

## Half Articulate Speakers of Prose

The range of poetry, and diversity of poets published in *The Dreadnought*, reflected Pankhurst's attitude towards the readers of her weekly. She rejected the cultural barriers set up by highbrow critics by assuming that her audience was capable of reading, enjoying and deriving meaning from *all* art regardless of their gender, class or education. In this way, *The Dreadnought* was political on two levels. Its content served socialism, and the diversity of its content created a community of readers premised on what Jacques Rancière calls an 'equality

of intelligence.'[556] In *The Emancipated Spectator* (*Le spectateur émancipé,* 2008) he locates art within a 'community of sense,' or a 'frame of visibility' that unites people through things and practices that shape a 'sense of community.' He proposed a link between 'being together and being apart,' between the solitary work of the artist, the solitude of the artwork, and human connectedness. 'The solitude of the artwork' is a 'false solitude' because it is an 'intertwining of twisting together of sensations.' [557] A human collective comes together in the same way. The artist constructs a new sensory fabric from the threads that make up the 'fabric of ordinary experience,' thereby creating 'a form of common expression of the community.'[558] The 'distribution of the sensible' defines a community's way of being together. It pertains to individuals and individual speech - the bodies and voices that are visible, audible and sayable, or conversely invisible, inaudible or unsayable, that exist alongside assumptions about what different groups or individuals are capable of. These assumptions are challenged by the idea of an 'equality of intelligence' premised on the given that a person does not need to learn in the educational sense to think critical, valuable, and rational thoughts. [559]

Art enters society because the distribution of the sensible cannot be separated from an 'aesthetic community.' By this Rancière does not mean a community of aesthetes, but a community of 'sense or *sensus communis*, a *sensus communis*' comprising three interconnected forms of community. First, a 'combination of sense data… forms, words, spaces, rhythms and so on' that combine 'different senses of sense.' He uses the example of 'the words of the poet' as a 'sensory reality which suggests another sensory reality…which in turn can be perceived as a metaphor of poetic activity.'[560] The second is the tension that arises when a community assumes a shape or 'dissensual figure' working towards a common goal, and 'reaching a place which can be visualised in space,' a sensorium. [561] A divergent sensorium is superimposed on the first and organised around 'what is specific to their power,' amounting to a conflict between the two regimes, and two 'sensory worlds.' Finally, data is collated, and dissonant relations are interwoven to create a new sense of community: 'The artistic "proposition" conflates two regimes of sense – a regime of conjunction and a regime of disjunction. The community built

[556]J. Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. G. Elliott, London, UK, Verso, 2009, p. 10
[557]Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, p. 56
[558]Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, p. 56
[559]Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, p. 10
[560]Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, p. 56
[561]Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, p. 58

by that dissensus stands in a two-fold relationship to another community, a community between human beings.'[562]

Rancière was responding to Friedrich Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (*Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*, 1794) in which he linked the beauty of art to living figures, and promised communities or more concisely, Utopias. Counter to Schiller's broader definition, Rancière imposes a specific spatial parameter on utopianism. In *The Flesh of Words* (*La chair des mots: Politiques de l'ecriture*, 1998) he wrote:

> Utopia for me is not the place that exists nowhere, but the ability of overlapping between a discursive space and a territorial space; the identification of a perceptual space that one discovers while walking with the *topos* of the community. In the identification of modern aesthetic with modern utopia is founded a singular ability for the community to make itself also appreciated, loved without concept, to identify its master signifiers (nature, liberty, community) with the place and act of a poetry conceived as free play of the imagination. The result of this, in Kantian terms, is the transformation of reflective judgment into determining judgment. In the free play of imagination, reason in effect presents itself directly as determining a world.[563]

The 'free play of imagination' is political because it has the potential to form, influence, sustain, and conceive of future communities. In socialist publications like *The Dreadnought,* a community of readers and artists were free, and encouraged, to imagine a future-perfect world different from their own. Fiction and non-fiction addressed contemporary reality alongside hopes for a society liberated from the limitations of class-based exploitation. A news article or political pamphlet condensed information, and placed current events into a local or global context. Poetry was an equally if not more effective medium through which to share these ideas for the same reason that the newspaper serial with its short instalments was a popular way for socialist romance authors to disseminate their politics – poems were short, easily digestible and took less *time* to consume.

Time was a prominent concern in working-class communities, and a recurrent theme in descriptions of socialist utopias in fiction and non-fiction. It was central to Pankhurst's short story 'Co-Operative Housekeeping', and in 'Love's Winnowing' where the protagonist echoed sentiments in Mannin's non-fiction work advocating a society of people with 'time to stand and stare, time to savour life as the vast luxury it is capable of being, not for a privileged and

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[562]Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, p. 58
[563]J. Rancière, *The Flesh of Words: The Politics of Writing*, trans. C. Mandell, Standford, US, Stanford University Press, 2004, p.18

moneyed few, but for the masses.'[564] Time as a commodity determined by class was so deeply entrenched in working-class communities that it impacted even the most abstract of concepts: love.

Interpersonal relationships were conditions of the private space. As Pankhurst and Mannin recognised in their feminist activism, one of the main indicators of class difference among women was how time (a commodity) was distributed in this space. The upper classes bought time, the lower classes sold it. A woman who could afford to employ another woman to perform reproductive labour freed herself from these tasks, allowing her to use her time to pursue other interests. The working-class women who sold their time performed these duties in the workplace, and in their own homes. They worked two jobs, one paid, and one unpaid, both of which involved distributing their time elsewhere.

In the context of literary production time to write was essential, and woman writers often claimed that time by employing other women to free them from domestic work. Cunard could focus on her poetry because she did not have to do waged work, or manage a household. Mannin described a situation in her early career where she was 'frequently servantless,' and able to write only because she neglected domestic duties. When she could, she hired a 'maid,' who as she remembered it was 'always very young, did all the housework, the cooking, a certain amount of washing and ironing, and took the baby out in the afternoons…It was snobbish; it was class distinction; it was exploitation; but it worked.'[565] In 1937, Mannin wrote a lengthy article for *The Leicester Illustrated Chronicle* urging employers to recognise that they were depriving their domestic servants of time and freedom. They worked long hours, and as Mannin clarified, even when there were breaks in the day their time wasn't their own: 'She cannot use her non-working time for her own pleasure, in any real worthwhile fashion, because it is not long enough.' The domestic service industry was unregulated.

Women preferred jobs in factories because of fixed working hours that allowed for personal time. Mannin appealed to the 'madams' to think about themselves in relation to their workers: 'Is one woman, then, to work 12 and 14 hours a day, in order that another woman may not have to get her own tea and supper? Actually, of course, in a rational society, no woman would be permitted domestic help who did not need it for some very good reason.' In response to an angry woman who had complained that 'Servants…think of nothing but the pictures and boys and having a good time,' Mannin asserted that 'the social snobbery of women

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[564] Mannin, *Women and the Revolution*, p. 300.
[565] Mannin, *Young in the Twenties*, pp.17-18

had a great deal to do with "the servant problem",' she pointed out that employers, like servants, also engage in activities that bring them pleasure. Behind the woman's complaint was the idea that she owned the domestic worker's time, inside and outside of working hours:

> So long as this state of affairs lasts it must be difficult to get domestic workers, and the best type of worker will tend to stay out of domestic service; freedom is too precious a heritage to be lightly discarded for the mess of pottage which is a servants life in the average English household. Women, whose problem it is, have the solution in their own hands; it is for them to make a proper job of domestic service with agreed working-hours with agreed working-hours, and to eliminate the social snobbery symbolised by uniforms and insistence on being addressed as "Madam." […] Freedom is not the prerogative of the monied classes, but the blessed right of all.[566]

The awareness, whether conscious or subconscious of the complex relationship between the women, employer and employee, who managed a household would often manifest in depictions of similar relationships in literature. The 'cheerful little maid' who brought Diana coffee in 'Love's Winnowing' was mentioned only once, and only briefly.[567] She was accorded no characteristics outside of the cheerfulness projected onto her in that brief moment, and receded into the background once the coffee had been delivered. Her presence was loosely implied again when Grace, Maurice, and Diana go to the country cottage in Sussex and they rough it 'in the wild' without a maid to take care of them.[568] When Mannin wrote her novelette, she couldn't afford to employ a maid but would have noticed the servants behind the scenes in the homes of her artist friends. In modernist literature the complexity of employer-employee relationships was often even more pronounced, and less self-reflexive.

In *The Labors of Modernism* (2013), Mary Wilson pays close attention to the figures written into modernist narratives, showing how 'the structure of modernist formal experimentation can be read as a reaction to, and as an often-uncomfortable negotiation with, those servants' still-necessary presences in the house of fiction, and in the houses of female protagonists and of the women writers who create them.'[569] She uses the example of Lucy in

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[566]E. Mannin, 'Freedom for Domestic Servants', *The Illustrated Leicester Chronicle*, 3 July 1937, p.4, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0003133/19370703/027/0004, accessed: 27 November 2023.
[567] Mannin, 'Love's Winnowing', p.21.
[568] Mannin, 'Love's Winnowing', p.31.
[569] M. Wilson, *The Labors of Modernism*, New York, US, Taylor and Francis, 2016, online: https://www.perlego.com/book/1633616/the-labors-of-modernism-domesticity-servants-and-authorship-in-modernist-fiction-pdf., accessed: 18 November 2023.

*Mrs. Dalloway* to illustrate Woolf's anxiety about the relationship between servant and employer: 'Lucy's housekeeping work, preparing for the party, enables Clarissa to engage in the creative labor of buying the flowers: the action that begins the work of the narrative.'[570] Woolf was a useful case study for Wilson, who notes that the author 'tended to view the servants she employed in her adulthood as either objects of amusement or frustrating encumbrances – often as both.'[571]

Woolf's attitude to her domestic servants was classist, and not confined to the home. She wrote about her experience attending a Women's Co-operative Guild conference in June 1913 in an introductory letter for *Life as We Have Known It*.[572] She found the conference proceedings difficult to listen to, not because of the content of the speeches but because she had 'reached a stage of irritation and depression by half-past eleven in the morning,' and wondered what 'depths of boredom and despair' she would be 'plunged' into by 'half-past five in the evening.'[573] To entertain herself she tried to imagine herself as the working-class women who were speaking, and had a moment of introspection: 'One sat in an armchair or read a book. One saw landscapes and seascapes, perhaps Greece or Italy, where Mrs. Giles or Mrs. Edwards must have seen slag heaps and rows upon rows of slate-roofed houses…They did not stroll through the house and say, that cover must go to the wash, or those sheets need changing. They plunged their arms in hot water and scrubbed the clothes themselves.'[574] In her letter she noted the class divide, and showed a vague awareness of the lived realities of the women that she was introducing, but when it came to comments on the work itself her brow was high:

> It cannot be denied that the chapters here put together do not make a book—that as literature they have many limitations. The writing, a literary critic might say, lacks detachment and imaginative breadth, even as the women themselves lacked variety and play of feature. Here are no reflections, he might object, no view of life as a whole, and no attempt to enter into the lives of other people. Poetry and fiction seem far beyond their horizon.[575]

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[570] Wilson, *The Labors of Modernism*
[571] Wilson, *The Labors of Modernism*
[572] In her chapter, 'Virginia Woolf and the Women's Co-operative Guild, 1913–31', Jones provides a cogent and useful overview of what she describes as Woolf's 'fractious relationship' to the Women's Co-operative Guild and Llewelyn Davies, as well as a closer look at the politics and publication history of the 'Introductory Letter'. See: C. Jones, *Virginia Woolf: Ambivalent Activist*, Edinburgh, UK, Edinburgh University Press, 2016, pp.108-154
[573] V. Woolf, 'Introductory Letter', M. Llewelyn Davis (ed), *Life as We Have Known It, By Co-operative Working Women*, London, UK, W.W. Norton & Company, 1975, p.xx
[574] Woolf, 'Introductory Letter', p.xxii
[575] Woolf, 'Introductory Letter', p.xxxvii

Although the hypothetical reviewer is gendered male, Woolf's own biases come through. She took the stance that the 'voices' in the essays were 'beginning only now to emerge from silence into half articulate speech,' which she justified by reminding her audience that the writing had been done 'in kitchens, at odds and ends of leisure, in the midst of distractions and obstacles.'[576] Ben Clarke aptly summarised her attitude at the 2006 Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf – she framed the authors as 'mechanicals, "half articulate" speakers of prose, unable to produce poetry.'[577]

Woolf was unable to disengage from the idea that lowbrows were incapable of adequately depicting their lives for themselves. Rancière, relaying a lesson learned from Gabriel Gauny's thoughts on aesthetic contemplation in letters from two 19th Century workers, identified the correspondents as both 'spectators and visitors within their own class.'[578] Through their 'idleness as strollers and contemplators' they disrupted a distribution of the sensible which would dictate that the worker does not have time for leisure – 'that the members of a collective body do not have time to spend on the forms and insignia of individuality.'[579] Emancipation is therefore 'the blurring of the boundary between those who act and those who look; between individuals and members of a collective body'(between the highbrows and the lowbrows) by reconfiguring the 'distribution of space and time, work, and leisure.'[580]

When women wrote 'in kitchens, at odds and ends of leisure, in the midst of distractions and obstacles' they were participating in an act of resistance by reclaiming time, and using it to depict their lives for themselves, and for their readers. In Badiou's terms, they mounted the stage of history. The 'chapters' as Woolf called them were oral histories, a feature of working-class culture, which they committed to paper. The implication that they were incapable of writing poetry ignored a rich tradition of working-class literature including the poems, ballads, broadsides, and songs that had captured the concerns and experiences of the working classes for centuries. John Goodridge and Bridget Keegan used the 'amazed interlocutor' in working-class poet Tony Harrison's epigraphic poem 'Hereditary' (*The School of Eloquence: And other Poems*, 1978) to support their discussion of 'the ideological and psychological pressures that

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[576] Woolf, 'Introductory Letter', p.xxxix
[577] B. Clarke, '"But the Barrier is Impassable": Virginia Woolf and Class', A. Burrells, S. Ellis, D. Parsons, and K. Simpson (eds), *Woolfian Boundaries: Selected Papers from the Sixteenth Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf,* University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK, Clemson University Digital Press, 2006, p.38
[578] Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, p.19
[579] Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, p.19
[580] Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, p. 19

warn the poet that by writing poetry he is stepping out of his class role and regarded as a sort of freak':[581]

> How you became a poet's a mystery!
> Wherever did you get your talent from?
> I say: I had two uncles, Joe and Harry –
> one was a stammerer, the other dumb.

Goodridge and Keegan point out that asking the question, and trying to solve the 'mystery' of the origins of the poet's skill stems from a 'familiar process of othering, restriction, and exoticization that routinely afflicts writers of lower class origin.' [582] The word 'familiar' speaks to an attitude that, as covered in previous sections, was at its zenith in the interwar period with the rise of the critic, the battle of the brows, and social eugenics. What sets the interwar period apart from the 1970s when Harrison wrote his poem is that the woman poet, regardless of class, was subjected to similar (in some ways identical) ideological and psychological pressures. She was warned that by writing poetry she was stepping out of her assigned gender role. 'She's Coming, Ye Bards', written by a 19th Century poet who went by The Factory Girl, challenged gender and class discrimination in literary circles. She told fellow poets that they would know she was breaching their borders when they 'see the banners are waving / High on the towers of the famed Penny Post':

> She's coming, despite dark November's rude scorning –
> Ah, what now to her are the sunshine or storm? –
> With the fame crown you wove her wan brow adorning,
> The goddess of genius may bow to her form.
>
> ….
>
> She's coming, ye bards, and when'ere you behold her
> The impress of care you shall read in each look;
> Oh, pray that good fortune with smiles may enfold her,
> And bring her success in her now finished book.[583]

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[581] J. Goodridge and B. Keegan, 'Introduction', J. Goodridge and B. Keegan (eds), *A History of British Working Class Literature*, Cambridge, UK, 2017, p. 3
[582] Goodridge and Keegan, 'Introduction', p. 3
[583] The Factory Girl, 'She's Coming Ye Bards', *Victorian Poetry*, vol.39, no.2, 2001, p.206

The similarities between how critics treated the working-class poet and the poetess was tied to the role of the body in production – the thinking man's labour is intellectual, while the working-class man or woman, and women across class lines labour with their bodies – spinning, tilling the field, manning the factory, mining; or fulfilling the role of devoted wife satisfying her husband's physical needs, cleaning, cooking, bearing, and raising children. The sentimentality attributed to women was necessary for emotional labour – one of the duties that fell under the purview of reproductive labour. Working-class women were reduced to mere bodies in both waged and unwaged labour.

As a young woman, Pankhurst was not immune to the social conditioning and language of her class. In the early days of trying to introduce class consciousness into the fight for gender equality she fell into the trap of trying to shock middle, and upper-middleclass women into sympathy for the poor by describing the worn bodies of working women. In essays like 'The Potato-Pickers', written while on a trip in 1907 to Scotland and northern England, she emulated a form of writing that dated back to the early 19th Century, used by middleclass social anthropologists attempting studies of lower-class people and their living conditions.[584] The resulting tone-deaf descriptions reinforced the class divide between her, her intended audience, and her subjects:

> Then the potato pickers rose, and straightened themselves, and came towards me where I sat watching them, and I saw them clearly for the first time. They were poor, miserable creatures, clad in vile, nameless rags…There were old, old women, with their skin all gnarled and wrinkled, and their purple lips all cracked. There were young women with dull white sullen faces, many with scars or black bruises, round the eyes, and swollen shapeless lips.[585]

Dodd neatly summarises the cause and effect of Pankhurst's writing in 'The Potato-Pickers' – she was 'straining to find ways of articulating women's solidarity across class lines, and being held within a received language, which expresses separation.'[586]

Pankhurst missed the mark but her essay was written with good intentions. In contrast, Woolf's grotesque description of the women in the Co-Operative Guild in what was supposed

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[584] K. Dodd, 'Introduction', S. Pankhurst, 'The Potato-Pickers', *A Sylvia Pankhurst Reader,* K. Dodd (ed), Manchester, UK, Manchester University Press, 1993, p.10
[585] S. Pankhurst, 'The Potato-Pickers', *A Sylvia Pankhurst Reader,* K. Dodd (ed), Manchester, UK, Manchester University Press, 1993, pp.34-35
[586] Dodd, 'Introduction', p.11

to be an introduction to their *intellectual* work did not appear to be in service of any higher purpose outside of justifying the quality of writing in the collection. It illustrates the extent to which the body factored into class-based assumptions about intelligence:

> their bodies were thick-set and muscular, their hands were large, and they had the slow emphatic gestures of people who are often stiff and fall tired in a heap on hard backed chairs. They touched nothing lightly. They gripped papers and pencils as if they were brooms. Their faces were firm and heavily folded and lined with deep lines…Their lips never expressed the lighter and more detached emotions that come into play when the mind is perfectly at ease about the present…They were indigenous and rooted to one spot. Their very names were like the stones of fields – common, grey, worn, obscure, docked of all splendours of association and romance.[587]

Woolf deprived these women of individuality by massing them together, and making their names (their identities) extensions of their bodies – common, grey, worn, obscure. Her fixation on their physical appearances, alongside her claim that the voices from those 'thick-set' bodies were only just 'beginning…to emerge from silence into half articulate speech,' exposed her class bias, and limited understanding of working-class women's literature. In her limited understanding she failed to notice that these women were aware of the highbrow misconception that they were incapable of articulating their circumstances in art and speech. In some cases, they addressed it directly in their creative work.

The most overt example of this theme in poetry is Carnie Holdsworth's collection, *Voices of Womanhood* (1914), released 17 years before *Life as We Have Known It*. Pankhurst published one of the poems, 'A Vision', in the 26 December 1914 edition of *The Woman's Dreadnought*:

> There is a silent woman in this land
> A silent woman, thinking all this
> while
> Beside a fire upon a little hearth
> As narrow as a cradle – or a grave!
> Strange echoes reach her from the
> world outside.
> And move, and thrill her: but she
> Sits and waits
> And muses in her corner 'midst the

[587] Woolf, 'Introductory Letter', p.xxii

Shades.
She listens to the voices from her
Hearth.
And answers not again nor contradicts.
Though sometimes in her eyes a smile
Will gleam.
A shadow sometimes rests upon her
brow.
And all this time she never speaks a word
Save gentle love. And by her house
there sound
A thousand echoes from the world outside.
When she shall speak, ah, then the
world will hear.
Will listen as she listened all this
while.
For as her strength was in the little
house
So strong will her presence be in the
world.[588]

The meaning of 'silence' is twofold. First, the poem is a warning that the woman isn't incapable of speech, she is at ease in the present, waiting in contemplation; an underestimated, formidable force lying in wait for the right moment to emerge from the silence to show her full strength. Second, women did not have the vote in 1914, and therefore did not have a voice in politics. They were waiting for the moment when their 'presence' would be as strong 'in the World,' as in the private space of the 'little house.' Carnie Holdsworth was also challenging the idea of the 'masses' which homongenised the working classes thereby suppressing their individuality, interests, and concerns.

In another poem, 'Life', Carnie Holdsworth used stones as an analogy. However, unlike Woolf's stone-like anonymous women they represented rest 'when it all is done / All suffered and all known.'[589] The poem acted as a prelude to the collection, and honoured the 'Voices impetuous, daring, and wild; / voices of yearning, with sorrowful sigh' that she heard through 'the silence' She asked, 'What shall a poet give? Shall it be tears? / I , as you pass, unashamed,

[588] E. Carnie Holdsworth, 'A Vision', *The Woman's Dreadnought*, 26 December 1914, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0002235/19141226/011/0002?browse=true, accessed: 19 November 2023.
[589] E. Carnie Holdsworth, 'Life', *Voices of Womanhood*, London, UK, Headley Brothers, 1914, p.11

unafraid, / Out from the silence to cry against wrong.'[590] Her question was a common preoccupation of the self-aware political artist who was critical of their ability to speak for others.[591]

Alan Bold, in his introduction to *The Penguin Book of Socialist Verse* (1970), explains that for the artist 'when it comes to alleviating the plight of the dispossessed the frightening knowledge that his [or her] activity is, usually, confined to the lonely pursuit of a minority interest is often overwhelming.' At the same time, 'the political context can make the treatment of these themes more intense and more authentic.'[592] Carnie Holdsworth, a Socialist and working-class woman, was not an outsider but she was cognisant of the diversity of experiences in different contexts and communities. Her self-awareness stood in stark contrast to Eliot's confidence that he was 'aware of the damp souls of housemaids' in 'Morning at the Window', and Cunard's assumptions about the 'hideous poor, Accursed of life' in 'Poor Streets'.

A number of the poems in *Voices of Womanhood* were 'songs': 'A Rebel Song', 'Cradle Song', 'Old Woman's Song', 'A Riding Song', 'A Lullaby'. Industrial folk songs, and political anthems had been circulating among the British working classes since the early 19th Century. Industrial folk songs were an effective medium for preserving and passing on oral histories. Anthems related to socialist, and working-class lyric poetry, which was not always set to music, or intended for singing, but mirrored the structure of a song.[593] Unlike the industrial folk music firmly grounded in the oral tradition, anthems were typically printed in magazines and newspapers. Jim Connell's famous 'Red Flag' first appeared in print in the leftist newspaper, *Justice* (21 December 1889). It was a celebration of International Socialism with a rousing battle cry for a chorus:

> Then raise the scarlet standard high!
> Within its shade we'll live and die.
> Though cowards flinch and traitors
> Sneer,
> We'll keep the Red Flag flying here.[594]

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[590] E. Carnie Holdsworth, 'Prelude', *Voices of Womanhood*, London, UK, Headley Brothers, 1914, p.10
[591] A.Bold, 'Introduction', A. Bold (ed), *The Penguin Book of Socialist Verse*, Middlesex, UK, Penguin Books, 1970, p. 36
[592] Bold, 'Introduction', p. 36
[593] I. Watson, *Song and Democratic Culture in Britain: An Approach to Popular Culture in Social Movements*, London, UK, Croom Helm, 1983, pp.21-22
[594] J. Connell, 'A Christmas Carol: The Red Flag', *Justice*, 21 December 1889, p.3, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0002533/18891221/009/0003, accessed: 20 November 2023.

Connell was inspired to write the anthem by a series of global events that had elevated 'the souls of all true Socialists,' including but not limited to the 1889 London Dock Strike, and the unjust exile of Russian Nihilists some years earlier (the forerunners of the Bolsheviks). He had intended for it to be sung to the tune of Jacobite Robert Burns' 'The White Cockade', which he hummed while he wrote it, but socialist writer Adolphe Smith Headingley 'induced people to sing "The Red Flag" to "Maryland, Maryland".' The tune for 'Maryland' was lifted from the Christian hymn 'Oh, Tannenbaum' ('Oh, Christmas Tree'). Connell was not pleased, writing that 'It is Church music, and was, no doubt composed, and is certainly calculated, to remind people of their sins, and frighten them into repentance. I daresay it is very good music for the purpose for which it was composed, but that purpose was widely different from mine.' He concluded that 'Every time the song is sung to "Maryland" the words are murdered.'[595] Regardless, the song was popular, and became the anthem of the Irish Labour Party, the British Labour Party, and the Northern Irish Social Democratic and Labour Party.

Douglas writes that songs, serious and humorous, were 'a way of transporting and appreciating history.' The old ones in particular were, and are 'a unique and highly accurate way of understanding old methods, work systems and conditions.'[596] Singing unified voices in a veritable polyphony, affirming solidarity, shared histories, hopes for a utopian socialist future, and a commitment to fight for it. It was a call to war that came from within the community, not a higher authority or government that did not represent them, or their interests. Pankhurst's political writing matured when she immersed herself in working-class communities and politics, situating her poetry and fiction within the diverse literary traditions – the established collaborations between writer and reader, orator and listener, singer and songwriter – that had shaped her intended audience.

Russ was referring to woman writers when she said that the best way to sustain the idea that they were incapable of great literature was to prevent them from producing literature. The power afforded the literary critic was the second bastion of defence against attempts by women to enter highbrow literary spaces. The first was arguably the social structures in place to control women's time, and how they used it. Attempts to maintain traditional gender roles underscored much of how literature was classified, reflected in the gendered epithets 'poet' and 'poetess'.

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[595] J. Connell, 'How I Wrote The Red Flag', *Call*, 6 May 1920, p.5, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0003232/19200506/025/0005, accessed: 20 November 2023.
[596] Douglass, '"Worms of the Earth"', p.63

If women had no time to write, they couldn't produce literature. Women were expected to prioritise the private space of the home, and the reproductive labour that sustained it. Under Capitalism, reproductive labour could be bought and sold, and with it the time that it took to perform these duties. As was often the case, women who could afford it wrote in the time that they bought from working-class women. This ensured that working-class women performing reproductive labour for their employers and in their own homes were left with very little time not only to write, but also to read.

The relationship between employer and employee in the home was a complicated one. Highbrows like Woolf struggled to navigate it partly because of preconceived, and classist ideas about what different people were capable of. As Wilson points out, literary representations of domestic staff in modernist novels provide insight into how they were viewed by the women who relied on their labour to free up time for writing. Comparing how socialist authors like Mannin challenged these representations builds on Wilson's work. Additionally, it further confirms the necessity of maintaining the barriers between the brows. If Mannin, for example, was repositioned as a Modernist, her work would redeem the movement instead of highlighting its failings. The value of her work, and the contribution that analysing her work makes to modernist studies, lies in the broadening of the field to include its discontents. Those discontents included working-class poets like The Factory Girl who recognised and challenged gender and class discrimination in literary circles.

The idea that working-class women were incapable of producing good literature was captured in Woolf's patronising introduction to Llewelyn Davis' *Life as We Have Known It,* where she included grotesque descriptions of working-class women's bodies. When she was young and naïve, Pankhurst made similar observations in 'The Potato Pickers', albeit with kinder intentions. These descriptions from Woolf and Pankhurst reinforced the idea that working-class women were defined by their labour, and unable to articulate their circumstances – an idea that Carnie Holdsworth and others challenged in their poetry.

Rancière's formulation of how art is intertwined with community through the creation of a 'frame of visibility' that united people through things and practices, amounting to a 'sense of community,' is helpful for understanding why socialist authors took time into consideration when choosing forms for their creative work. Apart from novels they wrote short stories, poetry and newspaper serials that took less time to read. There is a marked difference between Pankhurst's writing and perspective in 'The Potato Pickers', and the work that she produced when she immersed herself in working-class politics, and broke free of the language of her

class. Actively engaging with class politics alongside working-class people in the East End drove her to abandon the role of spectator, and the style that she had emulated in her early essays. She focused primarily on bringing news of socialism and Internationalism through articles, poems and short stories to the British public at large.

## I Sing of Revolt

Pankhurst's fiction has commonly been side-lined as more personal expression than political act, leaving a gap in scholarship on the connection between her aesthetic and political activity that scholars have only recently begun to address. Romero notes the short stories 'Utopian Conversations' and 'The Pageant' that she wrote for *Germinal*. She takes the view prevalent in scholarship, and stated often in a long list of biographies, that Pankhurst's creative work was unimaginative and poorly written. In *Sylvia Pankhurst: From Artist to Anti-Fascist* (1992), Ian Bullock and Richard Pankhurst mention the fiction and poetry that she drafted in notebooks hidden in the archives, and the potential merits of exploring it further, but do not attempt to do so themselves. Few have taken them up on the challenge.

At the forefront of new scholarship on Pankhurst's art as activism, Marion Wynne-Davies does the critical work of bringing *Writ on Cold Slate*, and some unpublished poems into conversation with poems by Claude McKay within the context of the Suffragette movement in 'Sylvia Pankhurst Poetry and Politics' (*Women's Suffrage in Word, Image, Music, Stage and Screen,* 2021).[597] She revives and builds on scholarship that takes a more positive approach to Pankhurst's creative work, including Dowson and Alice Entwistle's comparison between *Writ on Cold Slate* and the poems in the suffragette anthology *Holloway Jingles* (1912) in *A History of Twentieth-Century British Women's Poetry* (2005).

In fairness to scholars like Connelly and Bullock, who chose to focus almost exclusively on her visual art, Pankhurst displayed little talent as a poet. Wynne-Davies addresses this with a quote by Shirley Harrison calling Pankhurst's poetry 'embarrassingly immature and amateur…sentimental, romantic, and very personal.'[598] Without deeper engagement with her work, the lack of attention paid to her poetry because of its sentimentality

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[597] M. Wynne-Davies, 'Sylvia Pankhurst, Poetry and Politics', C. Wiley, and L. Ella Rose (eds), *Women's Suffrage in Word, Image, Music, Stage and Screen*, London, UK, Routledge, 2021, online: https://www.perlego.com/book/2534854/womens-suffrage-in-word-image-music-stage-and-screen-pdf accessed: 25 September 2021.

[598] Wynne-Davies, 'Sylvia Pankhurst, Poetry and Politics'

could be mistaken for a lingering symptom of the highbrow critic's feminisation of mass culture, depreciation of femininity and dismissal of the poetess. That does not appear to be the case here. Objectively, Pankhurst's poetry cannot be read as great literature. Its value lies not in its stylistic merit, which as Wynn-Davies pointed out, was of little concern to her. She wanted to write poetry that reflected the social injustices that informed her activism.[599]

Wynn-Davies, Dowson, and Entwistle consider Pankhurst's poetry primarily in the context of the Suffragette movement. Still, their parameters can be expanded to include a more nuanced look at broader working-class politics, and how she captured class conflict in her poems. Pankhurst did not write much fiction, but what does exist has gone largely unnoticed. Archival research into Pankhurst's fiction appears to be limited to contributions to her literary magazine, and collections like the one housed at the International Institute of Social History, which explains why so much of it has gone unexplored. There is a rich archive of her creative work in *The Dreadnought* hidden amongst advertising, and lengthier journalistic pieces.

It is not always immediately apparent that these works are fiction given that Pankhurst's creative work was so intertwined with her non-fiction. The second instalment of 'Co-Operative Housekeeping' is a good example of where the line is blurred. Dodd published fiction and non-fiction in her reader. Without the crucial information provided in the opening paragraphs of the first instalment– two fictional characters interacting in a post-revolutionary society - it can easily be mistaken for an account of actual events, and especially in light of the social systems that Pankhurst described when reporting on her visit to Russia.

Understanding Pankhurst's methods, and the literary styles that she incorporated into her work, is essential for identifying her fiction. The short story, 'Thrift', retrieved from the pages of the 20 June 1914 edition of *The Woman's Dreadnought* was written using a combination of styles typical of working-class literature.[600] It begins like a fable:

> It was in a wide park and the path led through wonderful old oaks and chestnuts and broad open spaces. Where the ground dipped into a hollow were two little cottages covered with a tangled mass of roses and honeysuckle, and with their little garden plots ablaze with close-growing old-fashioned flowers. In the most flowery of these cottages lived an old woman, well over 90 years of age. Her clothes were always of plain black stuff and her dresses copied one from another, were always made with the skirt full, the

[599] Wynne-Davies, 'Sylvia Pankhurst, Poetry and Politics'
[600] See Appendix V

> bodice very straight and plain, and the sleeves without a cuff, as country women wore them when she was young.[601]

After setting the scene, the narrative shifts to emulate working-class life writing, specifically the anecdote. 'Life writing' encompassed a range of working-class literatures from oral histories to autobiography to anecdotes. Douglas, in his account of mining oral histories, discusses how the hostility of the ruling class was remembered,

> in bitter recollection of things said at the time of '26, like when A.J. Cook said: "We'll let the grass grow on those pulley wheels before we submit to tyranny." And Churchill said: "And I'll make you eat it." And choice phrases he had like, "The worms of the earth" and "Drive them back down their holes like rats". They're reflections of history which not only convey events; they convey the bitterness and the class hatred not found in more academic things.[602]

Britain's history of labour and working-class movements is one of the longest in the world, beginning with artisans and peasants in the Middle Ages and continuing through the early capitalist period (the domains of Ball and More). By the 19th Century, artisans and peasants had become the industrial labourers and farm workers that Morris championed, before transitioning to the working classes and proletariat that Pankhurst and Mannin's work spoke to in the 20th Century. Weaving and coalmining are two of Britain's oldest industries, and two of the richest in terms of song and poetry.[603] Mining (the coal needed to run the machines) and weaving (the first industry to be mechanised) were central to the Industrial Revolution, adding further significance to Adam toiling and Eve spinning in Burne-Jones' illustration for Morris' *A Dream of John Ball*.

Anecdotal life writing relayed a story in much the same way that it would be told in conversation between two people sharing news of friends, neighbours, and events. In 'Thrift', following a brief outline of the old woman's family history or service, the narrator relays snippets of conversation: '"It's little enough to give you, after all your years of unpaid work!"

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[601] S. Pankhurst, 'Thrift', *The Woman's Dreadnought*, 20 June 1914, p.2, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0002235/19140620/006/0002?browse=true, accessed: 19 November 2023.
[602] Douglass, '"Worms of the Earth"', p.63
[603] Ian Watson provides the useful example of 'independent skilled hand-loom weavers, who had woven in their own homes' before finding 'themselves priced out of the market by machines and forced as wage-earning workers into the power-loom factories,' to illustrate the shift from artisan to proletariat. I. Watson, *Song and Democratic Culture in Britain: An Approach to Popular Culture in Social Movements*, London, UK, Croom Helm, 1983, p.9

I used to say to her, but she would smile and answer: "Lord doesn't understand all I've done for him",'

> "People ask me if I am not lonely and whether I am not afraid to live by myself," the old woman said to me, "Of course I am not lonely. I should be very wicked if I were. Haven't I got my dear son living next door to me? It's true he and the boys are out all day, but look at the beautiful flowers and the birds I have got all around me"…So she would talk on, rambling as solitary people do, who are glad to have found someone to listen well and always she spoke kindly and seemed sweet tempered and generous to all.[604]

Pankhurst's writing was simple and straightforward. It evoked the conversational cadence of life writing by working-class women like Mrs. Scott, a felt hat worker, in her account of attempts to get fellow workers to join the Felt Hatter's Trade Union: 'We began to get the other girls in. It was hard work, the answer would be "I will when the others do." So one day we went round with a list…and said "just put your name down, those who will join if the others consent," and behold, we got the majority.'[605] Conflict enters the narrator's account in 'Thrift' when the old woman tells her that her late daughter-in-law died owing £5 to some tradespeople:

> "I don't know how George'll ever manage to pay off the money," the piteous voice went on. 'It's been a hard struggle to pay for the funeral as it is. He only found out last night that she owed anything." "She hasn't been the good wife I thought her, mother," he said "I didn't think she'd have done it." And so they shook their heads together and wondered however that money was to be paid: and in their trouble they bitterly blamed not the Lord for whom they had done so much in return for so little, but the poor dead woman who had gone on working until the day she had died.[606]

After the anecdote has been relayed, the story reverts to a fable with a moral about how debt, accident and misfortune arise out of 'That never ending painful contriving to make ends meet on little wages with many mouths to feed' that 'weighs down the hearts of poor working mothers, and warps the whole current of their lives.'[607] Pankhurst ends on an informative note of the kind in a newspaper article by calling attention to the high interest rates that pawnbrokers

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[604]Pankhurst, 'Thrift', p.2
[605] J.P. Scott, 'A Felt Hat Worker', Llewelyn Davis (ed), *Life as We Have Known It, By Co-operative Working Women*, London, UK, W.W. Norton & Company, 1975, p.90
[606] Pankhurst, 'Thrift', p.2
[607] Pankhurst, 'Thrift', p.2

and moneylenders charge the poor, and especially women, who without their husband's wages are forced to find money where they can. Placed side-by-side, 'Thrift' and 'The Potato-Pickers' could not be more different in style and tone.

By the time that Pankhurst wrote 'Thrift', she had moved to the East End, abandoned the middleclass society that she was born into, and with it the divisive 'received language' of her class, favouring a language that fostered inclusion. An anecdote, relayed from one person to another is intimate, and therefore encouraged intimacy between the author and reader. The fable came with the expectation of a moral that made sense of the story. Combined, the anecdote and the fable relayed a message to the reader through a story that was less cold and rigid than a fact-based news article.

*The Dreadnought* was founded in the East End which from the late 19th Century had gained a reputation among writers as representative of poverty and working-class life. As Stephanie Brown describes it in the context of literary production, it was a 'site, only liminally or nominally within London, which was repeatedly rhetorically positioned as a constitutive against which to define a "civilized" London.'[608] The borders between 'civilised' London and the East End were reflected in the content and distribution of print media. Advertising and articles in publications 'like *Good Housekeeping* or *The Economist* invited working-class readers to aspire to a middle-class lifestyle.'[609] Readers of the *Dreadnought* found content that did not disparage their class position, infantilise them, or alienate them linguistically.

The inclusion of more accomplished poets and writers alongside lesser known writers of poetry and fiction, and fair reviews of works by authors spanning a range of genres, defied the categories imposed on art by the literary elite. Jamaican-born writer Claude McKay, one of the most acclaimed voices of the Harlem Renaissance, was a regular contributor who recognised the potential of equal collaboration between artists, journalists and activists across class lines.[610] In *The Dreadnought,* he fulfilled the vital role of situating poetry and prose within a political framework, and through his complex work as a poet-critic, making these ideas accessible to an audience – a working-class audience – largely excluded from more mainstream publications. He distanced himself from the experimental aesthetics associated with high art,

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[608] S. Brown, 'Claude McKay, 'The Workers' Dreadnought, and Collaborative Poetics', *Literature & History*, vol. 28, no.1, 2019, p.29

[609] Brown, 'Claude McKay', p.30

[610] Citing scholars like William Maxwell, Keith Booker claims that McKay wasn't just a prominent poet in the Harlem Renaissance, but that the Renaissance *began* with the publication of McKay's poem 'If We Must Die' in *The Liberator* in 1919. The poem was written in response to attacks on African Americans during what was later called the 'Red Summer.' K. Booker (ed), *Encyclopedia of Literature and Politics: Censorship, Revolution and Writing*: *vol. 1:A-G*, London, UK, Greenwood Press, 2005, p.11

preferring the sonnet, and other more traditional forms. Pankhurst supported McKay (who sometimes published under the pseudonym Hugh Hope) by not limiting his content, and citing him as a Jamaican. Other publications featuring his work often situated him within a British literary tradition by comparing him to poets like Shelley, and emphasising his British citizenship (as if to justify his inclusion alongside work by other British poets).[611] McKay's influence can be felt in Pankhurst's poetry, especially the poems that she compiled in *Writ on Cold Slate*.

On 20 October 1920, the *Sheffield Independent* reported that the offices of the *Dreadnought* had been raided, and Pankhurst arrested on charges of 'publishing seditious articles in the "Workers' Dreadnought"…in connection with the article "Discontentment on the Lower Deck".'[612] 'Discontentment on the Lower Deck' was written using information passed on to McKay by a young sailor in the Royal Navy, Douglas Springhall. McKay, who had been left in charge of *The Dreadnought* while Pankhurst was in Russia, published it using the pseudonym S.000 (Gunner), H. M. S. Hunter. Springhall appealed to his fellow sailors to 'hail the formation of the Red Navy,' and join the Socialist Revolution: 'You are the Sons of the Working Class, therefore it is your duty to stand by that class and not the class and Government which is responsible for the starving of your ex-service brothers.'[613] This was one of four articles that appeared as evidence in Pankhurst's trial alongside 'How to Get a Labour Government', 'The Datum Line', and McKay's 'The Yellow Peril and the Dockers'.[614] As editor of the *Dreadnought,* Pankhurst was accused of 'an act calculated and likely to cause sedition among his Majesty's Forces, in the Navy, and among the civilian population.' The courts found her guilty and sentenced her to six months in Holloway prison.[615]

Over the course of those six months, Pankhurst wrote poems which she published in *The Dreadnought* in 1922 recalling her time in prison enduring hunger strikes, forced feedings, and steel gags. Her poetry contributed to a body of work produced during the Suffrage

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[611] Brown, 'Claude McKay', p. 33
[612] 'Sylvia Arrested', *Sheffield Independent*, 20 October 1920, p. 1, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001464/19201020/015/0001, accessed: 23 December 2022.
[613] qtd. in: W. James, 'In the Nest of Extreme Radicalism: Radical Networks and the Bolshevization of Claude McKay in London', *Comparative American Studies An International Journal*, vol. 15, no.3-4, 2017, p.183
[614] W. James, 'In the Nest of Extreme Radicalism: Radical Networks and the Bolshevization of Claude McKay in London', *Comparative American Studies An International Journal*, vol. 15, no.3-4, 2017 p. 183
[615] 'Defence of the Realm Act 1914', online: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/4-5/29/contents/enacted, accessed: 23 December 2022.

campaign by women who depicted their experiences through a variety of subject matters, and styles ranging from the political, to the profoundly personal.[616]

Pankhurst's work showed traces of McKay's style and characteristic mix of natural imagery and drudgery. In 'Unto the Birds', a poem about hunger strikes, the detained women eat 'much bread, much bread / for heavy grief forbids that we should eat/ so is this prison girt about with song.'[617] In 'Morn', she described waking in her cell:

> The cruel white dazzling square that first aroused
> Mine eyes reluctant from their slumbers brief,
> Long chased in vain by leaden-footed thoughts,
> Now turns to blushing rose and azure fair;
> Whilst those small birds that in grey morn did chirp,
> With trills desport them in these showers of light.
>
> Sing, sing my little songsters, sing and sing;
> Twitter your lively twitterings, cocks, crow on;
> Carry our minds away with thee from here.[618]

The poem was written in blank verse in iambic pentameter, with five iambs and 10 syllables per line, deviating with 11 syllables in lines six and nine. The first three lines, with 'the cruel dazzling square' of light, 'eyes reluctant from slumbers brief,' and 'leaden footed thoughts' contrast the three that follow, taking a more optimistic turn to 'blushing rose and azure fair.' The birds that 'in grey morn did chirp' is emphasised by the additional syllable in line six, setting it apart from the previous four lines, making the birds architects of the change in tone and imagery. The 'cruel white dazzling square' is transformed at the end of the stanza by bird song into 'showers of light.' The final three lines appealed to the birds to keep singing, to 'twitter' their 'lively twitterings.' The cocks were implored to crow in line eight, with the eleventh syllable falling on the word 'on'. The extended length of the line is mimetic. While the birds must 'twitter' their 'twitterings' in the present tense, the cocks must crow *on*, as the line goes on past the 10 syllables of the previous lines. The poem concluded with the directive to 'carry our minds away with thee from here.'

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[616] C. Nelson (ed), *Literature of the Women's Suffrage Campaign in England*, Plymouth, UK, Broadview Press, 2004, p.153
[617] S. Pankhurst, 'Unto the Birds', *Writ on Cold Slate*, Ripon, UK, Smokestack Books, 2021, p.19
[618] S. Pankhurst, 'Morn', *Writ on Cold Slate*, Ripon, UK, Smokestack Books, 2021, p.21

Pankhurst chose to describe natural imagery and sounds instead of the details of her cell, contrasting it with her 'leaden-footed thoughts.' Nature intruded on the monotony of prison life. 'The Cleaners' seems to follow on from 'Morn':

> Daily we cleaners, ere the earliest dawn,
> Drag weary limbs from bed; and I must haste,
> Haste to the cleaning of full fifteen cells,
> And two long corridors must also scrub
> Before the great ones come, swift marching through;
> And as I scrub they call me 'Cleaner! Here!'[619]

'The Cleaners' moves Pankhurst out of her cell into the windowless depths of the prison where she helped the other women clean. Referring to her and the others as 'Cleaner' stripped them of their identities and individuality, and reduced them to their labour in the same way that working-class women were reduced to labouring bodies.

McKay's 'Joy in the Woods' (1920), a poem that juxtaposed natural imagery with the plight of the worker, used similar tropes and themes to explore the dichotomy of bondage and freedom. Pankhurst would have read the poem, published under the pseudonym Hugh Hope in *The Dreadnought* on 10 April 1920:

> There is joy in the woods just now,
> The leaves are whispers of song,
> And the birds make mirth on the bough
> And music the whole day long,
> And God! to dwell in the town
> In these springlike summer days,
> On my brow an unfading frown
> And hate in my heart always—
>
> A machine out of gear, aye, tired,
> Yet forced to go on—for I'm hired.
>
> Just forced to go on through fear,
> For every day I must eat
> And find ugly clothes to wear,
> And bad shoes to hurt my feet
> And a shelter for work-drugged sleep!

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[619] S. Pankhurst, 'The Cleaners', *Writ on Cold Slate*, Ripon, UK, Smokestack Books, 2021, p.34

A mere drudge! but what can one do?
A man that's a man cannot weep!
Suicide? A quitter? Oh, no!

But a slave should never grow tired,
Whom the masters have kindly hired.

But oh! for the woods, the flowers
Of natural, sweet perfume,
The heartening, summer showers
And the smiling shrubs in bloom,
Dust-free, dew-tinted at morn,
The fresh and life-giving air,
The billowing waves of corn
And the birds' notes rich and clear:

For a man-machine toil-tired
May crave beauty too—though he's hired. [620]

Marx wrote in *Capital* (*Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, vol.1, 1867) that 'the possessor of labour-power, instead of being able to sell commodities in which his labour has been objectified, must rather be compelled to offer for sale as a commodity that very labour-power which exists only in his living body.'[621] With no control over the means of production the worker is alienated from his or her labour. Automation forced the worker to confront 'the instrument of labour… dead labour' which dominated and absorbed 'living labour-power.' He or she was consumed by the 'mass of social labour embodied in the system of machinery.'[622] In McKay's poem, the liberty of nature is contrasted with the alienation of mechanized labour. At the end of each stanza, the couplets compare a man to a machine performing a task to earn a wage. McKay's man-machine calls to mind Woolf's lowbrows riding their bodies in pursuit of a living, and the 'mechanicals', as Clarke phrased it, that wrote for *Life as We Have Known It*.

'Joy in the Woods' was not only a sophisticated look at the effects of industrialisation on the working classes, it was also a subtle critique of perceptions about their ability to

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[620] C. McKay (Hugh Hope), 'Joy in the Woods', *Workers' Dreadnought*, 10 April 1920, p.3, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0002236/19200410/003/0003?browse=true, accessed: 19 November 2023.
[621] K. Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy Volume One*, trans. B. Fowkes, London, UK, Penguin Books, 1990, p.272
[622] Marx, *Capital,* pp. 548-549

appreciate art. The poem contains an 'ode' to nature in its description of 'joy in the woods just now / The leaves are whispers of song / And the birds make mirth on the bough / And music the whole day long… heartening, summer showers /And the smiling shrubs in bloom.' The final line has a double meaning. An appreciation of beauty humanises the man-machine. The ode to nature breaks with poetry that simply describes the struggle of working-class life because 'man-machine toil-tired / May crave beauty too' – art and poetry.

McKay challenged the idea 'that the members of a collective body do not have time to spend on the forms and insignia of individuality.'[623] He echoed arguments made by Carnie Holdsworth in her essay on high culture, 'How Colour is introduced' (*The Woman Worker*, 1909): 'We are not tin men and women: we have blood in our veins and eyes in our head and want some sunshine and blue sky and birdsongs.'[624] It is doubtful that McKay read the essay. He was still living in Jamaica when it was published, and had not yet cultivated working relationships with British revolutionaries.[625] Pankhurst may have read it, but it is more feasible that her work was influenced by Carnie Holdsworth's poetry, and McKay's creative contributions to the *Dreadnought*.

Pankhurst wrote reviews of literature and poetry for *Germinal* and *The Dreadnought* that did not speak down to her readers. In the poetic editorial for the second volume of *Germinal,* she spoke of the importance of art in imagining 'the life of the future; that life of adventure our hopes and our love and our striving create.'[626] Evocative of Lynch's poem 'In the East', Pankhurst mentions 'the peoples who follow the earth to inhabit.' She also addressed misconceptions about the abilities of the working classes to produce and appreciate art by promising a world in which they would not be limited by 'the blight of the prejudice cramping, the dark superstition that bareth advancement.'[627] Imagination was a key element in creativity, in art, and in imagining a future society.

Pankhurst appreciated creativity in all forms because the freedom to create was one of the great markings of a socialist Utopia – an idea that she carried over into 'The Pageant'. Her poetry has been described as archaic or out of time, but it was arguably *in time* with socialist anthems, and working-class newspaper poems - she sang of the people. She was also inspired

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[623] Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, p.19
[624] E. Carnie Holdsworth, 'How Colour Is Introduced', *The Woman Worker*, London, UK, 7 April 1909.
[625] Brown, 'Claude McKay', p.28
[626] S. Pankhurst, 'Editorial', *Germinal*, vol.1, no.2, London, UK, Agenda Press, 1924, np., State Library Victoria, Melbourne, RARES; 821.912 G3179.
[627] Pankhurst, 'Editorial'

by poet-activists like Walt Whitman, whose 'Pioneers! O Pioneers!' lit a fire in her when her father read it to her as a child:[628]

> O you daughters of the West!
> O you young and elder daughters! O you mothers and you wives!
> Never must you be divided, in our ranks you move united,
> Pioneers! O pioneers![629]

The poem, about going to war and forging ahead after battle, emphasises solidarity between men and women. It contains the kind of utopian thinking that Pankhurst found appealing. Those who survive the battle are tasked with creating the future. They are pioneers of a new age:

> Come my tan-faced children,
> Follow well in order, get your weapons ready,
> Have you your pistols? have you your sharp-edged axes?
> Pioneers! O pioneers!
>
> For we cannot tarry here,
> We must march my darlings, we must bear the brunt of danger,
> We the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend,
> Pioneers! O pioneers! [630]

Pankhurst adopted a similar tone in the poetry/anthems that she wrote for *The Dreadnought*, including 'I Sing of Revolt' (22 September 1923) which was published in the same year as the first issue of *Germinal*:

> I sing of revolt,
> I sing of the burning sun,
> I sing of thee and thy heat waves,
> Thy heat waves that stir men's hearts to revolt,
> Arousing a storm of passion, barriers overthrowing.
> Burst ye the bonds of wagedom,
> Burst ye the bonds, O people,
> Stirred by the sun that burns,
> O life giving sun that burneth,
> Why will ye chaffer by the market barrows?

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[628] Pankhurst, 'Sylvia Pankhurst', p. 259
[629] W. Whitman, 'Pioneers! O Pioneers!', *The Complete Poems*, London, UK, Penguin Books, 1996, pp.631-632
[630] Whitman, 'Pioneers! O Pioneers!', p.625

Or show your wares behind glass when the sun
Is raging?
Faded and spoilt are the paltry wares ye are selling.
Abandon this tedious barter in which ye waste your lives![631]

Whitman repeated 'Pioneers, O pioneers' to create order and divide his stanzas. Pankhurst's poem, more haphazard in meter, was written as a single stanza but can be divided into two parts comprising five lines, and an unrhymed couplet. The first five lines are followed by 'Burst ye the bonds of wagedom / Burst ye the bonds, O people,' and the last five lines by 'Faded and spoilt are the paltry wares ye are selling / Abandon this tedious barter in which ye waste your lives!' Anaphora, the repetition of 'I sing of' coupled with chiasmus – 'I sing of *revolt* / I sing of the burning sun / I sing of *thee and thy heat waves* / *Thy heat waves* that stir men's hearts to *revolt*' – emphasised the anthem-like call to rebellion. Pankhurst was also referencing the ballad/hymn form favoured by poets like DJ Nicoll whose 'The Coming of the Light' is a composite of all the familiar symbolism: the Phrygian cap, the Angel of Freedom and her trumpet call, the burning desire for revolution, the red banner, and the dawning of a new day:

Hark! the sound of many voices proclaim the dawn of day,
And in the glow of morning the shadows fade away;
Lo, the trumpet-call is ringing, and the sky is clear and bright,
And your masters flee in terror at the coming of the light.
…..

Raise again the blood red banner that your masters fear to see,
With the Phrygian cap upon it that tells of liberty.
One more, then, raise that banner – short and brief shall be
The fight.
For the people march to battle at the coming of the light.[632]

In another poem, 'Beyond' (*The Workers' Dreadnought,* 21 October 1922), Pankhurst used the promise of a future-perfect society to remind her readers of the aims of Socialism:

Oh may the spirit soar above these jars
And may the heart beat on: We would not die

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[631] S. Pankhurst, 'I Sing of Revolt', *Workers' Dreadnought*, 22 September 1923, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0002236/19230922/014/0004, accessed: 10 October 2022.
[632] D.J. Nicoll, 'The Coming of the Light', *Broadside Ballads*, online: http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/search/roud/V3567, accessed: 17 August 2021.

In this sad vale of deep despondency.
Oh struggle on; yea, doubting heart, strive
Through
Unto the dawn that yet will break – beyond;
Beyond where folk grow kindlier; where they
Meet
Untrammelled by these cares, and by the strife,
Beating like ocean waves upon the shore,
Breaking upon our life, destroying peace,
Turning thought barren with the constant
Gnaw
Of harsh anxiety which ceaseth not.
Oh Money: art though not our curse and chain
Clogging the impulse of our better selves,
And so doth stifle all the good and true?
Rise up, O heart, and struggle with these
Pains;
Let not deferred hope thy patience tire,
Nor warm desire be chilled, for this alone
Will bear ye onward, through these adverse
Days,
Unto the dawning of the great beyond.[633]

The language and structure of 'Beyond' are reminiscent of Carnie Holdsworth's 'A Vision'. 'The great beyond' could refer to what lies beyond the revolution, the dawn of a new day on the horizon, or the afterlife. Combining these interpretations, 'the great beyond' becomes the Earthly Paradise of utopian socialism.

After her sedition trial, Pankhurst briefly abandoned the overt symbolism, and poetic forms common to socialist poetry to produce one of her more successful political poems. 'For Half A Year' begins with a prologue:

Like to Persephone upon the brink,
a moments pause I from the dock to gaze,
before descending by those narrow steps
unto a world of shades for half a year;
amid the dusky Court a mist there swims
of ruddy faces blending into smiles,

[633] S. Pankhurst, 'Beyond', *Workers' Dreadnought,* 21 October 1922, p.1, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0002236/19221021/004/0001?browse=true, accessed: 19 November 2023.

and one stands forth, dead white, with staring eyes.

The comparison between Pankhurst and 'Persephone on the brink' referred to the Homeric 'Hymn to Demeter' where Persephone's descent into the underworld for half the year brought about the end of summer. The world is then plunged into winter because of her mother Demeter's grief in her absence. Pankhurst expanded on her descent into a world of shades in 'Morn' where she is aware of nature and light through the 'little window high,' but is unable to access it because of the 'barred panes.' She associated Persephone ascending from Hades with the realisation of the Earthly Paradise. She wrote in 'The Well-Wishing Adventurer In Setting Forth' (*Germinal*, 1923) that in Utopia, 'study and labour adorn and enhance you…You blossom as a garden of flowers; you are radiant as a morning of sunshine, welcome as Persephone bearing sweet almond blossoms in the early dawn, bounteous as Demeter with her golden sheaves.'[634]

Pankhurst was familiar with the British judicial system, having been arrested countless times, and on the receiving end of the violence that was levelled against her, and other suffragettes. In her description of the judges in her poem with their 'dead white eyes' she captured the politics, biases, and injustices that determined whether an accused would receive a fair trial. Pankhurst appeared before a 'harsh old man…clad in the purple of his Mayoral state, mouthing impatiently with hands a'twitch':

Oft interrupting, now he breaketh off,
his parchment cheeks distort, his eyes spit hate,
libel on libel hurls, that hired Press scribes
may circulate for gulling simple folk,
masking what lights may glimmer forth to show
their present exploitation and his sins,
by talk of loot, loot, loot, and pillage cruel,
and silly ogre stories, patent lies,
'gainst Soviet Russia, whence I'm late returned.[635]

Pankhurst was arrested shortly after her return from Russia, and the Second Congress of the Communist International, where Lenin had defined Imperialism as a world divided into 'a large number of oppressed nations and a very small number of oppressor nations' that were

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[634] S. Pankhurst, 'The Well-Wishing Adventurer in Setting Forth', *Germinal*, vol.1, no.1, London, UK, Agenda Press, 1923, np., State Library Victoria, Melbourne, RARES; 821.912 G3179.
[635] S. Pankhurst, 'For Half a Year', *Writ on Cold Slate*, Ripon, UK, Smokestack Books, 2021, p.59

economically privileged with strong militaries at their disposal.[636] The courts were determined to stop 'simple folk' (the uneducated masses) from reading articles that might alert them to their own oppression, and the oppression of those living under colonial rule:

> His paper tokens pass the world around,
> compel in Africa the negro's toil,
> make magic fingers of far Japs to ply,
>
> their art mis-prized for its so meagre cost,
> because on little rice they can exist.
>
> For him, in India, poor ryots toil,
> their immemorial Communism crushed,
> robbed of their produce and by famine scourged,
> dying like flies whilst he exports their grain.[637]

Pankhurst drew parallels between exploitation in the colonies and the exploitation of the British working classes. In a rhetorical move, she subtly introduced some of the symbolism central to British Socialism:

> For him, in Britain too, the miner delves;
> weavers and spinners follow ceaseless toil,
> their wage by far competitors depressed,
> children and parents in those Eastern mills,
> worse fed than beasts and nothing better housed.[638]

The repetition of 'toil' in local and international contexts – 'the negro's toil', 'ryot's toil', the 'ceaseless toil' of the weavers and spinners – extended the Adam and Eve analogy to the rest of the world, encouraging the British reader to identify with the workers of the Empire, and in doing so see him or herself as part of a larger struggle for freedom. Although the conditions of the British working classes and the labourers in the colonies were vastly different, it was essential to foster solidarity in the service of International Socialism. As Pankhurst saw it, and

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[636] V. Lenin, 'Minutes of the Second Congress of the Communist International', online: https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/2nd-congress/ch04.htm, accessed: 24 July 2021
[637] Pankhurst, 'For Half a Year', p.60
[638] Pankhurst, 'For Half a Year', p.60

made clear in her poem, the common enemy of all people, 'the very hub and central spring,' was the old man whose 'soul sits in a cellar hoarding gold,' and the 'hoary power of wealth.'[639]

'For Half a Year' was a personal battle cry from a woman who knew that she would not receive a fair trial because the verdict had been 'decided ere the case was called' by the magistrate.[640] The defiance that she poured into the poem was reflected in a statement in *The Dreadnought* (23 October 1920) responding to her conviction: 'Let us be of good cheer. Other comrades must try to carry on Sylvia Pankhurst's work until she is released. The arm of the capitalist is heavy and strong. It is put forth to crush the revolutionary workers and their leaders. Let us brace ourselves for the battle.'[641] After she was imprisoned, the letters that flooded in from Communists worldwide expressing solidarity testify to the high degree of respect that she commanded in International Socialist circles.

In *Three Guineas* (1938) Woolf wrote 'As a woman, I have no country. As a Woman I want no country. As a Woman my country is the whole world.'[642] This much-quoted statement formed part of a (pacifist) argument against war and Fascism in which Woolf questioned the fundamentals of nationhood and belonging. What constituted Country, Nation and National Identity was defined by men along with the criteria that determined who was and wasn't included in these categories, to what degree, and to what end. Women had no country in that they were excluded from these categories; wanted no country if it meant capitulating to the patriarchal ideals that governed them; and claimed the world as a country of their own by proxy of shared oppression facilitated by those ideals. For British women, this meant considering the whole world a country not only in terms of what connected them as women, but in terms of their complicity in Imperialism. In a genuine sense, the world had become their country through colonization, and Empire building.

Socialist British women, conscious of the interconnectedness of these ideas, sought to turn their unity through oppression into the unity of all oppressed peoples towards global equality under the banner of International Socialism. Literature and poetry were instrumental in passing on these ideas and recruiting others to the cause. The inequalities and prejudices in the highbrow literary industry have been well established. Mannin resisted by writing popular

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[639] Pankhurst, 'For Half a Year', pp. 59-60
[640] Pankhurst, 'For Half a Year', p.61
[641] 'Sylvia Pankhurst Arrested', *Workers' Dreadnought*, 23 October 1920, p.4, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001464/19201020/015/0001, accessed: 23 November 2022.
[642] V. Woolf, 'Three Guineas', V. Woolf, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, London, UK, Vintage Books, 2001, p. 206-207.

novels, novelettes and serials for working-class middlebrow readers. When she realised the political limitations of the avant-garde, Cunard turned to writing poetry in service of her activism. Newspapers like *The Dreadnought*, and literary magazines like *Germinal* were necessary interventions into a literary industry organised around inequality, not only because they disrupted this space but because they created reading communities premised on, to use Rancière's formulation, an 'equality of intelligence.'

Pankhurst wrote fiction and poetry for the same 'community of sense' as Mannin, but chose to position her work within a long-standing, and more localised tradition of working-class literary culture. Situating Pankhurst's work in context – both material contexts, and literary contexts – moves away from discussions about the literariness of her work towards its function as an element of her activism. To do this effectively, it is necessary to expand the body of available work to include texts like 'Thrift' that have, until now, been omitted from studies of her fiction and poetry. Pankhurst produced a substantial body of fiction and non-fiction over her lifetime which, to borrow Dodd's phrasing, was *'rhetorical*, with meaning forged not merely through their "factual" subject-matter but also by their conventions and form, and the narrator's relationship to the inscribed reader.'[643] The same can be said for work by Mannin, Cunard, and other socialist authors.

[643] Dodd, 'Introduction', p.6

# Part III: Anarchists, Socialists, Reds and Strikers

Socialist and worker's movements had existed in Britain since the late 19th Century. The philosophies of Marx and Engels that had guided many of them formed the foundations of Mannin, Pankhurst and Cunard's politics. The 1917 Russian Revolution reinvigorated these movements and provided a platform for unity with Russia as the pinnacle of the Communist International. Apart from men like the SLP's James Conolly, who were threatened by the idea of full equality, Pankhurst, Mannin and Cunard were treated as equals among their male comrades. Socialist writers, including August Bebel, John Stuart Mill, and Bernard Shaw, affirmed their solidarity with women by writing texts promoting gender equality as essential to establishing a socialist Utopia. Women attending meetings of the Comintern did so as active participants not spectators in decision-making processes. For British women who had experienced State-sanctioned violence, oppression and marginalisation, participating in Socialist politics was already a kind of freedom. The hope was that it would be fully realised and universal in a post-revolutionary world.

Russia was a source of inspiration for Pankhurst, Mannin and Cunard. It provided a blueprint for the society that all three aspired to achieve globally – one of freedom and progress outside of the exploitative capitalist system that went hand in hand with Western forms of governance. After the Revolution, Pankhurst refashioned *The Women's Dreadnought* as *The Workers' Dreadnought,* expanding its range and readership. In 1919, she travelled to Holland, Italy and Germany to meet fellow Socialists from around the world, and began her correspondence with Lenin. This was a period of hope for socialist movements who came together under Russia's leadership with a common goal and a utopian vision, the realisation of which now seemed possible, even inevitable. On 19 June 1920, Pankhurst founded the Communist Party British Section of the Third International (CP-BSTI). It was the first Communist Party in Britain which Pankhurst openly proclaimed in the by-line, 'Organ of the Communist Party,' of the 7 August 1920 edition of *The Dreadnought,* now the official paper of the CP-BSTI.[644] When advancing the International Socialist agenda, she was perspicuous in

[644] *The Workers' Dreadnought*, 7 August 1920, p. 1, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0002236/19200807/001/0001?browse=true, accessed: 31 July 2023.

her intentions: 'Let it be clear-cut and absolutely Communist; the more extreme our doctrine is, the more surely it will prepare the workers for Communism.'[645]

A commitment to the October Revolution distinguished the *Dreadnought* from other socialist periodicals of the time. It carried news from, and analyses of revolutionary activity in Italy, Bulgaria, Ireland, Austria-Hungary and Germany. Speeches by Lenin were printed often, as were countless historical articles about Marx. Pankhurst also adopted the Bolsheviks' Marxian anti-colonial stance outlined at the meeting of the Second Congress of the Third International, which she attended as an honoured guest with full voting rights. The 2 October 1920 edition of *The Dreadnought* reported her participation. The Congress declared that there should be a single Party in each country, and that a meeting should be convened in Britain to achieve this. The meeting was intended to unite nine parties across the United Kingdom under the supervision of an independent chairman.[646]

Notably, Moscow did not recognise the CP-BSTI, lending their support instead to the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). The report also outlined Pankhurst's resistance to the motion that the British branch of the Communist Party should ally itself with the Labour Party. She rejected participation in reformist trade unions and elections on the basis that 'the industrial organisations do not take the initiative when it is a question of revolutionary action.'[647] 'The Communist Party,' she wrote, 'must make itself able to control the industrial policy of the workers in order that it may direct them in industrial mass action, leading to revolution.'[648] The Labour Party was embedded in parliamentary systems. In 1918, it had formally constituted itself as a socialist party with a national structure and democratic constitution. In the 1920s and 1930s, under Ramsay MacDonald, it replaced the Liberal Party to become the primary opposition to the Conservative Party.

The motion must have come as a shock to Pankhurst. Her view was in congruence with a speech on parliamentary democracy that Lenin had made only two months prior to the meeting, published in *The Dreadnought,* in which he stated that 'Socialism cannot conquer Capitalism by assuming control of and using the parliamentary system; the system must be destroyed…The proletarian revolution annihilates the parliamentary system and its division of

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[645] S. Pankhurst, 'Towards a Communist Party', *The Workers' Dreadnought,* February 21, 1920, K. Dodd (ed.), *A Sylvia Pankhurst Reader*, Manchester, UK, Manchester University Press, 1993, p. 99.
[646] 'The Communist Party Conference', *Worker's Dreadnought*, 2 October 1920, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0002236/19201002/003/0001?browse=true, accessed 31 July 2023
[647] 'The Communist Party Conference', p. 5
[648] 'The Communist Party Conference', p. 5

functions, legislative and executive being united into one working body.'[649] It was on this topic that she challenged Lenin directly in a private meeting which he referenced in his speech to the delegates at the Third International:

> In a private talk, Comrade Pankhurst said to me: "If we are real revolutionaries and join the Labour Party, these gentlemen will expel us." But that would not be bad at all. Our resolution says that we favour affiliation insofar as the Labour Party permits sufficient freedom of criticism. On that point we are absolutely consistent.[650]

Lenin believed that expulsion from the Party could only be positive because it would alert revolutionaries to its failings. Pankhurst remained, and would remain unconvinced. Two years later, the *Gloucester Journal* reported that Pankhurst, 'speaking in London…said that the Labour Party had betrayed the workers' by pinning 'its faith in the fortunes of the capitalist employers.'[651] Regardless, she still thought highly of Lenin, describing him in 'Soviet Russia as I Saw It In 1920' as charismatic, 'vividly vital and energetic.' She left their meeting feeling as though she had 'always known him.'[652] Lenin returned her admiration. He would make 10 major references to her in his writings on Britain – more than any other British Socialist committed to the cause.

Lenin was instrumental in Pankhurst's decision, reached reluctantly, to join the CPGB. The alliance, however, was short-lived, and she was expelled when she refused to hand over *The Dreadnought.* In 1921 she reshaped the paper again, making clear her disengagement with the Third International and the CPGB in an editorial, 'Our Point of View,' published on 14 September. The article confirmed her confusion and disappointment in the contradictory position that the Comintern assumed on Parliamentary democracy. Her anger was evident in her attack on the newly united Communist Party which she saw as a group of novice and untried revolutionaries 'apt to be amenable and trusting, if only they are not asked to leave their groove, or to worry their minds with new and startling thoughts.'[653] The role of *The Dreadnought*, and

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[649] V. Lenin, 'The Constituent Assembly', *Worker's Dreadnought*, 7 August 1920, *The British Newspaper Archives*, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0002236/19200807/001/0001?browse=true, accessed 31 July 2023, p.3

[650] V. Lenin, 'Minutes of the Second Congress of the Communist International', 6 August 1920, online: https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/2nd-congress/ch13.htm, accessed: 24 July 2021.

[651] 'Miss Sylvia Pankhurst and the Labour Party', *Gloucester Journal*, 24 June 1922, , p.5, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000532/19220624/067/0005, accessed 31 July 2023.

[652] Pankhurst, S., 'Soviet Russia as I saw it in 1920', p.5

[653] S. Pankhurst, 'Our Point of View', *Worker's Dreadnought*, 24 September 1921, p. 1, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0002236/19210924/003/0001, accessed 31 July 2023.

the people it represented was now to educate by pointing out the 'illogical' and 'contradictory' decision to use Parliamentary action instead of adhering to Lenin and the Comintern's initial position that 'Capitalism will be overthrown, not by a Parliamentary majority, but by actual force, by the industrial and armed power of the workers.'[654] In the broader sense, she advocated the importance of an 'independent organ' as a 'guard against the corruptions, opportunisms and tyrannies which are apt to attend on Parties, and especially Parties formed, as the Communist Party of Great Britain has been, from groups of conflicting tendencies.'[655]

In 1922, signalling a complete break, Pankhurst informed her readership that a new alliance had been formed with the German Communist Party, Kommunistische Arbeiter-Partei Deutschlands (KAPD), which was calling for a Fourth International. In an open letter to Lenin published on 4 November 1922, her anger and disappointment were laid bare:

> What have you done, O one-time trumpet of revolution? In your impatience of the slow awakening of far multitudes, you have turned your face from the world's lowly and enslaved. You have dabbled in the juggleries of Capitalist diplomacy; you have bartered and bargained with the destinies of the Russian proletariat; and broadcasted the message of your own desertion of Communism, wrapped up in tortuous and misleading casuistry, to the Communist movement throughout the world. By your subtle and specious arguments, and by the glamour of the Russian Revolution, through which you were regarded, you have diverted from the quest of Communism many who had been aroused by the call of Soviet Russia. Therefore, we find those who lately set out bearing the standard of Communism, now working to place in power a Party which openly declares its opposition to Communism.[656]

Letters from leftist activists like Herman Gorter took the place of speeches by Bolsheviks. In The World Revolution, featured on the front page of the 9 February 1924 edition of the *Dreadnought,* Gorter framed the Russian Revolution as a 'bourgeois-democratic one, that is to-day only a capitalist revolution.'[657] This was a far cry from the articles glorifying the Revolution that had inspired Pankhurst to refashion her periodical only a few years earlier. Pankhurst's complicated relationship with the Comintern was short-lived. Mannin and Cunard

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[654] Pankhurst, 'Our Point of View', p. 1
[655] Pankhurst, 'Our Point of View', p. 1
[656] S. Pankhurst, 'Open Letter to Lenin', *Worker's Dreadnought*, 4 November 1922, online: https://files.libcom.org/files/Open%20letter%20to%20Lenin%20-%20Sylvia%20Pankhurst.pdf, accessed: 21 August 2023.
[657] H. Gorter, 'The World Revolution', *Worker's Dreadnought*, 9 February 1924, p. 1, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0002236/19240209/002/0001?browse=true, accessed 27 July 2023.

weren't directly involved in the finer workings of the Comintern, which could account for their continued support for the Soviet Union well into the 1930s, and in Cunard's case, long after Stalin dismantled much of Lenin's work in favour of his own plans for the USSR.

Mannin would eventually become attuned to the changes that he was implementing, and the problems that were arising in the CPGB, but not without first falling victim to the propaganda filtering down from Moscow. In 1934, she travelled to Russia, following which she released *Forever Wandering* (1934) chronicling 'the most worthwhile journey' that she 'had ever made.' [658] There she found,

> a life that has purpose and meaning, where progress is a reality, not a newspaper catch-phrase; a life illuminated by an ideal – the ideal of the right to live, as opposed to merely existing, for every man. It is we of the capitalist Western world who are the barbarians, living savagely according to the law of the Survival of the Fittest which a corrupt and decaying system imposes.[659]

Her visit supported her view that a socialist Utopia was possible. She returned convinced that the Western world was en route to destruction, while Russia maintained an 'unswervingly steadfast adherence to an ideal which shall ultimately yield them Utopia – the kingdom, the power and the glory.'[660] Two short years later her perspective had altered radically.

In 1936 Mannin released *South to Samarkand*, a travel book that began with her intent to capture her most recent visit to the USSR objectively. It turned out to be so critical that she was forced to include an author's note explaining that her views were not shared by Donia Nachshen – a card-carrying Communist who had withdrawn her illustrations and photography for the book after reading the manuscript. Mannin also made it clear in the author's note that she was not a Communist (having turned at this stage in her politics to Anarcho-Syndicalism) and had no 'axe to grind for or against the USSR.'[661] At the same time, her disillusionment with Soviet Russia and communism was starting to take root, grounded in 'the Communist attitude which permits of no criticism of existing conditions in the USSR.'[662]

In the same year that she published *South to Samarkand,* Mannin had written 'Wither Russia?', an article for the ILP's *New Leader* to which she was a regular contributor. She had

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[658] E. Mannin, *Forever Wandering*, London, UK, Jarrolds, 1934, p. 210.
[659] Mannin, *Forever Wandering*, p. 210.
[660] Mannin, *Forever Wandering*, p. 210.
[661] E. Mannin, *South to Samarkand*, London, UK, Jarrolds, 1936, p. 12
[662] Mannin, *South to Samarkand*, p.19

joined the Party in 1933, a year after it disengaged from the Labour Party. In her view, the ILP was the 'only surviving revolutionary Socialist Party,' and she supported its brief alliance with the Third International and efforts to create a unified front against Fascism with the CPGB.[663] In the article, she listed Russia's political and social achievements under Bolshevism, alongside her 'bitter disappointment that she [Russia] should yet be so far from having achieved a classless society.' She backed her claim with the example of 'a commissar's charming palatial summer home – the family has also an apartment in Moscow' just a 'short walk' away from 'the workers of a State (not collective) farm' who 'live four to a squalid room.'[664]

The arguably balanced article was picked up by *Blackshirt*, a newspaper published by the British Union of Fascists (BUF), who exploited it out of context as anti-Soviet propaganda with the headline 'Ethel Mannin's Disillusion in Russia.' Mannin addressed this by correcting 'the misrepresentation in the columns of the official organ of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), the *Daily Worker*.'[665] In the 14 February 1936 edition, her article, 'Blackshirt Lies About Russia', appeared as a special feature in which she stood by her criticisms of Russia, reiterated her extensive praise for their 'magnificent' achievements, and explained how her words had been 'shamelessly taken…clean out of context.'[666]

The ILP's connection to the CPGB left Mannin with little reason to believe that the Party would not support her position. Instead, and to her dismay, the *Daily Worker* featured an editorial attacking her article and charging her with 'naïveté in not realising that [her] report of [her] visit to the Soviet Union was so much in line with current anti-Soviet propaganda that it was, for the *Blackshirt*, a chance too good to miss.' She was accused of writing 'with the outlook of a petty-bourgeois Socialist of a hundred years ago, unable to grasp the need for decisive transition measures towards a classless society.'[667] Similar accusations were levelled against her in a broadcast from Moscow. For Mannin, this was evidence that the CPGB could not distinguish between, as she put it, 'the malicious attacks of its enemies and the candours of its friends.'[668] Pankhurst had expressed similar views in 1921 when she identified the 'doctrine' of the CPGB as '"My Party, right or wrong"', which she said would lead 'inevitably to the

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[663] 'Women and Fascism Miss Ethel Mannin and Red House', *Eastbourne Gazette*, 27 April 1938, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001928/19380427/004/0001, accessed: 7 April 2023.
[664] E. Mannin, 'Inside Russia Whither Russia', *The Living Age*, 1 March p. 61 1936 (originally published in *New Leader*).
[665] Mannin, *South to Samarkand*, p.19
[666] Mannin, *South to Samarkand*, p.19
[667] Mannin, *South to Samarkand*, p. 20
[668] Mannin, *South to Samarkand*, p. 20

practice of putting party before principle.'[669] Pankhurst had cut ties when she suspected that the CPGB reflected Russia's position.

Mannin put aside her reservations, and continued to believe that the country had the potential to reach its goals, pointing to speeches delivered by Stalin in which he admitted that there was still work to be done. *South to Samarkand* is laced with contradictions, and written as if Mannin was struggling to reconcile what she had seen with what she believed. By the time she wrote *Women and the Revolution,* her resolve was firm, and her disillusionment with Russia complete. Stalin's work did not sit well with her and her anti-imperialist politics. The Soviet Policy on Nationalities (*коренизация*, implemented in the 1920s), drafted by Stalin when he was still a devoted follower of Lenin's vision for International Socialism, was based on the idea that all nations were entitled to self-determination, including nations that had been annexed during the expansion of the Russian Empire.[670] The policy had its benefits, but there was a darker side to it that would pave the way for the events after Lenin's death.

Self-determination did not necessarily mean independent national or cultural preservation. As Francine Hirsch calls it, an ideology of 'state sponsored evolution' was Russia's version of a 'civilising mission, entwining a Marxist conception of historical development with European anthropological theories about cultural evolution.'[671] This entailed the categorisation of ethnic groups, with some identified as in need of civilising, and others as the 'building blocks of nations with the State constructing modern nationalities as an essential step on the road to socialism with these nations merging with the advent of communism, constructing a new ethnicised modernity.'[672] The events that unfolded in Ukraine six years after Stalin's rise to power were an example of how this policy could be corrupted with the total abolition of any semblance of self-determination.

The *коренизация* was abolished, and Ukraine was besieged by the *Голодомо́р* (*Holodomor,* a combination of the Ukrainian word *Голодомо́* – hunger – and *морити* – murder). Anne Applebaum makes the convincing argument that Stalin deliberately starved the people of Ukraine to gain complete control over the country and eradicate any notion of Ukrainian Nationalism or challenge to the Soviet Union. This took place between 1931 and

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[669] Pankhurst, 'Our Point of View', p. 1
[670] D. R. Marples, *Stalinism in Ukraine in the 1940s*, London: The Macmillan Press, 1992, p.4
[671] Qtd in: I. Law and N. Zakharov, 'Race and Racism in Eastern Europe: Becoming White, Becoming Western', in: P. Essed, K. Farquharson, and K. Pillay et al (eds), *Relating Worlds of Racism: Dehumanisation, Belonging, and the Normativity of European Whiteness,* Cham, CI, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 119
[672] I. Law and N. Zakharov, 'Race and Racism in Eastern Europe: Becoming White, Becoming Western', in: P. Essed, K. Farquharson, and K. Pillay et al (eds), *Relating Worlds of Racism: Dehumanisation, Belonging, and the Normativity of European Whiteness,* Cham, CI, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 117

1934.[673] In 1934, a year after the *Голодомо́* began to dissipate, and the same year that Mannin had vehemently praised Russia, Cecily Hamilton published *Modern Russia As Seen By An Englishwoman*.[674] Mannin, quoting Hamilton on the subject of Ukraine in *Women and the Revolution*, posited that 'the emancipation of a people, both men and women, should come from within, from themselves; it should not be imposed on them from without, "for their own good", which savours too much of the British in India and Africa, and Mussolini's "civilising" campaign to the Abyssinians.'[675] The weakening of Ukraine by the *Голодомо́р,* alongside the Soviet Union's systematic and violent repression of the 'Ukrainian intellectual and political class,' had amounted to 'the Sovietisation of Ukraine.'[676] Stalin had justified the occupation by claiming that it was part of the war against Western Capitalism, and for the benefit of the Ukrainian people – a view that Mannin had initially accepted, writing in *South to Samarkand* that 'the horrors of the famines that followed the peasant resistance to collectivisation, will have been justified; the victims of civil war and famine will truly have died that future generations might inherit the earth forever.'[677]

For Mannin to accuse Russia of colonial practices in Ukraine, akin to those in Africa, India, and Abyssinia, was a pointed and justifiably vicious attack that recalled the central position that the liberation of colonised nations had once held in the mandate for International Socialism. Speaking more broadly, and no longer compelled to extensively list Russia's virtues, Mannin remarked that 'had Lenin lived it might well have progressed from Socialism to Communism, faithful to those Marxist doctrines Lenin upheld.'[678] Instead, she found that Russia,

> failed to achieve a classless society because of the forces of bureaucracy – the development through Stalinism of those tendencies which Lenin himself feared, as we have seen – and a new bourgeoisie of better-paid and privileged workers is arising as a result of this bureaucracy. The dictatorship of the proletariat is being succeeded…by a dictatorship of bureaucrats headed by a dangerous megalomaniac whose one ambition now seems to be to execute or imprison all who did outstanding work in the making of the original revolution.[679]

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[673] A. Applebaum, *Red Famine, Stalin's War on Ukraine*, 2017, London, UK, Penguin Books (eBook), Apple Books.
[674] C. Hamilton, *Modern Russia As Seen By An Englishwoman*, New York, US, E.P. Dutton, 1934.
[675] Mannin, *Women and the Revolution*, p.144
[676] Applebaum, *Red Famine*
[677] E. Mannin, *South to Samarkand*, p.22
[678] Mannin, *Women and the Revolution*, pp. 293-294
[679] Mannin, *Women and the Revolution*, pp. 293-294

Mannin's words call to mind Pankhurst's fears that bureaucracy would overthrow the core principles of the Comintern. In old age, Pankhurst wrote a letter to Teresa Billington-Greig, a fellow Socialist, in which she reflected on her experience of Russia in the interwar period. She had 'believed that Russia, almost a world, could establish socialism within its own borders.' [680] It had been vital to her that Russia succeeded in its aims to create a prosperous and happy society 'both in the interests of the home population and to render socialism attractive to the rest of the world.' [681] According to her, they ultimately failed in this task. While it had recruited some to the cause, their ruthlessness and propaganda estranged others, and she had 'lost sympathy with their methods.'[682]

What differentiates Cunard from Pankhurst and Mannin is that she was primarily concerned with how racial equality, not class equality, had been implemented in Russia. She wanted to see a country that professed to welcome people of all races as equals, or as George Padmore described it, display a 'natural kindness' toward people of colour.[683] When Cunard met Padmore, he was still an essential member of the Communist Party who, following a trip to Russia in 1930, had become the head of the Negro Bureau of Communist Trade Unions, helping to organise the First International Negro Workers Congress.[684] In 1933, following Hitler's takeover of power in Germany, his position changed with the Party's attempts to garner Western sympathy and support for Russia's anti-fascist efforts by downplaying the anti-colonial struggle. In 1934, when he refused to toe the party line, he was expelled and accused of 'petty bourgeois nationalist deviation.'[685]

Cunard was confused and upset by the events that were unfolding: 'On the one hand Padmore, one of the few people I reverenced for his integrity and very being' and 'on the other hand that this should come from members of the ideology (Communism) that I admired also entirely and wholly.'[686] Padmore's expulsion was insufficient to shake Cunard's allegiance to the Soviet Union, which she visited the following year, in 1935. She joined several friends, including Langston Hughes, Louis Aragon, Eugene Gordon and William Patterson, all of

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[680] Qtd in: S. Harrison, *Sylvia Pankhurst: The Rebellious Suffragette, East Yorkshire*, UK, Golden Guides Press, 2004 (eBook)
[681] Qtd in: S. Harrison, *Sylvia Pankhurst: The Rebellious Suffragette*
[682] Qtd in: S. Harrison, *Sylvia Pankhurst: The Rebellious Suffragette*.
[683]Qtd in: L. Gordon, *Nancy Cunard: Heiress, Muse, Political Idealist*, New York, US, Columbia University Press, 2007, p.205
[684] Gordon, *Nancy Cunard: Heiress, Muse, Political Idealist*, p.205
[685] A. Chisholm, *Nancy Cunard a Biography*, Middlesex, UK, Pengiun Books, 1981, p. 297
[686] Qtd in: A. Chisholm, *Nancy Cunard a Biography*, Middlesex, UK, Pengiun Books, 1981, p. 298

whom had written for *Negro.* The anthology had been well-received in Russia, and there was talk of a translation.[687] Racial equality was the crux of her visit. Her narrow focus meant that she was not exposed to the complexities of class, and therefore spared the disappointment that Mannin and Pankhurst felt relative to the failed nationwide dictatorship of the proletariat.

The USSR appeared to Cunard as fully progressive, and her visit confirmed the views that she expressed in the Forward to *Negro,* that 'To-day in Russia alone is the Negro a free man, a 100 per cent. equal.'[688] Additionally, her perception of the USSR was influenced and supported by the first-hand accounts from black activists like James W. Ford, and others who had spent time there. Whether Cunard, like Mannin, ever became aware of the reality of the 'civilising mission' in Russia is unclear. She certainly wasn't aware of it when compiling *Negro*, writing that 'Soviet Russia, encompassing some 130 different racial groups, has once and for all solved the " problem " of races, turning instilled conflicts into co-operation, wiping out the false concept of "inferiority."'[689] British and American Communists were aware of The Soviet Policy on Nationalities but viewed it in a positive light. In his essay for *Negro*, 'Communism and the Negro', Ford credited the policy with the liberation of nationalities oppressed under the Tsarist regime and Capitalism 'resulting in the establishment of the Soviet Union as a voluntary union of all races, colors and nations on the basis of proletarian solidarity.' In keeping with the propaganda justifying occupations he wrote that the policy was 'directed to the rapid development of industry and culture in these backward nations.'[690]

Cunard's support for Russia continued long after Stalin began to dismantle the work that Lenin had done in the service of International Socialism. In 1942 she privately printed a limited edition run of 100 portfolios containing Surrealist etchings by John Banting (her co-editor), John Piper, Mary Wykeham, C. Salisbury, and others, alongside her poems, and poems by Cecily Mackworth, James Law Forsyth, and J. F. Hendry. *Salvo for Russia* was the only collaboration between Surrealists and Marxists produced between 1941 and 1942. The publication was sold in aid of the Comforts Fund for Women and Children of Soviet Russia following the German invasion of 1941.[691] The unforeseen attack had come a week after the Soviet news agency Tass claimed that military movements in the East were 'nothing but clumsy

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[687] H. Ford, 'Introduction', N. Cunard (ed), *Negro Anthology Made By Nancy Cunard 1931-1933*, London, UK, Wishart & Co., 1934, p. xxv
[688] N. Cunard, 'Forward', N. Cunard (ed), *Negro Anthology Made By Nancy Cunard 1931-1933*, London, UK, Wishart & Co., 1934, p.xxxii
[689] Cunard, 'Forward', p.xxxii
[690] J.W. Ford, 'Communism and the Negro', N. Cunard (ed), *Negro Anthology Made By Nancy Cunard 1931-1933*, London, UK, Wishart & Co., 1934, p.151
[691] M. Remy, *Surrealism in Britain*, London, UK, Routledge, 1999, p. 224

propaganda by forces hostile to the USSR and Germany and interested in an extension of the war.'[692]

The efficiency of the invasion, and the resultant mass capitulation of demoralised Russian troops, called for an intervention to restore national pride and morale. As David Welch put it, in terms that emphasise the power of narratives in times of conflict, Stalin 'mobilized the Soviet media for total war.'[693] On 6 November 1941, he delivered his famous 'Holy Russia' speech commemorating the 24th anniversary of the Revolution. Cunard's poem, 'Russia – The USSR' appears to recall his speech, and reference imagery in propaganda posters that rallied the troops and promoted national pride:

> I see a man standing sharp against skyline, a woman on the
> horizon,
> Born in vast October, guarding the East and West of life.
> It is here they say: "No citadel we cannot take in the end,"
> Was it Lenin? It is all. This is the USSR,
> The giant's come of age in the blood bath; the giant arms
> him with hurricanes
> Of driving steel, and with little snowflakes
> So close so close – and so unending; arms him with emptiness,
> Hunger, and the burnt acreage of near-infinity,
> With great leaders, partisans, galloping heroes,
> With moujik wickedness, with Death's inexhaustible tricks –
> Ah, Death's both Slav and Tartar.
> The giant slept so long in the world, awakened in Russia;
> You had forgotten his name, his old simple name which is:
> Truth.
> He stirs,
> And the false-measure half-tone vices fall away.
> He moves,
> And between YES and NO pass the armies of pristine values.
> He stands,
> And a forest of hands sweeps towards him; not a race lacking.
> He arms,
> He is Truth fully armed now – millennium is on its way.
> Vnoushenie, inspiration – you giant that gives us our life again

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[692] Qtd in: D. Welch, *World War II Propaganda: Analysing the Art of Persuasion During Wartime*, California, US, ABC-CLIO, 2017, p. 71
[693] D. Welch, *World War II Propaganda: Analysing the Art of Persuasion During Wartime*, California, US, ABC-CLIO, 2017, p. 71

> All of the agony is going to turn into something else
> When the time is won to turn.
> It is then we shall honour our dead and our martyrs
> With revenge, and with tears as eternal as amber; then will
> we drink to them
> With laughter too, knowing they will be seeing us, having
> helped us,
> Knowing they will want it so, ordering our laughter.
> Laughter, comforting scarlet of strength, plenty, comradeship.
> BUT TODAY
> The only reds on the snow; bayonet red.
> The next colour, they'll call it: Peace. Let us wish it:
> World's Peace.
> Peace and Victory.[694]

Lazar Markovich Lissitzky's poster, *Everything for the Front,* is an exemplar of the aesthetics associated most strongly with Soviet propaganda produced during World War II, which often displayed a man and/or woman, eyes and face tilted up in pride, against the background of a military parade, city or sunrise.[695] Cunard evoked propagandist imagery in the poem's first two lines, with the man standing sharp against a skyline, and a woman on the horizon. From there, her poem appears to draw on the statements that Stalin made in his Red October speech, beginning with a reference to the Socialist Revolution – 'Born in vast October' – and moving, as Stalin did, on to the battles that Russia had overcome in the past with a reminder of the circumstances under which the country celebrated its first anniversary.

In Stalin's words, having lost three-quarters of Russia to invasions, 'We had no allies, we had no Red Army – we had only just begun to create it; there was a shortage of food, of armaments, of clothing for the Army…But we did not become despondent, we did not lose heart… In the fire of war we forged the Red Army', animated by 'The spirit of the great Lenin.'[696] Cunard captures the reclaiming of lost territory, and the unifying spirit of Lenin with 'No citadel we cannot take in the end/ Was it Lenin? It is all. This is the USSR...' The 'great

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[694] N. Cunard, 'Russia – The USSR', N. Cunard and J. Banting (eds), *Salvo for Russia: A Limited Edition of New Poems, Etchings and Engravings Produced in Aid of the Comforts Fund for Women and Children of Soviet Russia,* London, UK, Privately Printed, 1942.
[695] E.L. Lissitzky, *Everything for the Front*, 1942, Russia: published under articles 5 and 6 of Law No. 231-FZ of the Russian Federation, 2006, opensource [online photograph] https://viewer.rsl.ru/ru/rsl01009395044?page=1&rotate=0&theme=white, accessed: 22 July 2023.
[696] J. Stalin, 'Speech at the Red Army Parade on the Red Square', Moscow, Russia, 7 November 1941, Stalin Archive, *Marxist Internet Archive*, online: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1941/11/07.htm, accessed: 22 July 2023.

ancestors' that Stalin referenced – 'Alexander Nevsky, Dimitry Donskoy, Kuzma Minin, Dimitry Pozharsky, Alexander Suvorov and Mikhail Kutuzov' – were encapsulated in the line 'With great leaders, partisans, galloping heroes.' The giant named Truth and the armies of pristine values were 'a force capable of destroying the plundering hordes of German invaders,' thereby freeing the 'enslaved peoples of Europe who have fallen under the yoke of the German invaders' – guarding the East and West of life.[697] Stalin ended his speech with the battle cry, 'Under the banner of Lenin, forward to victory!' The poem concludes with 'Peace and Victory.'

Cunard's loyalty to and admiration for the USSR was unwavering even when confronted with incidents like Padmore's expulsion from the Party for his commitment to a cause that she was famously devoted to. She was silent when the Soviet Union signed the Nazi-Soviet pact in 1939 but quick to jump publicly to Russia's aid when it was repositioned at the forefront of anti-Fascism after the German invasion. Her inability to make overly complex political connections lay in an unwillingness to relinquish the romantic and utopian ideals that she associated with communism. Chisholm provides an account of how Cunard approached 'ideas' which is useful for understanding how someone so politically radical could be simultaneously naïve and uncritical:

> She was genuinely puzzled by Padmore's problems because argument about ideas was foreign to her nature. Her own loyalties, once formed, were undeviating, because she was blind to everything except what she perceived as right and wrong. In the 1930s communism was the obvious guiding light. To believe anything else would have seemed to Nancy stupid, or wicked. Anything that threatened this view she either rejected totally or regarded as an unfortunate misunderstanding.[698]

In many ways, her narrow, laser-sharp focus served her activism well. In others she remained, whether wilfully or not, oblivious to the reality of some of the situations in which she found herself. The two often combined in her support for the global anti-racist, anti-colonial and anti-imperialist efforts in the United States, Africa and elsewhere.

It took Mannin, and especially Cunard, longer than Pankhurst to realise the shortcomings of the Comintern. Still, all three eventually recognised that it had failed to meet expectations under Stalin's leadership. The speed with which Pankhurst caught on to and resisted the politics of the Comintern and the USSR challenged the idea that Socialists followed

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[697] Stalin, 'Speech at the Red Army Parade on the Red Square'
[698] Chisholm, *Nancy Cunard a Biography*, p. 299

Lenin, and then Stalin, blindly. Mannin took a likewise critical approach, and while Cunard's romantic notions of communism clouded her judgement for a time, and she was taken in by Stalin's propaganda, the activism that she was engaged in was not conducted under instruction from Moscow. Mannin wanted to believe that Stalin had good intentions but her sceptical nature and personal experiences with the CPGB prevented her from simply taking him at his word.

Pankhurst's critique of Russia's 'ruthlessness and propaganda' in her letter to Billington-Greig is evidence that she saw International Socialist propaganda and Stalinist propaganda as diametrical. When Pankhurst resisted the Comintern, and the mandates handed down from Moscow, she did not abandon utopian socialism, nor did she cease including it in her literary activism and newspapers. This suggests that she viewed it as a kind of counterpropaganda to what was being promoted by the Comintern. Taking a similar path, Mannin's commitment to the utopian socialism of the late 19th Century intensified after she became disillusioned with the USSR. Although she worked with Communists, Cunard never joined the Communist Party. She chose a politics of her own making grounded in International Socialist ideals, and specifically the utopian idea that art, politics and community were intertwined.

Anti-communist scholars insist that it was impossible to be a Communist or Socialist without participating, if only tangentially, in the atrocities committed by the USSR. In other words, that the fundamental basis of communism and socialism was violence and deceit, and the only way to resist it was to abandon it entirely. They have chosen to supplant utopian socialism with the perverted utopianism of Stalin's pseudo-communism despite evidence that the politics that Pankhurst, Mannin, Cunard and others were committed to was alive, active, and contemporaneous to Stalinism on a global scale.

## The Earthly Paradise

Cunard's pamphlet, *Black Man, White Ladyship,* written in response to her mother's and British society's adverse reaction to her relationship with Jazz musician Henry Crowder, secured her notoriety in racial politics. Crowder's descriptions of American racism had enlightened her to the 'Colour Question' and, as she put it, presented her 'personally with its CLASH or SHOCK

aspect.'[699] She became determined to assist in any way that she could to abolish racial inequality. Through the pamphlet Cunard became acquainted with McKay who thought it worthy of publication but wrote in *A Long Way From Home* (1937) that he 'did not admire the style and tone of representation.'[700] Barely a paragraph in, Cunard made sure that the reader was aware that she had a 'Negro friend, a very close friend (and a great many other Negro friends in France, England and America).'[701] She followed this with 'Nothing extraordinary in that' as if to signal her difference from those, including her mother, who responded to the idea of having a 'Negro friend' with open hostility, and blatant racism that included attempts to separate her and Crowder upon their arrival in London.

At the same time, the pamphlet contained a sample of the type of journalism that would benefit the cause. Cunard provided a brief overview of the history of slavery and racism in the USA and even went so far as to launch an attack on her beloved G.M. by recounting a conversation in which despite 'a whole long life of "free" thought, "free" writing, anti-bigotry of all kinds, with, his engrossment in human nature, after the injustice of the Boer war', he revealed himself to hold 'race or colour prejudice.'[702] The problem with the pamphlet is the same one that would limit Cunard's ability to approach the 'Colour Question' with the introspection she needed to fully comprehend her place in the fight for racial justice. She did not see herself as an outsider in African American communities which came through in the style and tone of representation that McKay found unsettling. Despite his reservations he and Cunard corresponded for some time. When she needed someone to help her navigate Jamaica while collecting materials for *Negro*, he sent her to stay with his older brother.

McKay was initially enthusiastic about the anthology, writing in a letter to Langston Hughes, one of Cunard's close friends, that he hoped it would be a 'revelation' and 'inspiration' for people of colour.[703] At the time he was trying to finish a book in Morocco, had 'come to the point of breakdown,' and was struggling financially. He wrote an article for *Negro,* at Cunard's request, which she praised highly. However, when McKay requested payment for his article, her attitude changed.

According to McKay, Cunard told him that she had 'suffered and sacrificed a fortune for Negroes,' and 'was doing the book for the benefit of the Negro race and she had thought

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[699] Cunard, 'Black Man and White Ladyship', p.181
[700] C. McKay, *A Long Way From Home*, London, UK, Rutgers University Press, 2007, p. 261
[701] Cunard, 'Black Man and White Ladyship', p.181
[702] N. Cunard, 'Black Man and White Ladyship', p.195
[703] Qtd in: L. Gordon, *Nancy Cunard: Heiress, Muse, Political Idealist*, New York, US, Columbia University Press, 2007, p. 163.

that every Negro would be glad to contribute something for nothing.'[704] Mckay did not feel any moral obligation to contribute and requested the return of his article. Cunard said that she would return it, but only after sampling sections of it for her book – a compromise that he refused. In solidarity, Mckay's brother withdrew the article that he was going to write for the anthology. At that point, and as Mckay recalled it, she went from telling him in her letters from Jamaica that she liked his brother's face, and appreciated his hospitality to 'not [liking] his face anymore. She wrote that he was big and fat.'[705] McKay, calling her a 'modern white aristocrat,' wrote that 'in spite of her ultra-modern attitude toward life, apparently she still clung to the antiquated and aristocratic and very British idea that artists should perform for noble and rich people for prestige instead of remuneration.'[706]

Cunard's statement that she had 'suffered and sacrificed a fortune for Negroes' was not entirely untrue. She gave up her inheritance, and was persecuted in some ways for her commitment to achieving racial equality – as Chisholm wrote, 'there were times when her activities were of interest to the authorities, especially those concerned with communist conspiracy and anticolonial agitation'[707] – but the sameness that she sought to cultivate between herself and the people that she was helping was unfounded, and has drawn fair criticism. What Colby calls the 'spectacle of Cunard' has contributed to the tension that exists in scholarship torn between the good that she did as an activist, journalist and poet fighting for racial justice, and her at times problematic perception of the lived realities of minority groups in America and Britain, and the subjugated people in colonised countries.

Moynagh read the texts that Cunard produced for *Negro* as 'a kind of political tourism' that exhibited 'the ambivalence of the tourist's gaze even as it claims partisanship in the causes it strives to represent.'[708] Cunard's obsession with race and African aesthetics 'played out by her polemical writing…and photographs of Cunard that display the white, female body working in proximity to black men' has further contributed to narratives questioning her ability to fully comprehend her position as a privileged, white, British woman.[709] In a famous series of photographs captured in 1927 by Man Ray she is depicted with her arms stacked to the elbows with African ivory bracelets from her personal collection. Like many Modernists, she had a 'feeling for things African,' especially sculpture. William Atkinson writes that 'in using Africa

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[704] McKay, *A Long Way From Home*, p. 262
[705] McKay, *A Long Way From Home*, p. 262
[706] McKay, *A Long Way From Home*, p. 262
[707] Chisholm, *Nancy Cunard a Biography*, p. 417
[708] M. Moynagh, *Political Tourism and its Texts*, Toronto, US, University of Toronto Press, 2008, p. 33
[709] Colby, *Staging Modernist Lives*

as a topos, or source of imagery, modernism was drawing from the well to which late Victorian capitalism went.'[710] Colonization took place on multiple levels outside of territorial occupation, and the pillaging of resources for economic gain: 'Africa became an important mental colony, invested with and settled by numerous myths and figures of considerable semiotic vigour.'[711]

Not all Modernists mined Africa for its aesthetics. In *The Waves*, Woolf explored how the development of the individual was impacted by a British national identity premised on Imperialism. In the italicised overture to the third section of the book, 'The waves drummed on the shore…like turbaned men with poisoned assegais who, whirling their arms on high, advance upon the feeding flocks, the white sheep.'[712] Woolf describes an uprising against the 'white sheep,' the colonisers, 'feeding' off the land that doesn't belong to them. At the end of the book when Bernard addresses the reader directly he remarks 'I met you once, I think, on board a ship going to Africa.'[713] Earlier in the narrative, Bernard admits that 'A journey to Rome is the limit of [his] travelling.'[714] Bernard is not an unreliable narrator in this moment. He is emphasising his, and the reader's complicity as 'sheep' blindly accepting the narrative of the British Empire. Even if they have not travelled to Africa their nationality implicates them in the colonial project. They are among the feeding flocks benefitting from the exploitation of other nations.

Woolf's critique was sophisticated and displayed a level of awareness missing from her attempts at class commentary. The problem with *The Waves* is the same one that more than a few Modernists ran into in their efforts to write political texts – it was oblique. In Mannin's words, Woolf was 'too intellectual, too subtle and complicated and remote from reality.'[715] Where Woolf succeeded, however, Lawrence failed by unironically 'drawing from the well to which late Victorian capitalism went.' In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Michaelis has 'the silent, enduring beauty of a carved ivory Negro mask,' and 'a timelessness which the Buddha aims at, and which Negroes express sometimes without ever aiming at it; something old, old, and acquiescent in the race!'[716] Lawrence's description of Michaelis shares disturbing similarities with Cunard's feeling for all things African which extended uncomfortably to her relationship

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[710] W. Atkinson, 'A Common Topos in Lawrence and Eliot', *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 37, no. 1, 1991, p. 22
[711] Atkinson, 'A Common Topos in Lawrence and Eliot', p. 22
[712] V. Woolf, *The Waves*, London, UK, Penguin Books, 1992, p. 55
[713] Woolf, *The Waves*, p.183
[714] Woolf, *The Waves*, p.166
[715] Mannin, *Young in the Twenties*, p.101
[716] D.H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Florence, ITLY, Orioli / International Collectors Library reprint, 1928, pp.20-21

with Crowder. She described his personality as a manifestation of those 'anonymous old statues.' She addressed him in 'Dordogne', a poem written in France after the Spanish Civil War:

> *Do you remember, Henry*
> We were there that 1930, and I made you work;
> After the day's bucket brought in from the pump
> You sat at the piano the oxen had dragged from Martel,
> Composed Henry-Music and were loved by the people of Creysse:
> "A brown man, a beautiful Negro, in a red and blue car..dropped from the sky... Now look how he plays" they said, and we all drank together at the inn.
> We didn't look so much at the world then, that pre-Marchukuo year,
> The village was the scene, not death's international roustabouts.[717]

As a musician he spoke to what she called her 'sympathy with the Afro-American which began with music.'[718] She wrote that she had dreams about 'black Africa' with 'Africans dancing and drumming' around her, and she was 'one of them, though still white, knowing mysteriously enough, how to dance in their own manner.'[719] Her contributions to *Negro* were punctuated with photographs of her in Harlem and the Caribbean, situated as a central figure among the people that she was writing about.

Cunard wasn't alone in letting her imagination, personal feelings, and ideals cloud her perceptions. In 1926, Pankhurst published a 638-page study, *India and the Earthly Paradise*, which argued for Indian nationalism free from colonialism, and expanded on her fascination with Hindu religion and philosophy, politics and social organisation. She had travelled to India on an expedition likely inspired by Walter Crane's visit to the country, and his travel book published in 1907. The Earthly Paradise in her title was an apparent reference to Crane's Angel of Freedom guarding the gates to Eden. Whatever her grievances with the Third International, Lenin's approach to the colonial question influenced her greatly. He had advanced the idea that the only way that revolutionary Internationalism could be achieved was by supporting the anti-imperial struggle and the colonised nations' right to self-determination.

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[717] N. Cunard, *The Poems of Nancy Cunard From the Bodleian Library*, Nottingham, UK, Trent Editions, 2005, p.70
[718] N. Cunard, *Grand Man: Memories of Norman Douglas*, London, UK, Secker and Warburg, 1954, p. 140
[719] Cunard, *Grand Man*, p. 140

In his Draft Theses on National and Colonial Questions For The Second Congress Of The Communist International, Lenin emphasised the importance of uniting 'the whole mass of the working population in the struggle against the bourgeoisie,' and called on all communist parties to 'render direct aid to the revolutionary movements among the dependent and underprivileged nations (for example, Ireland, the American Negroes, etc.) and in the colonies.' Complete victory over Capitalism, he concluded, could not be 'won unless the proletariat and, following it, the mass of working people in all countries and nations throughout the world voluntarily strive for alliance and unity.'[720] Where Pankhurst and Lenin differed was idealism. He was pragmatic to a fault, and it was this that would ultimately lead to the changes in the Comintern that alienated Pankhurst. She remained committed to the realisation of a socialist Utopia.

Pankhurst's idealism came through in *The Earthly Paradise,* which traced the history of India before British occupation. She uncovered stages in Indian history which she identified as an 'old Communism …obtained even under the greatest ignorance and the bare and difficult conditions of primitive times.' The 'old Communism,' as Pankhurst imagined it, provided a blueprint for the type of society that Socialists should strive for. More importantly, for her, it returned communism to its purest form. Russia, she said, had hauled 'down the flag of Communism,' and abandoned 'the cause of the emancipation of the workers.'[721] It was therefore necessary to seek new inspiration for the revolution.

Her frustration, which she elaborated on in *The Earthly Paradise*, was partly with Lenin's dismissal of the early utopian ideas first put down by Marx as the 'attempts of the proletariat to attain its own ends, made in times of universal excitement, when feudal society was being overthrown.'[722] In her poetry, Pankhurst often relied on symbolism to evoke Utopia. An exception is a poem, 'In the Future', preserved at the International Institute of Social History, in which she explicitly outlined her hopes for a perfect society.[723] The prose poem was the draft, or perhaps adapted for her creative editorial in the second volume of *Germinal*, where it was published without its title. The undated folder containing the draft, labelled 'Writings', also contains poems that were included in *Writ on Cold Slate,* and others signed 'Richard

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[720] V. Lenin, 'Draft Theses on National and Colonial Questions For The Second Congress Of The Communist International', *Collected Works*, vol. 31, Moscow, Russia, Progress Publishers, 1965, pp.144-151
[721] Pankhurst, S., 'Open Letter to Lenin'
[722] Marx, and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, p.253
[723] S. Pankhurst, 'In the Future', N.d., Sylvia Pankhurst Papers, folder 177, ARCH01029.177, International Institute of Social History, [online photograph] https://hdl.handle.net/10622/ARCH01029.177, accessed: 24 November 2023

Marsden' (her pseudonym) so it is safe to assume that it was written between 1920 and 1924 – the period in which Pankhurst distanced herself from the Comintern. The title and the opening lines suggest that she was writing in opposition to the rigid anti-utopian approach to building a socialist society:

> Others have sung of the States; but I sing of the peoples. I sing the peoples united; I sing the peoples creative; the people alert without master; of themselves they are master. For the joy of creating, the power of creating, they husband their strength, O the peoples creative. [724]

Creativity for Pankhurst extended to the imagining and building of a new world with 'wonderful brain, with hand, patient serving':

> I sing of the land will arise when the slums are destroyed and the palaces levelled; the songs will be sung and the halls will be builded, the seeds will be sown and the garden of flowers will be planted; the life of the people, the gay wealth of harvests; O life of abundance that moveth with gladness, where stint is unknown. [725]

The poem contained the basic ideas outlined in the passage from Marx's *Critique*, ending 'to everyone according to his needs.' When 'stint is unknown,' and the world is free from capitalist oppression, the individual will develop 'the power of creating,' and grow through knowledge ascending':

> As we stir ye, from out ye, old leaves that are fallen, new life is arising; from ye, the decaying; abundance preparing; with vigour endowing the peoples who follow the earth to inhabit, in the life of the future; that life of adventure our hopes and our love and our striving create.[726]

While Lenin and others argued that 'communities which still practise [the old Communism] must be crushed between the mill-stones of capitalist exploitation…before they can begin their progress towards the new Communism,' Pankhurst believed that the dismissal of utopian socialism was 'counsel well-nigh of despair.'[727] The idea that 'Communism could only be

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[724] S. Pankhurst, 'In the Future', N.d., Sylvia Pankhurst Papers, folder 177, ARCH01029.177, International Institute of Social History, online: https://hdl.handle.net/10622/ARCH01029.177, accessed: 24 November 2023.
[725] S. Pankhurst, 'In the Future'
[726] S. Pankhurst, 'In the Future'
[727] S. Pankhurst, *India and the Earthly Paradise*, Bombay, India, Princess Publishing House, 1926, pp.83-84

achieved internationally and can by no means be reached until all parts of the world are prepared to establish it simultaneously' would ultimately delay the process of liberating independent communities from Capitalism. [728]

Pankhurst's firm adherence to her utopian vision coloured her impressions of India, which were undeniably, to borrow Romero's term, 'romantic Communist.[729] She called for a return to village councils based on Russian Communes like the ones that she had described in 'Co-Operative Housekeeping' and 'Communism and its Tactics' (1922)[730] to achieve 'the world-wide abundance, mutuality and fraternity of the Earthly Paradise,' which she associated with India's past. The paradise that she was describing, however, was a fiction based on an incomplete understanding of Indian history, society and the effects of colonialism. The pre-colonial paradise in her book was not divided by caste, religion or tradition. Instead, according to her, these divisions were a product of Imperialism. She highlighted the hypocrisy of 'nationalists, who demand the abolition of the colour bar which Europeans have created against their race; but are themselves zealous upholders of the most exclusive caste and sex distinctions' and the 'reformers who wish to improve the lot of the untouchables, but by no means to abolish untouchability, or who are willing to abolish untouchability, but cling to the other distinctions of caste.'[731] What she failed to recognise is that the caste system had been part of Indian culture for over 2500 years.[732]

Indians were divided into four Varna categories: Shudras (servants), Vaishyas (agriculturalists), Kshatriyas (warriors) and Brahmins (priests). The Dalits (untouchables) existed on the margins outside the four Varna categories.[733] Imperial powers exploited these divisions but were not responsible for their construction. This was a misconception that, as Ben Heath has shown, arose out of the idea that the caste system was 'part of the content of what British colonialists generalised as Hinduism,' when in reality they 'invented the general label given to this content,' and not 'any of the actual content of Hinduism itself.'[734] The conflict-

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[728] Pankhurst, *India and the Earthly Paradise*, pp.83-84
[729] P. Romero, *E. Sylvia Pankhurst*, New Haven, USA, Yale University Press, 1987, p. 180
[730] Pankhurst described the Russian communes in 1922 as 'efficient because…it gives every worker a responsible share in the common effort, and thereby encourages the co-operative impulse.'
S. Pankhurst., *Communism and its Tactics*, Arizona, USA, Prism Key Press, 2011, p. 34
[731] Pankhurst, *India and the Earthly Paradise*, p 162
[732] The caste system is mentioned in the Rigveda. The Vedas are among some of the world's oldest religious texts, and formed the foundations for many Indian religions.
[733] The caste system in India persists today. The Dalits continue to face violence and discrimination, the constant threat of humiliation and limited if any access to the human rights and privileges of their fellow citizens.
[734] B. Heath, 'The Impact of European Colonialism on the Indian Caste System', *E-International Relations*, online: https://www.e-ir.info/pdf/30280, accessed: 19 December 2021

free society that Pankhurst imagined might have existed in some form, but it would have involved myriad religions, cultures, sampradayas and castes. In pursuit of proof that a perfect society was possible, she missed the significance of religion and the religious laws that would have governed the communal living that she glorified.

This is not to say that Imperialism did not fundamentally change India. After the war, Mannin wrote that she witnessed the 'bad heritage of the British' when she embarked on a 'long secretly hoped for' journey to India to see the country 'the hard way', without the comfort of first-class travel which would 'set them [her and her husband] apart from India's masses.'[735] She found the experience unbearable at times. In a letter to a friend, she summarised her experience as 'Dust, glare, flies, brown faces, white clothes, black heads, bare feet, hot-coloured flowers, gaudy *saris*, tall palms, lepers, beggars, ornate architecture, hovels, people lying on the pavements, people squatting, life lived on the streets, and crowds, crowds, crowds.'[736] She found it difficult to be anything other than 'interested' in a 'country in which eye and ear are so habitually offended…it is a country full of lovely things – temples, palaces, flowers, trees, landscapes – but even in the jungles this terrible poverty reaches out to the consciousness and every tiny grass-hut village.' [737] This was not the Earthly Paradise that Pankhurst had hoped for once the British had been ousted.

To her credit, Pankhurst was generally politically astute, willing to learn, and more importantly, deferred to those directly affected by the causes that she took on as an activist. This was especially true of how she conducted herself as editor of the *Dreadnought*. Claude McKay recalled that 'Her weekly might have been called the Dread Wasp. And wherever Imperialism got drunk and went wild among native peoples, the Pankhurst paper would be on the job.'[738] Cunard's path to self-awareness was more winding, and while she still struggled at times to separate fact and fiction, the process of compiling *Negro* was instrumental in expanding her worldview. Until she left France (then a relatively liberal country) with Crowder for England, she had never witnessed first-hand the full extent and violence of racial prejudice. It was a necessary education, and she devoted herself to the project, studying African American literature at the British Museum, and planning trips to Africa and elsewhere. She managed to visit some countries, including Jamaica, where she had stayed with McKay's brother, but she

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[735] T.R., 'Ethel Mannin looks at India', *Irish Independent*, 4 December 1950, p.4, *The British Newspaper Archives,* online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001715/19501204/041/0004, accessed: 18 August 2023.
[736] T.R., 'Ethel Mannin looks at India', p.4
[737] T.R., 'Ethel Mannin looks at India', p.4
[738] C. McKay, *A Long Way From Home*, London, UK, Rutgers University Press, 2007, p. 64

had trouble gaining access to those still controlled by the British. The British Foreign Office would not issue her papers on the pretence of concern for her safety. When she persisted, they abandoned all pretence, and simply refused.[739]

While travelling and working on the anthology she became aware of the heavily publicised Scottsboro trial. Nine teenage African American boys from Alabama had been falsely accused of raping two white women on a freight train in 1931. After three short court appearances, all but one of the boys were convicted of rape, and sentenced to death. Their sentences were appealed with the help of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the Communist Party USA (CPUSA). In 1932, she went to New York, where she was met with vicious attacks in the media from journalists, and in letters from the public for associating with African Americans. She decided to use the hype and scandal surrounding her to publicise the Scottsboro case, and her efforts to assist the nine accused by raising money for their defence. She wrote about the case in *Negro*, in 'Scottsboro – and other Scottsboros', detailing the story and court proceedings, and locating it within the more extensive history and context of American racism.

Her ability to immerse herself in her projects by familiarising herself with systems (in this case, the American legal system) previously unknown to her comes through in her analysis of the processes and politics surrounding the case. In a bold move, she outed the NAACP for withholding funds. She accused it of being 'at one with the Southern lynch-courts by its assertions that the world-protests are only "red scare," by its advocacy of letting the law take its course (lynch law), by its engaging of Stephen Relay (lynch advocate), by its lies and frauds, insults and inventions against the actual defence.'[740] She drew attention to the International Labor Defense (ILD) as a proven organisation capable of exposing the 'criminal mistreatment of Negroes in America.' Cunard concluded her piece with a demand for the 'recognition and enforcement of the Negro's full rights, as an equal, as a brother, and an end to the oppression of coloured peoples the world over.'[741] Moynagh noted that the style of Cunard's Scottsboro – and Other Scottsboros 'is reminiscent of the Living Newspaper form of theatre developed in the wake of the Russian revolution of 1917 as a means for the new communist government to disseminate news, education, and propaganda in a geographically vast and culturally diverse

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[739] L. Gordon, *Nancy Cunard: Heiress, Muse, Political Idealist*, New York, US, Columbia University Press, 2007, p.163.
[740] N. Cunard, 'Scottsboro – and other Scottsboros', N. Cunard (ed), *Negro an Anthology*, New York, US, Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1970, p.161
[741] Cunard, 'Scottsboro – and other Scottsboros', p.174

nation.'[742] Her analysis is in keeping with Cunard's familiarity with Russian and communist propaganda, and ability to creatively communicate ideas to a global audience. Her work comprised a juxtaposition of images, storytelling, and news, which combined to keep her readers engaged, stimulate emotional responses, and relay facts – tactics that she would use successfully in her coverage of the Spanish and Ethiopian wars.

When approaching issues of colonialism, and racial inequality in countries outside of Britain, all three authors failed at times to move past the received language of a utopianism forged in a European context. In many ways this mirrored Pankhurst's struggle to transcend the preconditioned ideas and received language of her class in 'The Potato Pickers', and Cunard's attempts at class-consciousness in 'Poor Streets'. Mannin's description of postcolonial India also hints at a romanticisation that collapsed when she journeyed there. Unlike the British working classes with whom Pankhurst and Mannin shared a socio-politics, the people that they encountered in India, and that Cunard encountered in America, and Africa were fighting different kinds of oppressions in diverse contexts. Cunard was also uncritically taken in by the modernist preoccupation with a mythologised Africa which was, in Atkinson's words, 'the well to which late Victorian capitalism went.'[743]

The core principles of International Socialism were universally applicable, as was the blueprint for utopian societies – but this was a future not yet achieved. The sentiments that Crane expressed following a tour of India in 1906 illustrate the discord between how British Socialists imagined other countries, and reality. His recollections in *India Impressions, With Some Notes of Ceylon During a Winter Tour* (1907) suggests that he may have been ignorant to the conditions in the colonies when he united America, Europe, Africa, and Asia in his May Day illustration, *The Angel of Freedom*:

> it is not a comfortable thought for an Englishman, loving freedom, and accustomed to the principles of popular and representative government at home, to realise that this vast empire is held under the strictest autocratic system; and that the national aspirations that are now beginning to make themselves heard and felt should be entirely ignored, and the voice of native feeling sternly suppressed.[744]

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[742] M. Moynagh, 'Introduction', N. Cunard, *Essays on Race and Empire*, M. Moynagh (ed), Ont. , Canada, 2002, pp.57-58
[743] Atkinson, 'A Common Topos in Lawrence and Eliot', p. 22
[744] W. Crane, *India Impressions, With Some Notes of Ceylon During a Winter Tour, 1906-7*. London, UK, Methuen, 1907, p: ix

The surprise and disillusionment he expressed shows that the idea of a united workers front across the empire was well-intentioned, but ill-informed and sentimental. When Crane created his illustration 'Freedom' (for him) did not mean liberation from colonialism, but equality within Great Britain. He appears to have assumed that the worker in England and the worker in the colonies shared the same labour conditions and rights under British rule.

There were times when Pankhurst, Mannin, and Cunard were not self-reflexive in a way that would have allowed them to suspend their belief that all were equal and acknowledge difference so that the specific concerns of communities could be addressed. The worker in India and the worker in Britain were not facing identical struggles. The racial violence and social exclusion that people of colour suffered in the United States was not comparable to the marginalisation of a white British woman from an upper-class family. Engaging with Pankhurst, Mannin, and Cunard's experiences in this regard are necessary to form a more nuanced picture of International Socialism. Simply focusing on their successes, and in doing so ignoring where utopian socialism fell short, is to contribute to scholarship, pro-communist and anti-communist, that omits crucial elements of British history. When these details are omitted, the picture that emerges is unrealistic, and incomplete.

## The Murderous Onslaught of a Fascist Enemy

*Negro* was published, and her pilgrimage to Russia concluded, but if Cunard had any plans to rest they were almost immediately set aside upon her return from Moscow. In August of 1935, the Ethiopian war came to a head, and she set to work on finding a way to contribute to the war effort. She was appointed as a foreign correspondent for the Chicago-based *Associated Negro Press,* and immediately left for Geneva to send news of the League of Nation's response to calls for aid, which was granted in the form of sanctions against Italy. The sanctions were set in place to maintain collective security and pressure Italy to open negotiations and end the war.

Regarding public support for Ethiopia, Cunard optimistically reported that 'People are rising and will rise against the clutching hands of fascism that are stretching out to destroy the last black nation in Africa.'[745] The war thrust Padmore back into racial politics. He had joined the ILP, believing as Mannin did that it was the 'heir to the October Revolution' and 'the only working-class party in Britain that [had] a correct theoretical approach on the questions of

[745] Qtd in: L. Gordon, *Nancy Cunard: Heiress, Muse, Political Idealist*, New York, US, Columbia University Press, 2007, p. 207

Imperialist war and colonies.'[746] Mannin was part of Padmore's inner circle, and like him and Cunard, in full support of Haile Selassie. Pankhurst was also among those rising to Ethiopia's defence. On 12 October 1936, she had joined an estimated 2000 'London workers, intellectuals, and friends of peace' who marched to the Ethiopian Legation to show their support for Selassie, delivered in an address to the Minister, Dr. Martin: 'You are defending Ethiopia against the murderous onslaught of a Fascist enemy who knows neither honour nor humane feeling. We are confident that in this war victory will be yours. You have beaten the Italian Imperialists before and you will do it again.'[747]

Pankhurst's various contributions to war efforts continued anti-fascist activism that had started years before. Richard Pankhurst traced the origins of his mother's campaigning all the way back to 1919 when on a trip to Italy she witnessed fascist squads assaulting their opponents. For her, Italy was 'the first victim of fascism,' and after Mussolini's March on Rome in 1922, and the murder of the socialist deputy Giacomo Matteotti in 1924, she founded the Women's International Matteotti Committee.[748] Italy had been her initiation into the evils of Fascism accounting for her extreme reaction to the Italo-Ethiopian war. For her, it was personal and political. She wrote in her study of Ethiopian art, literature, song and poetry, *Ethiopia: A Cultural History* (1959): 'Wherever I went in Ethiopia I felt I was among friends, I derived from my visits there more happiness than I can ever adequately express.'[749]

As the first African nation to gain independence from European Imperialism, Ethiopia was a beacon of hope in the anti-colonial struggle.[750] Aware of Mussolini's intent to invade Ethiopia, Pankhurst founded the *New Times and Ethiopia News.* In the first edition, published the day that Italy occupied Addis Ababa (5 May 1936) she made her position, and reasons for starting the newspaper clear: 'The cause of Ethiopia cannot be separated from the cause of International Justice…."New Times" is opposed to the conception of dictatorship. It understands that fascism destroys all personal liberty and is in fundamental opposition to all forms of intellectual and moral progress.'[751] Pankhurst's correlation between the plight of the

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[746] G. Padmore, 'Hands off the Colonies!', *New Leader*, 25 February 1938, *Marxist Internet Archives*, online: https://www.marxists.org/archive/padmore/1938/hands-off.htm, accessed: 16 August 2023.
[747] 'Support of Ethiopia', *Edinburgh Evening News*, 14 October 1935, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000452/19351014/301/0009, accessed: 20 July 2023.
[748] R. Pankhurst, 'Sylvia Pankhurst, Ethiopia and the Spanish Civil War', *Women's History Review*, vol. 15, no. 5, 2006, p. 773
[749] S. Pankhurst, *Ethiopia A Cultural History*, Essex, UK, Lalibela House, 1959, p. xxxviii
[750] M. Davis, *Sylvia Pankhurst: A Life in Radical Politics*, London, UK, Pluto Press, 1999, p. 110
[751] Qtd in: R. Pankhurst, 'Sylvia Pankhurst, Ethiopia and the Spanish Civil War', *Women's History Review*, vol. 15, no. 5, 2006, p. 774.

Ethiopians and international justice was not hyperbole. As Cunard reported, The effects of the war were felt worldwide. Reactions from colonised nations supported the view that Ethiopia stood as an exemplar of progress in the anti-colonial struggle, evident in the mass protests that rose up in almost all the British colonies in West India, instilling fear in the British Colonial Office that colonial Africa would follow suit.[752] Cunard responded to these fears directly, affirming with a positive bend that 'In England we are saying: if England helps Mussolini there will be risings in the British colonies. For Mussolini is not only fighting Abyssinia but every black man in the world today—YES, and will have to fight some of us whites too.'[753]

Haile Selassie had been exiled to England after the Italian invasion, and Pankhurst became one of his trusted advisors. Over the course of the years that followed she was unwavering in her support of him, wrote extensively on Ethiopian art and culture, and served on the non- members' advisory board of the *Voice of Ethiopia,* a journal published by the United States-based Ethiopian World Federation alongside Lij Andargue of Aden, Michael Dei-Anan of the Gold Coast, Richard Rathnell of South Africa, and Nyabongo of Uganda. In her campaign for the liberation of Ethiopia, she wrote countless newspaper articles and letters calling for aid. Her appeals ranged from urging Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands to protest her Government's proposal to the League of Nations to recognise Italy's occupation of Ethiopia,[754] to asking the British public to save and donate their stamps to the 'gallant little nation who suffers to-day…under the cruel aggression of Italy' so that correspondence could be maintained with its 'representatives in foreign capitals.'[755]

The Netherlands was not the only country extending their support for the recognition of Italy's sovereignty over Ethiopia. In 1937, Britain submitted the same appeal to the League – something which former advisor to the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, John H. Spencer, said that they had initially opposed.[756] Spencer provided a detailed account of the League's actions from the start of the war until 1937. He captured why their response to the war is commonly recognised as one of the episodes that revealed the League's ineffectiveness

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[752] M. Davis, *Sylvia Pankhurst: A Life in Radical Politics*, London, UK, Pluto Press, 1999, p. 110.
[753] Qtd in: L. Gordon, *Nancy Cunard: Heiress, Muse, Political Idealist*, New York, US, Columbia University Press, 2007, p. 207
[754] 'An Appeal to Queen Wilhelmina', *Western Daily Press*, 30 December 1937, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000513/19371230/045/0004, accessed: 20 July 2023.
[755] S. Pankhurst, 'Help for Ethiopia', *Edinburgh Evening News*, 3 July 1937, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000452/19370703/226/0006, accessed 20 July 2023, p. 6
[756] On 9 May 1936, at a meeting of the League of Nations, Spencer recorded the brief and 'somewhat cryptic statement' made by Britain's primary delegate that 'this Assembly should not in any way recognise Italy's conquest over Ethiopia.' J.H. Spencer, 'The Italian-Ethiopian Dispute and the League of Nations', *The American Journal of International Law,* vol. 31, no. 4, 1937, p.637

and paved the way for World War II. In a summary that captured the conflict and disorganisation that went into decision-making, he concluded that 'the difficulties experienced by the League were due clearly to its inability, on the one hand, to give precedence to the procedure which it had adopted for the settlement of the dispute, over the attempts made outside the League with a view to conciliation, and, on the other, to pursue consistently any one course of procedure once adopted by itself.'[757] The League took a free-for-all approach in declaring that each member state could decide whether or not they supported Italy.

As the threat of Fascism intensified Pankhurst and Cunard produced less fiction. They turned their efforts to journalism allowing them to disseminate facts to International audiences. Literature and poetry relied on reader-response and personal interpretation. For them, the events that were unfolding in the specific context of war required no interpretation outside of the recognition that the invasion of Ethiopia was not an isolated event. Their journalism was part of a larger struggle against Fascism. By 1938, both Britain and France naively recognised the Italian occupation in the hope that (fascist) Italy would support them against (fascist) German expansion. According to Albert Speer, the result was that Hitler saw 'both England and France' as 'loath to take any risks and anxious to avoid any danger. Actions of his which later seemed reckless followed directly from such observations. The Western governments had proved themselves weak and indecisive.'[758] In Geneva, in a report for the *Associated Negro Press* and an unnamed 'West African Paper,' Cunard expressed her 'disgust' at the way the League 'carried on – breaking their clauses and covenants with supra-human cynicism.'[759] Her disgust extended to their approach to the Spanish Civil War which was well underway by 1937 when the League was still circling the Italo-Ethiopian question.

## Talking all the Time of Peace in Terms of War

When Cunard, Mannin and Pankhurst joined those supporting Republican Spain, they shared a similar socialist politics, and the view that, in Mannin's words, the Spanish Civil War was 'a social revolution behind the anti-Fascist struggle.'[760] Cunard made a plea to end complacency in her survey, *Author's Take Sides on the Spanish War*, which brought together authors and

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[757] Spencer, 'The Italian-Ethiopian Dispute and the League of Nations', p. 641
[758] A. Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, Qtd in: G.W. Baer, 'Sanctions and Security: The League of Nations and the Italian-Ethiopian War, 1935-1936', *International Organization* , vol. 27, no. 2, p.178
[759] Cunard, *Grand Man*, p. 106
[760] Mannin, *Privileged Spectator*, p.61

poets worldwide to express their views on the conflict. She asked those reading the results of the survey to consider that 'To-day, the struggle is Spain. To-morrow it may be in other countries - our own,' citing the rapid spread of Fascism through Germany and Italy, and the revival of 'Imperial Rome abetted by international treachery', which had 'conquered her place in the Abyssinian sun' as evidence.' [761] Mannin and Pankhurst were among the respondents to the survey.

Mannin wrote that she was 'passionately' for the 'legal government of Spain,' and that 'the future of civilisation depends upon the extension of individual liberty.' According to her, Fascism was 'the self-declared enemy of the human race.'[762] Pankhurst affirmed her solidarity with Cunard ('Of course I am with you') against the Fascists who had launched 'an attack on a people, the majority of whom had repeatedly declared their aversion to dictatorship and determination to throw off feudalism and to advance to a freer, more equalitarian and more enlightened organisation of society.'[763] All three agreed that the Spanish War was a clear continuation of the Ethiopian War, and the next step in a global takeover. Fascist regimes viewed the rebellion in Spain as the perfect opportunity to test their power on a global stage, preparing the way for future wars. However, as the war progressed, Pankhurst, Cunard, and Mannin took different paths. Pankhurst and Cunard became more committed to their socialist ideals. Mannin's experience of the wars led to a radical change in her politics that would reflect poorly on her in the aftermath of World War II.

Mannin wrote non-fiction that mentioned the Spanish Civil War, the Ethiopian War, and Imperialism. For the most part, she continued to use her fiction to inform and conscientize. She started including indexes at the back of her novels – *Ragged Banners,* and *Women also Dream* (1937) are important examples – which provided her readers with an easy way to return to the passages that illustrated her views. The explicit guidance of an index was a marked deviation from covertly political stories like 'Love's Winnowing' and 'Men are Unwise'. It also speaks to the scope of what she was trying to cover. Whereas in 'Love's Winnowing' she focused on a localised socio-political concern – the experiences of British working-class women – her indexed novels covered a range of topics. As she was quoted as saying in a *Montrose Standard* review of *Women also Dream* by "The Critic" (a pseudonym) 'The time

[761] Cunard, *Authors Take Sides*, 1937.
[762] E. Mannin in: N. Cunard, *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War*, London, UK, Left Review, 1937.
[763] S. Pankhurst in: N. Cunard, *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War*, London, UK, Left Review, 1937.

has come…to talk of many things.'[764] The shift from covert to overt political narratives was a conscious one evident in *Women Also Dream* which included a passage on its title page that clearly references 'Men are Unwise':

> There is a tendency to forget that though it is true that men are for the most part unwise and curiously planned, that they have their dreams which rule their women out, it is no less true that women also dream…and along the same lines, though there be fewer, perhaps, of these adventurous women. Yet even that is debateable.[765]

By signalling the connection between her earlier fiction and most recent book, she alerted the reader to the continuity of her work, perhaps even encouraging them to revisit 'Men are Unwise' with a more critical eye, before presenting them with something entirely different. There are other similarities. In 'Men are Unwise', Donald Hildred is obsessed with expeditions up mountains but is eventually domesticated by his love interest, Kathleen. In *Women also Dream,* the protagonist Janet is a woman who seeks adventure, and it is her husband who encourages her to settle down. Where the narratives differ significantly is that the obstacles Janet faces are far more complicated and pressing than pressure from her husband:

> …there was the Abyssinian war, and the inevitable thought that no one could tell what was going to happen in Europe during the course of the next few months, the feeling that it was impossible to make plans…the League still talking, and very soon even the war itself ceasing to be front-page news, and the world going its complacent way, getting ready for bigger wars, talking all the time of peace in terms of war.[766]

The world of the novel is expansive. Mannin achieved this by making her protagonist a pilot who can travel freely, and must take global politics into consideration when planning her trips. It encouraged women to pursue their dreams against all odds, which is something that she felt was under threat if Fascism took hold in Britain, and elsewhere. In *Women and the Revolution,* she wrote that 'though you yourself may be content to make your home your career, what about your daughter – supposing she has some other ambition which takes her out of the home? In a Fascist State it would be exceedingly difficult if not impossible for her to gratify this

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[764] The Critic, 'New Novels and Some Serious Reading', *Montrose Standard*, 12 February 1937, p. 6, *British Newspaper Archives*, online https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0002751/19370212/092/0006, accessed: 10 August 2023.
[765] E. Mannin, *Women also Dream*, London, UK, Jarrolds, 1937.
[766] E. Mannin, *Women also Dream*, London, UK, Jarrolds, 1937, p. 118

ambition.'[767] Additionally, *Women Also Dream* drew its dominantly female readership's attention to the war against Fascism, fought on myriad fronts, while encouraging them not to be complacent or to assume that they could continue as normal.

According to Mannin, the time had come for women to choose between 'freedom and life' or 'oppression and death': if the revolution failed, civilisation would be 'engulfed in a new world war of the capitalist-imperialist powers' because 'fascism by any other name is the same oppression, the same death of freedom and progress, especially for women.'[768] Pankhurst had expressed similar views in 1934 in an address at a meeting supporting a women's international peace crusade in Hyde Park. She called on British women, 'the last bulwark for women in Europe,' to recognise that if war came, and Fascism prevailed, what freedoms they 'had won' would be threatened.[769] On 24 April 1938, the year following the publication of *Women Also Dream*, Mannin delivered a speech on the role of women in the war on Fascism at Red House on behalf of the ILP. She had urged women to 'carry political thinking to its logical conclusion.'[770] In the novel, Janet contemplated her relationship, concluding that 'life was bigger than who fell in love with who, who slept with who, all the loves and lusts and jealousies and vanities, of this man and woman business!'[771] She continued:

> A few months ago a comparative handful of simple coloured people had been fighting for their lives against Imperialism, Fascism, exploitation, and going down for the count before the machines of destruction of Western civilisation; now in Spain another people struggled against the forces of militarism and Fascism; all over the world men and women fought and lived and died in order to keep flying the ragged, blood-drenched, banner of freedom at this moment it was all going on... how could the petty personal griefs and joys of individuals matter…?[772]

In her speech Mannin reiterated the views that she had attempted to convey in the novel. In the *Eastbourne Gazette's* coverage of the event, they reported that she encouraged women to 'take a keener interest in politics,' outlining her reasons within the context of 'lessons to be learned from events in Europe' including the Spanish Civil War. For her, combatting the threat of

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[767] Mannin, *Women and the Revolution*, p. 202.
[768] Mannin, *Women and the Revolution,* pp. 298-299
[769] Author Unknown, 'Women and Fascism', *The Falkirk Herald*, 13 June 1934, p.11, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000733/19340613/096/0011, accessed: 22 August 2023.
[770] Author unknown, 'Women and Fascism Miss Ethel Mannin and Red House', *Eastbourne Gazette*, 27 April 1938, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001928/19380427/004/0001, accessed: 7 April 2023.
[771] E. Mannin, *Women also Dream*, London, UK, Jarrolds, 1937, p. 226
[772] Mannin, *Women also Dream*, p. 226

Fascism required more than an alliance with Feminist movements. It was necessary for women to 'ally themselves with the whole working-class movement, and fight alongside their husbands, sweethearts and brothers for liberty.' [773]

She spoke on the topic of motherhood, noting that 'English women to-day please themselves with how many children they have. Under Fascism, they would have to bear as many children as the State required.' [774] In terms of education, she addressed complaints by British mothers that English schools were teaching militarism, which she pointed out was mild in comparison to conditions 'under Fascism' where 'the teaching of militarism to the children would be intensified.'[775] She would later elaborate on her point in *Women and the Revolution,* writing that under Fascism 'your husband, brothers and sons, will all have to serve a term of military service whether they like it or not, and whether they like it or not fight when the time comes in imperialist wars, dropping bombs on defenceless civilians like the people of Guernica and the Abyssinians.'[776]

The *Gazette*'s report did not focus solely on her speech. It included an account of the talk delivered by the event's principal speaker, John MacNair, who gave a first-hand account of his time in Spain, and the 'indescribable horror of the air raids on Madrid and Barcelona.'[777] Fascists who responded to the article in letters to the editor in the 4 May edition of the newspaper disregarded MacNair completely, or mentioned him only briefly. Their focus was almost exclusively on Mannin. James H. Clark was offended by her 'manifestly absurd statements in her efforts to discredit Fascism,' and her comments on motherhood in particular. His argument against the idea that women would be required to birth as many children as possible was a terrifying account of the 'noteworthy and intelligent efforts to hand down…a healthy population' via 'sterilisation of the unfit':

> As Miss Mannin disagrees with the at least open and honest efforts of the Fascist states to remedy this scourge to humanity she would apparently prefer to let a minority endow the future with its pitiful quota of insanity and heredity disease, all in the glorious cause of liberty. If this is the liberty and civilisation that the I.L.P. wish to save for us, the sooner changed the better for mankind.[778]

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[773] 'Women and Fascism Miss Ethel Mannin and Red House'
[774] 'Women and Fascism Miss Ethel Mannin and Red House'
[775] 'Women and Fascism Miss Ethel Mannin and Red House'
[776] Mannin, *Women and the Revolution,* p. 202.
[777] 'Women and Fascism Miss Ethel Mannin and Red House.'
[778] J.H. Clark, 'Letter to the Editor: Women Under Fascism', *The Eastbourne Gazette*, 4 May 1938, p.14, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0001928/19380504/151/0014?browse=true, accessed: 7 April 2023.

To put it differently, only genetically fit women would be encouraged to bear children; the rest needn't concern themselves. An anonymous self-described 'Fascist' took issue with the idea that 'women would be forced out of industry…as Miss Ethel Mannin states,' and into the kitchen. Missing the point entirely, he was convinced that with the implementation of an equal wage they would not be forced out, but return willingly to the home and their children without the need to 'supplement the inadequate wages of their husbands.'[779] Continuing the fixation on family, M. Wilson Grant was incensed that she did 'not seem to see the European nations are to suffer if women refuse motherhood, at least until science has made it possible to produce children artificially.'[780] These statements were a chilling reflection of things already being implemented, and things to come. In 1939, the eugenic sterilisation and euthanasia program 'endorsed by scientists, physicians and administrators' was put into effect in Germany, targeting Germans and Jews considered unfit to live or procreate. The murder or sterilisation of women and mentally ill children was considered more important for 'racial hygiene' than the sterilisation of men. 30 killing centres were established for children. Six were equipped with gas chambers to kill adults. [781]

Mannin was correct in her assessment of the role of the woman and mother under Fascism, summarised in Joseph Goebbels' speech, German Women, delivered in 1933 at the opening of a women's exhibition in Berlin. Only six weeks after Hitler's rise to power, he asserted that 'the first, best, and most suitable place for the woman is in the family, and her most glorious duty is to give children to her people and nation, children who can continue the line of generations and who guarantee the immortality of the nation.'[782] This simple statement would be enforced through extensive efforts to return women to the traditional principles of *Kuche, Kinder und Kirche,* from ideology and propaganda that celebrated the mother as protector of the *Volk*, to stipends that encouraged women to marry and leave the workforce to focus on reproductive labour. The alleged reproductive science that British Fascists revered

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[779] 'Letter to the Editor: Women Under Fascism', *Eastbourne Gazette,* 4 May 1938, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001928/19380504/148/0014, accessed: 7 April 2023.
[780] M.W. Grant, 'Letter to the Editor: Women Under Fascism', *Eastbourne Gazette,* 04 May 1938, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001928/19380504/148/0014, accessed: 7 April 2023.
[781] B. Chalmers, *Birth, Sex and Abuse: Women's Voices Under Nazi Rule*, Surrey, UK, Grosvenor House Publishing Limited, 2015, pp. 23, 27, 35
[782] J. Goebbels, Deutsches Frauentum," *Signale der neuen Zeit. 25 ausgewählte Reden von Dr. Joseph Goebbels,* Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP., 1934, pp. 118-126, *German Propaganda Archive*, online: https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/goeb55.html, accessed: 11 August 2023.

amounted to brutal experiments conducted on women and children in camps out of morbid curiosity or attempts to refine the Aryan race.

Mannin responded to her critics in the 15 May edition of the *Gazette*. She corrected Clark's assertion that the ILP wanted to wage war on 'four different fronts,' maintaining that the 'only war worth the loss of a single worker's life is the war against Capitalism.'[783] Wilson Grant was informed that 'with the second world war imminent, the production of the family is a thing to be avoided.' As to the survival of the European nations, she saw 'no reason in favour of survival…If they were finally to wipe each other off the face of Europe it would at least be a very good thing for the millions of coloured people they have for centuries kept in subjection.'[784] Towards the end of the Spanish Civil War, statements such as this one started to become more and more frequent. A year before, in a piece for *The Long Eaton Advertiser* (6 August 1937) she had written that 'many people…grow very indignant over Franco dropping bombs on civilians in Spain and over Hitler's concentration camps and his methods with political prisoners, with bland disregard for our own bombing of villages of the North West Frontier, and our own methods with political prisoners in India and Africa.'[785]

At this juncture, Mannin was still actively working with the ILP, which had sent a small group of supporters, including George Orwell, to fight alongside the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification (POUM) in the Spanish War. In 1937, she released her life savings of £1000 to help the ILP purchase a ship to transport supplies through the Spanish blockade to Bilbao. As she told the *Daily Mirror* in 1937: 'I do feel that it is the best use that I can find for my money. After all, what good is it to me? It is my entire life savings, but I do not need it…I don't care about money any longer…the poor people in Bilbao are starving.'[786] She was also at a crossroads, and about to undergo a radical change in her revolutionary politics, foreshadowed in the articles that brought war and Imperialism into dialogue.

Her commitment to anti-imperialism was steadfast. She was stubborn in her view that Britain was as culpable in oppression as fascist regimes. In *Privileged Spectator* she highlighted the hypocrisy of Britain's call to arms ahead of World War II. She posited that a country built on colonisation and Imperialism had no right to claim the moral high ground in

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[783] E. Mannin, 'The social Revolution', *Eastbourne Gazette*, 18 May 1938, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001928/19380518/208/0020, accessed: 7 April 2023.
[784] Mannin, 'The social Revolution'
[785] E. Mannin, 'Freedom for Servants', *The Long Eaton Advertiser*, 6 August 1937, p.4, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0002506/19370806/101/0004, accessed: 22 August 2023.
[786] 'Woman Author Risks £1,000', *The Daily Mirror*, 19 April 1937, p.3, *The British Newspaper Archives*, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000560/19370419/024/0003, accessed: 11 August 2023.

the war against Fascism while ignoring 'those vast masses of human beings…commonly forgotten in estimates of peace and war', including 'the millions of subject coloured peoples…Arabs, Negroes, [and] Indians.'[787] In *Christianity – or Chaos* (1940) she chastised those who clung to the idea that Fascism began with Nazi Germany, describing it as a 'convenient scapegoat… as though without Adolf Hitler the conflicting materialist interests in Western civilization would never have reached the peak of crisis which topples over into war.' For her, 'Hitlerism' was long in the making, beginning in the nineteenth century with the Industrial Revolution, and a period of decadence which she referred to as a 'secret dictatorship of money.'[788]

The books and articles that Mannin published in the years 1939-1940, including *Women and the Revolution* and *Privileged Spectator*, were a confusing mix of work promoting her old revolutionary politics and work that reflected a massive shift in ideology – she became vehemently anti-war, devoted herself to anarcho-syndicalism and pacifism, and doubled down on her Christian socialist spirituality. She joined the likes of Woolf and George Bernard Shaw who, although they did not join The Peace Pledge Union (PPU), often wrote articles and generated pamphlets to aid in its cause, including *Why I Am Still a Pacifist*, which Mannin contributed to in 1946.[789] Sadly, while her intentions may have been good, her views on the connection between Imperialism and Fascism, and her pacifism, amounted to some troubling interpretations of and reactions to the war.

Mannin wrote articles for the PPU's *Peace Times* which was governed chiefly by a single principle: the renunciation of war. It attracted renowned philosophers, authors and politicians, but also the occasional piece that displayed sympathy for Germany (albeit not pro-Nazi) and articles that, while not necessarily antisemitic, were strikingly unsympathetic towards Jews under threat in Europe.[790] One of these pieces, published on 4 August 1939, was written by Mannin. She refused to believe many of the reports documenting the treatment of Jews whom she dismissed as 'Western civilised' and 'white' – ignoring the Nuremberg Laws, which had effectively removed them from both categories.[791] The deaths of approximately 500 000 (estimates have ranged from 150 000 to 800 000, and even as high as 1,5 million)

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[787] Mannin, *Privileged Spectator* pp. 122, 293
[788] E. Mannin, *Christianity - or Chaos*, London, UK, Jarrolds, 1940, p. 189.
[789] C. Ligt et al. *Why I Am Still a Pacifist*. London, UK, Peace Pledge Union, 1946.
[790] D.C. Lukowitz, 'British Pacifists and Appeasement: The Peace Pledge Union', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1974, p.122.
[791] P. Lassner, *British Women Writers of World War II: Battlegrounds of their Own*, London, UK, 1998, p. 45

Romani[792] and Sinti, neither of whom fit into her categories of 'white' and 'Western Civilised,' went seemingly unnoticed despite her awareness of Romani communities. Her awareness was admittedly nominal and romantic, and she was unaware or uninterested in their persecution in Britain and elsewhere. In *Bread and Roses,* she claimed that they were 'the freest people in the world' because they moved outside of the law.[793]

As more information came to light following Hitler's defeat by the Allied Forces, including the horrifying realisation that approximately six million Jews had been murdered, Mannin attempted to justify her pacifist stance in her fiction. Lassner identified her arguably failed attempts to reconcile her position in two of her post-war novels, *The Dark Forest* (1946) and *Bavarian Story* (1948), which although they displayed Mannin's 'repugnance at Nazi antisemitism,' also dramatized a 'a providence whose victims and heroes she selects to fit her model of spiritual victory.' She concludes that this model, which 'excludes those whose bodies or spirit could not be rescued by providence is of no concern to Mannin, and so they too are fated to be destroyed.'[794] It is worth lending context to Lassner's (accurate) analysis. Mannin's husband, Reginald Reynolds, maintained a close friendship with Gandhi, and it was through him that she was acquainted with his and Anarchist Barthelemy de Ligt's philosophies on non-violence. Gandhi maintained that if the Jews had resisted Nazi persecution using his methods of non-violent action (*satyagraha*), their suffering would eventually have drawn compassion from Hitler and his followers.[795] After the Holocaust, he stood by his position, saying that the

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[792] It is worth noting at this juncture that there were Romani in Britain, having arrived on its shores as early as the sixteenth century. The Romani in Britain were a neglected people who, despite mass persecution did not seem to draw the attention of Socialists allegedly seeking equality for *all* people. A Crystal's Vargo Resource, *The Gypsy Holocaust, Forgotten Victims*, online: https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/FFT-The-Gypsy-Holocaust-Booklet.pdf, accessed: 26 June 2023.

Prior to WWII, mass persecution of Romani and Traveller communities was already in effect in Britain and elsewhere, and would continue long after it ended. In an article published in *The Independent* in 2022, Katie Alexander, responding to comedian Jimmy Carr's joke that a 'positive' of the Holocaust was the slaughter of 500 000 Roman and Sinti, noted that the British Gypsy (her word) community still faces racism and stigma from wider society: 'While living in a world that actively shuns racism, society does not see Gypsies. It does not hear Gypsies. And when people do, they don't care enough to take any form of progressive action.' K. Alexander, 'Gypsies are one of the most vulnerable groups in society – why are we still ignored?', *The Independent,* May 2, 2022, online: https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/gypsy-traveller-community-racism-jimmy-carr-b2069822.html, accessed: 26 June 2023.

[793] Mannin, *Bread and Roses*, p. 12
[794] Lassner, *British Women Writers of World War II,* p. 46
[795] L. Stec, 'Gandhian Non-Violence in the Works of Ethel Mannin and Virginia Woolf', *Literature of Nation and Region, Proceedings of the 6th International Literature of Region and Nation Conference*, University of New Brunswick, Saint John, Canada 1996, p.170

Jews 'should have offered themselves to the butcher's knife…as it is they succumbed anyway in their millions.'[796]

Mannin's fierce opposition to the horrors of war led her to believe that it should be resisted at all costs, even if that meant sacrificing the lives of the few for the benefit of the many. Her Anarcho-Syndicalism, coupled with her pacifism, was inseparable from the anti-colonial and anti-imperial work that she was doing for the Africa Freedom Campaign, and the India Freedom Campaign. Taking all of this into consideration, a kind interpretation of Mannin's response to the persecution of Jews during World War II is that she was misguided by a narrow focus akin to what had plagued Cunard in her unwavering support of the U.S.S.R. – fixed utopian ideas of right and wrong, black and white, good and evil informed by the politics that she was directly involved in and influenced by at the time. Passivity as sacrifice was a far cry from her politics at the onset of the Spanish Civil War. She had celebrated those willing to fight, and in fighting risk death, for the benefit of the many and the 'legal government of Spain.'[797]

Mannin continued to use fiction as a primary form of activism. Scholars who focus on her political fiction have not noted that the shift from covertly to overtly political novels and short stories was not only a reflection of her turn to more public political engagement. It was necessary. In the same way that Pankhurst and Cunard focused more on journalism than their literary activities to ensure that their positions were indisputable, Mannin's novels needed to speak directly to her politics to ensure intelligibility. The urgency of war, and the threat posed by Fascism, could not be left open to interpretation. When the focus was working-class politics and imperialism, there was time to plan and imagine. With World War II looming, time was of the essence.

## The Poets' War

In her famous critique of inequality between men and women, and proposal for an 'Outsiders Society' of pacifists in *Three Guineas*, Woolf described the photographs that the Spanish government was sending to Britain. They were 'not pleasant photographs to look upon. They

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[796] Qtd in: L. Stec, 'Gandhian Non-Violence in the Works of Ethel Mannin and Virginia Woolf', *Literature of Nation and Region, Proceedings of the 6th International Literature of Region and Nation Conference*, University of New Brunswick, Saint John, Canada 1996, p.170

[797] Mannin in: Cunard, *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War*

are bodies for the most part…what might be a man's body, or a woman's; it is so mutilated that it might, on the other hand, be the body of a pig. But those certainly are dead children.[798] As to the solution, Woolf believed that women, unlike men, were for the most part barred from doing anything substantial to alleviate the situation in Spain. They could not take up arms 'in Spain, as before in France – in defence of peace.'[799]

Socialist women were part of a different 'outsider society' than the one that Woolf was proposing. They did not feel incapable of resisting, and many of them, including Cunard travelled to the frontlines at significant risk to her personal safety to assist in the war effort. While still primarily dedicated to Ethiopia, Pankhurst's *New Times* started publishing articles about Spain. In many of her reports she emphasised that the war in Ethiopia and Spain were inseparable. She expressed her frustration at the colonial, racist and anti-communist sentiments behind refusals to provide support or aid in both countries:

> People stood by while Ethiopia was vanquished: this is only Africa, this is not a White Man's country. They listened to the Italian propaganda: these are primitives, their customs are barbarous. Now people stand aside again: they do not like Spanish politics: these are a disorderly people fighting among themselves; they are Anarchists, Socialists, Reds, strikers; it does not matter to us…[800]

On 13 March 1938, the *New Times* organised a demonstration in Trafalgar Square that brought together roughly 40 000 Socialists, Feminists, trade unionists, Pacifists, Africanists, and other leftist organisations in what Richard Pankhurst called 'the largest demonstration held in Britain since the time of the suffragettes prior to World War I.'[801] Attendees took a 'Personal Pledge' to 'support collective security,' and work towards 'the restoration of Abyssinia's independence, and the saving of democratic Spain.'[802] Articles covering a range of anti-fascist topics were circulated. The British government was urged 'to refuse recognition of the conquest of Ethiopia, take no action which 'would compromise [Selassie's] right to be represented at Geneva'[803] and 'to press insistently for the complete withdrawal of foreign troops…technicians

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[798] Woolf, *Three Guineas*, p.20
[799] Woolf, *Three Guineas*, p.23
[800] Qtd in: R. Pankhurst, 'Sylvia Pankhurst, Ethiopia and the Spanish Civil War', *Women's History Review*, vol. 15, no. 5, 2006, p. 775
[801] R. Pankhurst, 'Sylvia Pankhurst, Ethiopia and the Spanish Civil War', *Women's History Review*, vol. 15, no. 5, 2006, p. 779
[802] Pankhurst, 'Sylvia Pankhurst' Ethiopia and the Spanish Civil War', p. 779
[803] Cunard covered Selassie's appearance in Geneva in 'Nancy Cunard Writes Inside Story of Selassie's Plea Before League of Nations,' written for the 16 July 1936 edition of the *Philadelphia Tribune*.

and war material from Spain.'[804] German and Italian soldiers were among those troops, many of whom were there against their will. This issue overlapped with Cunard's continued efforts to awaken the world to the horrors of racial discrimination, oppression, and racially motivated violence. She was working as a foreign correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian,* only this time she was not just an observer.

Cunard was known to walk long distances through enemy fire, rain, and snow to reach the front lines. She participated in dangerous missions to distribute food and supplies to starving soldiers and civilians or help them reach places of safety.[805] She used her platform to alert the public to the 'Moors' whom Franco had forced to fight for the Fascists (their persecutors). Her reportage included accounts of Franco's exploitation of the Moors and his tendency to use them as 'cannon fodder.'[806] Hughes and Cunard remained in contact throughout the war. He was tasked with reporting back to the *Baltimore Afro-American* on black soldiers in the International Brigades. Like Cunard, he found that 'as usually happens with colored troops in the service of white imperialists, the Moors have been put in the front lines of the Franco offensive in Spain – and shot down like flies. They have been brought by the thousands from Spanish Morocco where the fascists took over power in the early days of their uprising.'[807]

Cunard's articles covering the war were eloquent and personal while still nuanced and factual, including those that she wrote for Pankhurst's *New Times* after joining the paper's editorial board in 1938. She exhibited a striking sympathy with, and sensitivity to the cause of the Republicans. Following the collapse of the Spanish Republic in Catalonia in 1938, a massive blow from which they would never recover, she described 'officials sitting on the roadside…in no hurry from sentimental reasons, to leave their last piece of territory that was their Spain' and a 'number of young pretty girls…sat along these roadsides waiting for such orders which have not come; they have sat in melancholic resignation, sometimes in tears, waiting.'[808] Her methods were rhetorical. In combining cold facts with detailed and creatively written descriptions of the suffering that she witnessed, she captured the humanity of the Republicans. She was able to relay it to and elicit sympathy from readers in the United

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[804] R. Pankhurst, 'Sylvia Pankhurst, Ethiopia and the Spanish Civil War', *Women's History Review*, vol. 15, no. 5, 2006, p. 779
[805] Gordon, *Nancy Cunard*, p. 220.
[806] Gordon, *Nancy Cunard*, p. 222
[807] L. Hughes, 'Hughes Finds Moors Being Used As Pawns by Fascists in Spain', 1937, From the Collection: Hughes, Langston, 1902-1967, The Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University, Box 428, folder 9549.
[808] N. Cunard, 'Annotated report on the collapse of the Spanish Republic in Catalonia', 11 February 1939, The John Rylands Library, University of Manchester, GDN/B/C290a/33

Kingdom. These were not just faceless soldiers. They were young, pretty girls mourning the loss of their country. Literary techniques and story-telling added depth and affect.

Cunard, still firmly of the belief that art could change the world, supplemented her journalism with poetry and projects that collected creative work from people around the world in support of the Republican cause. In 1937 she worked with Pablo Neruda on the anthology *Los poetas del mundo defienden al pueblo español* (The Poets of the World Defend the Spanish People) which included poems by a diverse group of poets, including Hughes, who had also contributed to *Negro,* and who described Cunard as one of his 'favourite folks in the world.'[809] W. H. Auden and, of course, Neruda and Cunard themselves also contributed to the anthology.

Matthew Beeber locates *Negro* and *Los poetas* within a compelling new category: 'the coalition anthology.'[810] For Beeber, Cunard's anthologies reflected 'the coalitional nature of their political project, including a broad and heterogeneous set of contributions.' The heterogeneity of the contributions, alongside the tension between the scope of the political opinions expressed, and the shared goal that blanketed the anthologies (in *Negro,* racial justice and *Los poetas,* the defeat of Franco), modelled 'coalitional social formations through their formal incongruities.'[811] The simplicity of the thread that tied different viewpoints together in Cunard's anthologies was an example of where her binary attitude to right and wrong served her cause. She allowed for diversity of opinion, and in doing so showed that cooperation was possible if the basic idea, the thread that tied it all together, was one that all could agree on – reminiscent of the simplified model of a utopian Eden that had once united Socialists like Pankhurst, Mannin and others in pursuit of a future-perfect society.

Eden was a story, a fiction, that made the revolution beautiful just as poetry could make wars visceral by capturing them, not as a series of factual events, but as a carefully crafted impression or moment shared intimately between author and reader. Cunard's 'To Eat Today' was written in Barcelona and printed in the *New Statesman* on 1 October 1938. She committed it to paper after reading Hitler's speech in Nuremberg, and the air raid that took place in Spain shortly thereafter:

> They come without siren-song or any ushering
> Over the usual street of man's middle day;

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[809] L. Hughes, Letter to Nancy Cunard, 2 June 1954, From the Collection: Hughes, Langston, 1902-1967, The Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University, Box 49, folder 918.
[810] M. Beeber, 'Nancy Cunard and the 1930s Coalitional Anthology', *Comparative Literature*, vol. 74, no.4, 2022, p.448
[811] Beeber, 'Nancy Cunard and the 1930s Coalitional Anthology', p. 450

Come unbelievably, abstract, beyond human vision,
Codicils, dashes along the great maniac speech –
'Helmeted Nüremberg nothing', said the people of
Barcelona,
The people of Spain – '*ya sabemos*, we have suffered all.'

You heroes of Nazi stamp, you sirs in the ether,
Sons of Romulus, Wotan – is the mark worth the bomb?
What was in it? salt, and a half-pint of olive,
Nothing else but the woman, she treasured it terribly,
Oil for the day folks would come, refugees from Levante,
Maybe with greens… one round meal… but you killed her,
Killed four children outside, with the house, and the preg-
nant cat.
Hail, hand of Rome, you passed – and that is all.

I wonder – do you eat before you do these things,
Is it a cocktail or is it a pousse-café?
Are you sitting at mess now saying 'Visibility, medium.
We got the port or near it with half a dozen', I wonder –
Or fighting it yet on the home-run to Mallorca,
Cold at 10,000 up, cursing a jammed release…
'Give it 'em, puta Madonna, here, over Arenys –
Per Bacco, it's nearly two – bloody sandwich it's made
down there –
Aren't we going to eat today, teniente? Te-niente?'
Driver in the clouds fuming, fumbler unstrapping death.
You passed; hate traffics on; then the shadows fall.

On the simple earth
Five mouths less to feed tonight in Barcelona.
On the simple earth
Men trampling and raving on an edge of fear.
Another country arming, another and another behind it –
Europe's nerve strung like catapult, the cataclysm roaring
and swelling…
But in Spain no. Perhaps and Tomorrow – in Spain it is
HERE.[812]

[812] N. Cunard, 'To Eat Today', J. Lucas (ed), *The Poems of Nancy Cunard From the Bodleian Library*, Nottingham, UK, Trent Editions, 2005, p.38

The poem was written at a critical point in the war when nationalist factions, supported by Nazi Germany, were gaining ground against the Republicans. The air raid in Cunard's poem was one of many in the workup to a shift in the war that took the country out of the hands of the Republican government. The poem's structure is chaotic, imitating the randomness of the attacks that resulted in the deaths of ordinary people, doing ordinary things under challenging circumstances. To drive the point home, she included 'the pregnant cat' which was in no way a threat to the Nationalist agenda. Cunard appeared to share Pankhurst's view in *Author's Take Sides* that 'the author and the journalist are the first to whom the choice comes, either to stand for Fascism or against it. Upon them rests the heaviest of responsibilities. They can defend the public mind and conscience against the specious propaganda of this base reaction, or they can assist the betrayal of the people to this greatest of all enemies.'[813]

Stephen Spender called the Spanish Civil War the 'Poets' War.' By this he meant that poets fought in the war – 'at least five of the best English writers gave their lives as did the poets of other countries.'[814] He travelled to Spain, where he met Victor Gollancz, John Strachey, George Orwell, Arthur Koestler, and E.M. Forster, who were, as he understood it, 'prepared to go as far, as the Communists in their opposition to Fascism, their defence of freedom and social justice.'[815] There was, however, a second poets' war fought in Britain on ideological grounds between those like Cunard, Auden, and the men that Spender listed, and the poets who refused to 'take sides.'

In December 1936, Head of the Department of English at Government College, Lahore, Professor E.C. Dickinson, delivered a lecture on 'Modern English Poetry' at a meeting of the Minerva Club. Dickinson, on the topic of 'modern poets' Eliot, Aldous Huxley, Robert Nicholls and others, said that the 'gesture' of art 'became public as an extension of the poetic idea, made to include all the usage and the paraphernalia of modern environment and the writers' reaction to them.' However, the 'emphasis…was on the reaction rather than on the paraphernalia and, thus, modern poetry became a philosophical-cum-psychological document.' Of Eliot's poetry, he remarked that 'the protest and revolt of the early popular Eliot has been forsaken, and the later Eliot revealed a period of submission' which he attributed to Eliot's 'turn towards theological comfort.' Dickinson, after admitting that he was a Communist, singled out Auden and Stephen Spender, both of whom travelled to Spain during the war. The

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[813] S. Pankhurst in: Cunard, *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War*
[814] S. Spender, 'The God that Failed', R. Crossman (ed), *The God that Failed*, New York, US, Bantam Books, 1949, p.218
[815] Spender, 'The God that Failed', p.218

poetry that Auden produced in 1936 was, according to Dickinson, 'attacking the Old Gang, the declining class, and, therefore, attacking everything in himself which clings to the sick part of society.'[816] Auden's poetry changed significantly after the Spanish Civil War. He lost some of the modernist rigour of his early poetry, being as it were, unable to focus on 'the reaction' when confronted with the urgency of a war, the outcome of which would have far-reaching consequences on a global scale.

The poem that marked the final turn in his work is arguably 'Voltaire at Ferney', published in *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* (June 1939). Auden took themes from Voltaire's satire, *Candide* (*Candide, ou l'Optimisme*, 1759) about a sheltered young man, Candide, who lives in an Edenic paradise. His mentor Dr Pangloss indoctrinates him with Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's optimistic philosophical proposition in *Theodicy* (*Die Theodizee*, 1710) that the world and our existence in it is optimal. Where there are imperfections, they can be avoided because 'God has chosen the best of all possible worlds.'[817] In 'Voltaire at Ferney', the poet 'Perfectly happy now' looks at 'his estate.' The Edenic estate in the first stanza, with its trees and view of the white Alps, quickly deteriorates with the intrusion of far-off enemies in Paris, and a blind old woman.[818] The poet feels compelled to write,

> "Nothing is better than life". But was it? Yes, the fight
> Against the false and the unfair
> Was always worth it. So was gardening. Civilize.

The poem ends with the poet unable to sleep with the knowledge of the distant, but ever-present 'wrong' outside:

> Yet, like a sentinel, he could not sleep. The night was full
> of wrong
> Earthquakes and executions: Soon he would be dead,
> And still all over Europe stood the horrible nurses
> Itching to boil their children. Only his verses
> Perhaps could stop them: He must go on working: Over
> head,

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[816] 'Modern English Poetry: Professor E.C. Dickinson's Survey of the Last 20 Years', *The Civil and Military Gazette*, 15 December 1936, p.11, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0003221/19361215/143/0011, accessed: 27 November 2023.

[817] G. W. Leibniz, *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*, trans. E.M. Huggard, Illinois, US, Open Court Publishing Company, 1996, p.229

[818] W.H. Auden, 'Voltaire at Ferney', *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, vol. 54, no.3, 1939, p.119

The uncomplaining stars composed their lucid song.[819]

When Candide is expelled from his garden, he is confronted with the injustices outside of his Eden – earthquakes and executions. *Candide* ends with Voltaire's famous line, 'Il faut cultiver notre jardin' ('We must attend to our garden'). In 'Voltaire at Ferney' insomnia is a political condition. The poet writes because he doesn't know what else to do. The futility of his labour is overshadowed by the need to believe that his labour is useful because, as Pangloss maintains, 'when man was put into the Garden of Eden, he was placed there *"ut operaretur eum*" - to dress it and to keep it, which proves that man is not born for idleness and repose.'[820] Auden challenged the idea, as did Voltaire, that his was the 'best of all possible worlds.'[821] Candide creates a new paradise for himself. The poet cannot close himself off from the horrors beyond the borders of his estate. As Dickinson put it, Auden was 'attacking everything in himself which clings to the sick part of society.'[822]

Auden's friend, Spender, considered himself a Communist but was critical of the extent to which he was willing to fully commit to the cause. At Oxford, he had adopted the stance taken by fellow Modernists that art and politics should be kept separate. Throughout his life he struggled to reconcile the two. When confronted with the work that would be necessary to achieve socialism on a local and global scale, he 'had to admit that what [he] really wanted was that others should live as [he] did, not that [he] should "join the workers"' – a prospect that he found 'discomforting.'[823] Nevertheless, he joined Auden in Spain, distancing himself from Eliot's esotericism while still maintaining a reverence for craftmanship and high art. In 1939, Spender published a collection of poems, *Poems for Spain,* with the Hogarth Press. He sustained a long friendship with Eliot whom he viewed as a mentor and father figure. At the same time, he was unable to 'accept his literary "father's" view of the world and its possibilities.'[824] He had been driven to communism through a refusal to accept, as David Leeming explains it in his biography, the 'passive suffering' that he identified in poems like Yeats' 'The Second Coming', and Eliot's *The Waste Land.*[825]

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[819] Auden, 'Voltaire at Ferney', pp. 120-121
[820] Voltaire, *Candide*, *Candide and Other Writings*, New York, US, Barnes & Noble, 1995, p.94
[821] Voltaire, *Candide*, p.95
[822] **'**Modern English Poetry: Professor E.C. Dickinson's Survey of the Last 20 Years', *The Civil and Military Gazette*, 15 December 1936, p.11, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0003221/19361215/143/0011, accessed: 27 November 2023.
[823] Spender, 'The God that Failed', p.218
[824] D. Leeming, *Stephen Spender: A Life in Modernism*, New York, US, Henry Holt and Company, 1999, p.62
[825] Leeming, *Stephen Spender,* p.57

In Loris Mirella's words, 'the values which seem to motivate modernism, the paramount concern with literary innovation and experiment, appear to be incommensurable with the strictly political values of solidarity and self-sacrifice related to the Spanish War.'[826] Woolf viewed war as a disruption in the artistic process: 'Obviously, the writer is in such close touch with human life that any agitation in it must change his angle of vision. Either he focuses his sight upon the immediate problem; or he brings his subject matter into relation with the present; or in some cases, so paralysed is he by the agitation of the moment that he remains silent.'[827] Cunard shared the view that 'writers and poets' were 'amongst the most sensitive instruments of a nation,' but unlike Woolf, she believed that they were obliged to use that sensitivity for good.[828] She made this clear in a poem, 'Yes, it is Spain', which mocked and chastised authors who were content to remain complacent:

> The popes and imposters, the critics pragmatic, the pomps - to
> Prick irony into function by use of the heart and the fact -
> Into the washtub with History, for the better showing of it;
> Then, now, à la mode du temps - that the artist becomes the act.
>
> Blake too - you'll do well to remember that naked man's announcement:
> "It is impossible, yes, for truth to be told *so's understood*
> And not be believed". Great Blake is the Day of Judgement,
> Vengeful, oppressive, peculiar - Blake's all to the good.
>
> Daddy Hogarth, and Faust, Shakespeare, Chaucer and Marlowe,
> Goya, Heine and Daumier, and the long-exiled giant, Hugo,
> Dante - what do you think they'd say to you, artist in hesitations? Shall I call on these our dead for their answer? "Go,
>
> Learn from the day's ruins and tombs" they say, "our trust's in the people
> Who fought against iron, Church and Bank, with naked fist, fight not in vain –
> Every man to his battle, child; this is yours, understand it,
> In that desert where blood replaces water - Yes, it is Spain."[829]

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[826] L. Mirella, 'Realigning Modernism: Eliot, Auden, and the Spanish Civil War', *Modern Language Studies*, vol. 24, no. 3, 1994, p.94
[827] V. Woolf, 'Why Art Today Follows Politics', *Selected Essays*, D. Bradshaw (ed), Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press, 2008, p.213
[828] Cunard, *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War*
[829] N. Cunard, 'This is Spain' (extract), *The Poems of Nancy Cunard From the Bodleian Library*, Nottingham, UK, Trent Editions, 2005, p.46

Cunard had been repulsed by responses to *Authors Take Sides* from some of her friends. After years of loyalty she started to question her friendship with Pound. Sensing a divide in their ideologies, she had limited her dealings with him to the purely professional. If any affection remained between them, his attitude towards the Ethiopians and Jews destroyed it. In *The Hours* she wrote: 'he became very anti-Semitic, and I received a letter from him in the middle of the Ethiopian War telling me he hoped I realised that "the Abyssinians are BLACK JEWS." With all his humanity, so well remembered from the times I knew him first, this fascism is totally baffling.'[830] He was no longer welcome in the binary world of right and wrong that Cunard lived in.

Ernest Hemmingway had a theory about why Pound turned fascist, which he relayed to Cunard when she encountered him in Havana while trying to get back to England:

> He said that Ezra had been ridiculed or paid no attention to first of all in his native country, the United States. Next, living in England, he had not encountered sufficient respect for his work and ideas. Thirdly, it was more or less the same when he went to live in France. But in Italy, where he settled in the mid-twenties, he was considered of importance increasingly as the years passed. There he was, perhaps even "a great man".'[831]

In other words, Pound's ego and sense of self-importance had steered him away from moral approaches to the war. Cunard found the transition confusing: 'One would have thought that, to someone so hypersensitive, the very vulgarity of fascism would have been repugnant, even leaving out entirely its fundamental principles.'[832] That Pound was a lost cause was confirmed for her in his response to the survey. He insulted it and those against the war, calling it 'an escape mechanism for young fools who are too cowardly to think', before pronouncing that Spain was a 'luxury to a gang of sap-headed dilettantes.'[833]

Eliot was just as disappointing. He declared himself 'sympathetic' but 'convinced that it is best that at least a few men of letters should remain isolated, and take no part in these collective activities.'[834] Poet Roy Campbell did not respond to the survey, but he did address the war. Cunard was irritated, and unimpressed with his contribution:

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[830] Cunard, *These Were the Hours,* p. 129
[831] Cunard quoting Ellis. N. Cunard, *These Were the Hours: Memories of My Hours Press Reanville and Paris 1928-1931*, Illinois, US, Southern Illinois University Press, 1969, pp.127-128
[832] Cunard, *These Were the Hours,* p.128
[833] E. Pound in: N. Cunard, *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War*, London, UK, Left Review, 1937
[834] T.S. Eliot in: N. Cunard, *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War*

> His long poem, written then, *Flowering Rifle, A Poem from* the *Battlefield of Spain,* purports to be about the war but is mainly a collection of diatribes against "Jews and Marxists," and seems to me a tubthumping, lengthy piece of boredom. No matter how unsympathetic, the poem might perhaps have been revealing and interesting had it contained merely a few facts.[835]

In 'Yes, it is Spain', Cunard addressed those like Pound and Eliot who either dismissed the war or failed to see the importance of getting involved. She called attention to where the artists she had asked to take a side fell within the progression of literary tradition, and the undeniable connection between them, their contemporaries and those who came before them. For example, they held the work of poets like William Blake in high esteem, but did not follow in their footsteps, or heed the politics in their poetry, by standing up against war.

She alluded to these connections again in a report for the *Manchester Guardian* after an estimated 475 000 refugees had crossed the border into France to seek asylum after Franco took control of Barcelona, the Catalan capital, on 26 January 1939. She had made her way to Perpignan. From there, she started campaigning for the release of refugees, including poets, authors and intellectuals, who had been interned. Most found themselves in camps, which quickly became overrun. The conditions in the camps were inhumane, especially in the first few weeks when there was limited access to shelter, food and water, amounting to high mortality rates.

In her report, she wrote that 'they must be got out of these internment hells, where the French authorities are acting as virtual agents for Franco, for every single facility and immediate freedom is given those who accept to return to Franco Spain.' She supplied a list of interned artists who she placed side-by-side with their European counterparts. Her list included Ludwig Renn, 'whose renown…may be compared to that of H.G. Wells and Romain Rolland.' She described conditions where 'poets of the standing of Auden, or Jean Cocteau' were 'insulted by guards and starving, surrounded by the bayonets of the Senegalese, and sleeping in the icy wind on bare ground.'[836] Cunard managed to free five 'intellectuals' from a camp in Argelès. They stayed with her in Normandy until they recovered before leaving for Mexico.

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[835] Cunard, *These Were the Hours,* pp. 137-138

[836] N. Cunard, 'Report on Spanish Intellectuals Interned at Camps in Southern France, including "The Case of Emilio Prados, Poet"', *Manchester Guardian,* 16 February 1939, The John Rylands Library, University of Manchester, GDN/B/C290a/30

From there, exhausted and in need of recuperation, Cunard went to stay with Neruda in Chile. She remained as his guest for almost two years before she felt ready to return to Europe.[837]

In an editorial in the *New Times,* Pankhurst marked Franco's victory in Barcelona by accusing Britain, 'whose whole history has been a long struggle for human rights and the democratic ideal,' and France, 'whose revolution dethroned autocracy, and established democratic government, and the recognition of the essential Rights of Man…not for France alone, but for all Europe' of hypocrisy and complicity in the fall of Republican Spain.[838] Britain and France had adopted policies of non-intervention, which included France's refusal to send arms, weakening the Republicans against the insurgents who were heavily backed by Italy and Germany. After the war, Britain and France recognised Franco's victory, as they had recognised Mussolini's takeover of Ethiopia, confirming two significant victories for Fascism.[839] Moscow was another source of deep disappointment.

Long before Franco's rebellion, the Comintern had been involved in Spanish politics, with its own political party working alongside other leftist organisations towards establishing a People's Republic. It followed that when the war broke out, the U.S.S.R would have supported the Republicans. But as Stanley Payne found, apart from the occasional reference in memoirs, 'there is no reliable evidence of any immediate Soviet reaction that involved military assistance.'[840] Instead, Stalin took his time assessing the situation and weighing his options based on whether there was sufficient evidence that the Republicans could defeat Franco. While Stalin ruminated, the people of Russia set to work raising funds to send to the front and organised mass rallies to show their support for their comrades abroad. A plan for military intervention was eventually drawn up, and the Soviets entered the war, becoming the largest source of aid for the Republicans.

Pankhurst was not convinced that the intervention was selfless, writing several articles in the aftermath of the war criticising Russia for what she believed was a calculated effort with ulterior motives. According to her, Stalin exploited the conflict to his own ends, ideologically

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[837] A. Jackson, British Women and the Spanish Civil War, London, UK, Routledge, 2002, pp.171-172
[838] Qtd in: R. Pankhurst, 'Sylvia Pankhurst, Ethiopia and the Spanish Civil War', *Women's History Review*, vol. 15, no. 5, 2006, p. 780
[839] Cunard predicted France and Britain's actions in 1936. She had written to Hughes in that 'it is obvious that France has no intention of changing its policy; there will be no aid from there. As for England, its attitude never surprised me. The atmosphere of Europe itself, as you can feel, is highly nervous.'
N. Cunard, 'Letter to Langston Hughes', 2 December 1936, From the Collection: Hughes, Langston, 1902-1967, The Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University, Box 49, folder 918.
[840] S. Payne, *The Spanish Civil War, the Soviet Union, and Communism*, New Haven, US, Yale University Press, 2004, pp. 124-125

and economically, by using it to drum up support for his regime and taking large sums of money in exchange for weaponry. As for Ethiopia, Pankhurst meant it when she said at a Christmas bazaar fundraiser, organised by the *New Times and Ethiopian News* in 1936, that they would 'not allow that Ethiopia should go down and be wiped out from among the nations of the world.'[841] The country continued to fight for independence, and Pankhurst stayed the course, campaigning for liberation.

For Mannin, Franco's victory ended her belief that freedom should be fought for at all costs, even if that meant taking up arms. Her politics had become firmly tied to abolishing governments and war:

> Whenever a country goes to war it is for its conception of freedom. 'Your freedom is at stake,' the governments cry, to the peoples, 'To arms!' and the peoples obey, obedience to governments having become a habit of their civilisation. There was never a war yet that was not fought for freedom — or the illusion of it. Yet the world is in chains…what governments call Freedom is not what is understood by the term in Utopia.[842]

She supported her argument with a quote by William Godwin, reminding her readers not to forget that 'government is, abstractly taken, an evil, a usurpation upon private judgment and individual conscience of mankind,' and that the only free people are those not governed by law. [843]

In *Bread and Roses,* Mannin used the Spanish 'anarcho-syndicalist experiment of 1936' as an example of a Utopia that was almost realised, and might have been fully realised, if Franco had not won the war.[844] Aragon and its surrounding villages were reorganised into agrarian collectives. Anti-fascist revolutionary committees replaced local authorities, and the land was divided into zones. Delegates were elected by groups of workers to attend meetings with the stock breeding councillor in order to assure that their needs were met. On the industrial side, factory committees 'were elected in meetings held in the factories, and were composed of clerical as well as manual workers.' The whole organisation 'rested on this method of division of labour.'[845] Gaston Laval reported that the system proved that 'industry can do much better

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[841] 'Ethiopia Must not be Wiped Out', *Daily News*, 16 December 1936, online: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0003214/19361216/106/0007, accessed: 20 July 2023
[842] Mannin, *Bread and Roses*, p. 12
[843] Mannin, *Bread and Roses*, p. 12
[844] Mannin, *Bread and Roses*, p. 28
[845] Mannin, *Bread and Roses*, p. 29

without capitalists, without share-holders, and without employers, whose rivalries prevent the most rational use of raw material and of human effort.' Mannin cited this as proof that 'everything goes much better without government intervention.'[846]

Constant war and her negative experiences with the CPGB and the Comintern had tarnished her belief in a perfect society. According to her, the world that she found herself in was overrun by capitalism 'based on competition' and 'the struggle for world-markets.' Even the U.S.S.R., which was in theory 'non-capitalistic,' had fallen into the trap of capitalism because it was 'still imperialistic.'[847] Anarcho-syndicalism reawakened her utopian impulse by providing new ways of conceptualising the future, and she merged it with what had inspired her when she was still a card-carrying Socialist – the work of William Morris. The same outline of how man and machine would commune in Utopia that Pankhurst used to frame 'Utopian Conversations' was of particular interest to her:

> In Morris's 'Nowhere' when certain work was found by experience to be too disagreeable or troublesome it was given up, and what it produced was done without. The rule was that ' all work which it would be irksome to do by hand is done by immensely improved machinery; and in all work which it is a pleasure to do by hand machinery is done without... and as we are not driven to make a vast quantity of useless things, we have time and resources enough to consider our pleasure in making them. [848]

She agreed with the initial premise of machines doing the unpleasant work thereby freeing up time for pleasurable pursuits, but disagreed with Morris on the effect that this would have on the future. In his Utopia, 'Machine after machine was dropped in the course of years because the machine could not produce works of art, and these, things made by hand, were more and more called for.'[849] Industry and technology were so integrated into everyday life by the time that Mannin wrote *Bread and Roses* that she saw no way to abolish it, advocating instead for its inclusion in a restructured society. She was referring not just to industry but to media that had become integrated into culture, especially popular culture like cinema, which had provided new ways to make art and reach the masses.

Her return to Morris and the hope of a utopian future was nostalgia for a bygone era. He featured in *Comrade, O Comrade* in contrast to caricatures like Mr. Isinglass, a mockery of the British Communists who became useful idiots in Moscow's game. The story is set at the

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[846] Mannin, *Bread and Roses*, p. 29
[847] Mannin, *Bread and Roses*, p. 30
[848] Mannin, *Bread and Roses*, p. 68
[849] Mannin, *Bread and Roses*, p. 68

same time as the Spanish Civil War. Isinglass states with tears in his eyes and his 'thick lenses misted with emotion' that 'the Spanish People's struggle against Fascism is the struggle of the international working-class movement everywhere' before admitting a few pages later that his investment in the Communist Party is more a love of authority and power than politics.[850] He went to Moscow in 1934 because 'it was the correct Leftist-Intellectual thing to do', runs a small leftist paper called '*The Muck Sifter'* because it serves his 'power complex' and provides him with somewhere to publish his own work – 'he fancied himself as a poet. A poet of the people.'[851] In many ways, he is a more extreme version of Lattimer in *Ragged Banners.*

Morris' house, which Larry and Jackie visit towards the end of the novel where 'all the young socialists of those days…the common working people' gathered,[852] is set against a meeting that Larry attends of 'various political denominations' including the ILP who are distributing the *New Leader* outside the hall.[853] Mannin presents the speeches as a string of common phrases like 'class struggle between rich and poor' strung together with ellipses, rendering them phatic, and depriving them of meaning. The entertainment includes poetry read by a 'distinguished poet, clad in classy tweed' who 'heaved up languidly from his chair and in a bored, classy tone murmured that he would first read the perm' about the anti-fascists against the rebels 'in the original Spanish' to an audience who 'assumed intelligent expressions' and 'nodded and smiled at various points to indicate they understood Spanish.' He then announced that he would read his translation of the 'perm' and everyone 'looked even more intelligent.'[854] Finally, and with significantly more enthusiasm, he reads one of his own 'perms':

> No more the castanets
> All that is finished
> Plough all such insignia
> Of the Bourgeoisie
> Into the blood-soaked ground.
> Now the machine-gun blooms
> With crimson flowers
> Under the orange tree.
> No more the castanets,
> The soul of Spain is free![855]

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[850] Mannin, *Comrade O Comrade,* pp. 13, 19
[851] Mannin, *Comrade O Comrade*, p.20
[852] Mannin, *Comrade O Comrade,* p.152
[853] Mannin, *Comrade O Comrade*, p.60
[854] Mannin, *Comrade O Comrade*, p.61
[855] Mannin, *Comrade O Comrade*, p.61

The poem in Spanish is read with little emotion and tolerated by the audience. Everyone claps vigorously after hearing the translation. When the poet reads his original, nonsensical poem, it is met with 'such tremendous applause' that he is 'induced to give an encore.'[856] The escalation in enthusiasm is relative to the degree to which the audience can relate to the cause and the poetry. The cause, the Spanish Civil War, is incrementally appropriated by the poet and the audience, first through translation, then in an original poem. The Spanish poet is forgotten. He is robbed first of his language, then of his experiences, which are mined for content. The meeting is comical and pointless. Nothing has been decided, achieved, or set in motion regarding Spain.

Conversely, when discussing gatherings at Morris' house, Larry asks if there would be 'fine good talk there at all times, the fine poetic talk settin' the world to rights' to which Jackie simply replies: 'there would so.'[857] In Morris' Utopia*,* Mannin imagined the poets as 'the unacknowledged legislators of the world' who set it right.[858] In Cunard's words, 'the most sensitive instruments of a nation.' For Pankhurst, the defenders of the 'public mind and conscience.'

When Eliot said that 'a few men of letters should remain isolated' from politics, he was advocating partisanship in a situation where choices, as Cunard understood it, had to be made between freedom and Fascism.[859] The writer of fiction, poetry, and novels falls into the same class as 'men of letters', or intellectuals and observers like journalists. As Auguste Colin put it, press media and literary genres fulfil the same function: to lead 'governments, communes, families, and individuals to realize the societary order.'[860] To put it differently, journalism is inextricable from literature in that it serves as an intermediatory between the masses and authors, not only through literary criticism but in recording and reflecting upon the socio-political landscape of the world in which fiction is produced.

The connections between the journalism, non-fiction, and art that Cunard, Pankhurst and Mannin produced were clear, and necessary if they were to fully communicate their ideas. Fiction has historically played a role in politics with varying degrees of success. What is often overlooked is that by focusing on 'the reaction rather than on the paraphernalia,' works that

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[856] Mannin, *Comrade O Comrade,* p.61
[857] Mannin, *Comrade O Comrade*, p.152
[858] Mannin, *Comrade O Comrade*, p.152
[859] Eliot in: Cunard, *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War*
[860] Qtd in: H.B. Weber, 'Belinskij and the Aesthetics of Utopian Socialism', *The Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1971, p.298

have been classed as political, and primarily works by various Modernists including Cunard (in her early work) Eliot ,and Woolf are only political in the sense that they passively capture a moment in time, or speak to it from a distance. Woolf accidentally captured this in her characterisation of highbrows as 'the only people who do not do things.'[861] The utopian socialist literature and poetry that Pankhurst, Mannin, Cunard, and others like Carnie Holdsworth produced was active. It *did* something, it *argued*.

Therein lies the necessity of reading it in context – a context supported by their non-fiction and activism – taking readership and material reality into account. It is only within that context that its activity and arguments come alive. Successful socialist literature, according to György Lukács, depicts the revolution *and* the obstacles that must be overcome to reach it, and the future-perfect society that it promises:

> For these difficulties can only be portrayed in literature if our writers succeed in depicting, in a genuinely living and palpable way, the obstacles that keep good workers away from the revolutionary movement, and the currents that drive even the lower and proletarianized stratum of the petty bourgeoisie into the camp of counter-revolution - only if they show us how hard a road these sections of the masses face in attaining ideological clarification…with its obstacles, difficulties and setbacks.[862]

Pankhurst, Mannin and Cunard faced various obstacles in their attempts to fulfil their roles as writers of the revolution due, in part, to an inability to escape their contexts entirely. Pankhurst's depiction of communism in India was fundamentally flawed because she projected an idea of communism onto the Indian people that she had developed in a European context. Cunard's attempts, first to write about the working classes, and then to assimilate into African American communities came about as a result of a simplified idea of shared oppression that excluded the specificity of the working-class and African American experience. Mannin's attitude to World War II was an extreme manifestation of her anti-colonial activism that displayed an uncharacteristic lack of introspection and judgement. In other writing, they excelled in doing what Lukács outlined. This was evident in Mannin's novels, where her protagonists grapple with their circumstances to find the correct path to liberation. Pankhurst's short stories and poetry were riddled with reflections on the difficulties of remaining steadfast on the path to revolution, and when Cunard moved away from her highbrow aspirations and

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[861] Woolf, 'Middlebrow', p.198
[862] G. Lukács, 'The Novels of Willi Bredel', *Essays on Realism*, trans. D. Fernbach, Massachusetts, US, MIT Press, 1983, p.27

entered the fray, her poetry and other literary activities reflected the reality of the situations in which she found herself. For a moment in time, the revolution had seemed imminent, and Utopia possible. The horrors of World War II revealed a world in which the Earthly Paradise seemed too far off to contemplate, and Utopia became a place misplaced.

# Conclusion: Utopia Lost

Derek Attridge asks a question that has taken on a tone of urgency among scholars as the academy completes its corporate evolution: 'What is the role of the academic literary critic in the fostering and diffusion of literature? The role of the weekly or monthly reviewer is clear…But what is the purpose, and what are the benefits, of publishing articles and books on works of literature written by others?'[863] In *Professing Criticism* (2022), John Guillory proposes that this question (an 'overstatement of aim') results from an 'uncertainty about the social effects of literary study.'[864] He also notes that this question ignores a critical barrier to access for the common reader: 'the difficulty of critical language, the prevalence of a rebarbative dialect that sometimes has a more performative than communicative function':

> Literary criticism is certainly entitled to employ a technical lexicon, develop highly complex arguments, or address texts that lie well outside the domain of the general reader. But perhaps it is time for the professoriate to question whether its normative language overcompensates for its marginalization, whether this language is not in some measure the defense mechanism of an inward-turning profession, a response to the disappointment of its great expectations.[865]

If the problem with literary criticism is that it is inward-turning, then it follows that the solution is an outward-turning approach to literary criticism. For some, this means expanding the canon, but that only serves to widen its borders while leaving it intact. For others, using literature to illustrate discussions about topical events is an attempt to remain relevant at the expense of the literature that they claim to analyse.

Literature is of the world, and for the world. As I have shown, in the interwar period socialist literature could shape communities outside of the boundaries set up by the literary elite. When the focus is the insoluble connection between the literary work and its public, the perspective necessarily shifts outwards. Socialist novelists and poets like Pankhurst, Mannin, and Cunard understood the power of the written word to change minds, but for that to happen it needed to speak to its readers in ways that did not alienate them. This study is a step towards

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[863] Attridge, 'Introduction: Criticism Today', p.2
[864] J. Guillory, *Professing Criticism: Essays on the Organization of Literary Study*, Chicago, US, The University of Chicago Press, 2022, p.79
[865] J. Guillory, *Professing Criticism: Essays on the Organization of Literary Study*, Chicago, US, The University of Chicago Press, 2022, p.79

reframing how we approach literary studies, and the benefits of replacing value-judgements with a more nuanced approach to literary analysis that considers the very real ways that literature enters the public sphere, and the public imagination. The importance of approaching literature this way became steadily apparent as my research progressed, and the lines between the interwar period and our contemporary moment began to blur.

There are currently civil wars underway in Yemen, Syria, Somalia, Mali, Ethiopia, Colombia, and Afghanistan. Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 was met with public outcry, and mass protests worldwide, as was the war in Palestine beginning 7 October 2023 when the Sunni Islamist group Hamas mounted an attack on Israel from the Gaza Strip. Israel responded with a large-scale military operation so extreme that on 29 December 2023, South Africa filed a suit to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) accusing Israel of violating the 'Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide'. On 24 January 2024, the Court found that the evidence presented by South Africa was sufficient to order Israel to comply with their' obligations under the Convention,' and put measures in place to protect 'Palestinians in Gaza' from 'acts of genocide and related prohibited acts.' [866]

The ongoing war in Ukraine has led to concerns that the conflict will extend to Europe. At a speech delivered at an armoured vehicle conference in late January 2024, soon-to-be former Military Chief General Sir Patrick Sanders declared that Britain should train a 'citizen army' ready to go to war in the near future. He claims that Britain needs to be prepared for the possibility of war so that the mistakes of 1914 can be avoided:

> We will not be immune and as the pre-war generation we must similarly prepare - and that is a whole-of-nation undertaking…Ukraine brutally illustrates that regular armies start wars; citizen armies win them. But we've been here before, and workforce alone does not create capability.[867]

[866] International Court of Justice, 'Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel), Summary Judgement the Order of 26 January 2024, p.5, online: https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-sum-01-00-en.pdf, accessed 1 February 2024.
[867] J. Beale, and D. Faulkner, 'Britain Must Train Citizen Army, Military Chief Warns', *BBC News*, 24 January 2024, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-68086188, accessed: 31 January 2024

The Military Chief General echoed a similar statement by Former CGS General Lord Dannatt a week earlier. He said that the United Kingdom risked a 'repeat of the 1930s' if it failed to invest in expanding and modernising its military.[868]

Lord Dannatt is not alone in referring back to the interwar period. Variations on Stalin's claims that his occupation of Ukraine in the 1930s was resistance to Western Capitalism, and beneficial for Ukrainians, have resurfaced in rhetoric used by Vladimir Putin and his propaganda machine. In his State of the Nation address delivered on 21 February 2023, Putin stated that the invasion is an attempt at liberation for the good of the Ukrainian people: 'We aren't fighting the Ukrainian people…Ukraine has become hostage of the Kyiv regime and its Western masters, which have effectively occupied the country.'[869] Stalin's reputation has been rehabilitated in Russia since the onset of the war. On 5 March 2023, State-run news agency *РИА Новости* published an opinion piece by Peter Akopov in which he argued for two Stalins, the one vilified by the West and the 'real' Stalin – a hero of the Russian people, who would have supported the invasion. To accept the West's version – the defamed, or 'Black Stalin' ('черном Сталине') – is, according to Akopov, to support a 'myth that is no longer anti-Soviet, but Russophobic, aimed at dividing and defeating Russia' ('мифа давно уже не антисоветского, а русофобского, нацеленного на раскол и поражение России.').[870]

In domestic politics, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is less interested in war, focusing instead on welfare reforms that will adversely affect the working classes and other marginalised groups already disenfranchised by the system. During an interview with the BBC's Laura Kuenssberg he said that he planned to ensure that 'everybody who can work does work.' He expressed concern about the 'very significant rise in the number of people who have been deemed unfit to work' in recent years. Allister Heath praised the Prime Minister's tax cuts and welfare reforms – a 'truly conservative fiscal event' – in his 22 November 2023 opinion piece for *The Telegraph,* 'Rishi Sunak is Finally Trying to Reverse Britain's Long Drift Towards Socialism'.[871]

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[868] J. Beale, and D. Faulkner, 'Britain Must Train Citizen Army, Military Chief Warns', *BBC News*, 24 January 2024, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-68086188, accessed: 31 January 2024

[869] Associated Press, 'Putin Rages Against the West, Defends Ukraine Invasion in Annual State of the Nation Speech', *TIME*, online: https://time.com/6257059/putin-ukraine-state-of-nation-russia/ accessed: 10 March 2023.

[870] *Петр Акопов,* Больше чем история: Сталин стал оружием в битве России и Запада, *РИА Новости*, online: https://ria.ru/20230305/stalin-1855865817.html, accessed: 10 March 2023. (trans. Mine)

[871] A. Heath, 'Rishi Sunak is Finally Trying to Reverse Britain's Long Drift Towards Socialism', *The Telegraph*, 22 November 2023, online: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/11/22/sunak-finally-reversing-britain-drift-to-socialism/, accessed: 30 January 2024.

Suffragettes and Socialists were instrumental in bringing the Welfare State into being. Sunak's reforms are likely to continue the trend of Conservative government reforms that have amounted to massive inequality in Britain. In 2003, when Patricia M. Thane published 'What Difference Did the Vote Make? Women in Public and Private Life in Britain Since 1918', women were still more likely to live below the poverty line than men.[872] Poverty has barely decreased since the Conservative governments took power in 2010. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2024) found that between 2019 and 2022, the average person experiencing poverty had an income 29% below the poverty line.[873] As of 2023, people living in destitution cannot afford food, sometimes going days without eating. Women, children, and minority groups have been disproportionately affected. Single mothers make up the bulk of lone-parent households. 21% of working-age women, and 19% of pension-age women live in poverty.

Pankhurst found in socialist doctrine an example of what was possible when women, and especially mothers, were taken into consideration in the structuring of society. She used fiction to share her vision of how reproductive labour would factor into a utopian society in 'Co-Operative Housekeeping'. The clinics that she and the ELFS opened in the East End were designed to help women who needed to work to support themselves and their children. In Mannin's ideal society, free childcare would be part of a more extensive system designed to make motherhood easy for women. Her own experiences as a mother who needed to work came through in her novelettes, and novels like *Martha.* The need for intervention is still urgent, with women in lone-parent households unable to find fulfilling or high-wage employment because of their duty of care in the home. The Welfare system that Suffragettes fought for was supposed to help alleviate this problem, but in its current form it barely supplements basic needs, let alone paid childcare.

Lone-parent families are among the groups particularly reliant on Welfare. The two-child limit means that third and subsequent children aren't eligible for benefits. The Foundation called on the government to draw on 'the lived experience of people who have gone through hardship' when constructing policies around Welfare. To date, all changes have been set to benefit the middle and upper classes. [874] Sunak's words are an eloquent variant of the

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[872] P.M. Thane, 'What Difference Did the Vote Make? Women in Public and Private Life in Britain Since 1918', *Historical Research*, vol. 76, no. 192, 2003, p.268

[873] Joseph Rowntree Foundation, *UK Poverty 2024: Essential Guide to Understanding Poverty in the UK,* York, UK, JRF, 2024, pp.7-8

[874] Joseph Rowntree Foundation, *UK Poverty 2024: Essential Guide to Understanding Poverty in the UK,* York, UK, JRF, 2024, pp.16, 38-39

Conservatives' campaign in the 2010s to oust the 'welfare scroungers.'[875] He wants to see them back in the labour force by 'bringing forward reforms that 'look at the eligibility for who is signed-off sick.'[876] Many of the people on Welfare are working, but their salaries aren't enough to sustain them, and their families.

Mark Best of the West London Socialist Party is not convinced that Labour Leader Keir Starmer, his 'politics that treads a little lighter on all our lives,' and an end to 'politics fuelled by division,' will do any better as head of government:[877]

> Pro-capitalist politicians making decisions in parliament that put profit ahead of the lives and livelihoods of working-class people is an issue that would continue under a Starmer-led government. There is no party in Westminster which represents the interests of the majority of the country – the working class.[878]

In 2023, Starmer put forward the motion approved by Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC) to ban former Labour Leader and Socialist Jeremy Corbyn from standing as a Labour candidate. Corbyn was blocked from his candidacy for Islington North – the seat that he occupied as an MP for 40 years. This move was perceived by many as proof that Labour was turning away from socialism.

Starmer's shameless pandering to Conservative voters in articles like 'Voters Have Been Betrayed on Brexit and Immigration. I Stand Ready to Deliver' (*The Telegraph*, 2 December 2023) haven't helped to ease their concerns. His performative resistance to Sunak's proposed welfare reforms did not stop him from praising the scourge of the so-called 'Nanny State', Margaret Thatcher, for her efforts to, in his words, 'drag Britain out of its stupor by setting loose our natural entrepreneurialism,' before he outlined what can only be described as a thinly veiled right-wing stance on immigration.[879] When Corbyn was asked what he had

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[875] K. Summers, B. Baumberg Geiger, R. de Vries, and T. O'Grady, 'The Fall of Anti-Welfare Attitudes', *LSE Blogs,* 21 September 2023, online: https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/the-fall-of-anti-welfare-attitudes/, accessed: 30 January 2024.
[876] P. Daly, 'Welfare reforms to fund pre-election tax cuts about 'fairness', Sunak suggests', *Evening Standard*, 7 January 2024, online: https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/prime-minister-rishi-sunak-government-keir-starmer-laura-kuenssberg-b1130753.html, accessed: 30 January 2024.
[877] M. Best, 'Starmer: "Tread Lightly" in Power – Join the Fight for Socialist Change', *Socialist Party*, 1 January 2024, online: https://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/119736/10-01-2024/starmer-tread-lightly-in-power-join-the-fight-for-socialist-change/, accessed: 30 January 2024.
[878] M. Best, 'Starmer: "Tread Lightly" in Power – Join the Fight for Socialist Change', *Socialist Party*, 1 January 2024, online: https://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/119736/10-01-2024/starmer-tread-lightly-in-power-join-the-fight-for-socialist-change/, accessed: 30 January 2024.
[879] K. Starmer, 'Voters Have Been Betrayed on Brexit and Immigration. I Stand Ready to Deliver', *The Telegraph*, 2 December 2023, online: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/12/02/voters-have-been-betrayed-on-brexit-and-immigration/, accessed: 30 January 2024.

learned from his early years in Parliament, the lesson that stayed with him was 'if any minister stands up and says they need to make some tough choices, and some tough decisions, it's a disaster for the working-class.'[880] Sunak said that reforming Britain requires 'difficult decisions to control Welfare.'[881] Starmer said that for his plan to succeed, Labour must make some 'difficult choices' that might frustrate those in his Party.[882]

An opinion poll conducted in 2021 found that the majority of voters aged 18-34 preferred Corbyn to Starmer. According to Tom Blackburn (*Tribune*, 13 March 2021) Corbyn garnered support because 'His policies spoke to their material needs and offered them the prospect of a more hopeful future and a less inhumane political culture, after years of scapegoating.'[883] Corbyn's rhetoric of striving for a better future is grounded in utopian International Socialism. He has repeated the idea on various platforms, including his tribute (*Jacobin* 3 March 2021) to his 'comrade,' socialist parliamentarian Stan Newens, who he praised as a 'lifelong campaigner for socialism, internationalism, and justice' committed to 'building a better world.'[884] In an interview with Grace Blakely on her podcast *A World to Win* (19 August 2020) he encouraged the next generation of Socialists to look to those who came before them, from the 18th Century onwards. He made special mention of Hardie, Pankhurst and others 'that were prepared to consider a world that was different.'[885]

Along with Pankhurst and Hardie, Morris has re-entered public discourse. In an interview for *Jacobin* (8 October 2023) Daniel Finn asked Matthew Beaumont about what could be learned from Morris' art and socialism. He noted that for Morris, everything was aestheticized. Quoting Walter Benjamin, Beaumont spoke about the 'Left and the Right being the difference between politicizing aesthetics and aestheticizing politics':

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[880] 'Proudly Socialist: A Conversation with Jeremy Corbyn, *A World to Win with Grace Blakeley* [podcast], interview with Jeremy Corbyn, *Tribune Magazine*, 19 August 2020, https://tribunemag.co.uk/2020/08/1-proudly-socialist-a-conversation-with-jeremy-corbyn, accessed: 31 January 2024.
[881] P. Daly. 'Welfare reforms to fund pre-election tax cuts about 'fairness', Sunak suggests', *Evening Standard*, 7 January 2024, online: https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/prime-minister-rishi-sunak-government-keir-starmer-laura-kuenssberg-b1130753.html, accessed: 30 January 2024.
[882] K. Starmer, 'Voters Have Been Betrayed on Brexit and Immigration. I Stand Ready to Deliver', *The Telegraph*, 2 December 2023, online: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/12/02/voters-have-been-betrayed-on-brexit-and-immigration/, accessed: 30 January 2024.
[883] T. Blackburn, 'How Keir Starmer Alienated 'Generation Left', *Tribune*, 13 March 2021, online: https://tribunemag.co.uk/2021/03/how-keir-starmer-alienated-generation-left, accessed: 30 January 2024.
[884] J. Corbyn, 'Jeremy Corbyn on Stan Newens and the Fight for Socialism in Our Time', *Jacobin*, 3 March 2021, online: https://jacobin.com/2021/03/jeremy-corbyn-stan-newens-obituary, accessed: 31 January 2024.
[885] 'Proudly Socialist: A Conversation with Jeremy Corbyn, *A World to Win with Grace Blakeley* [podcast], interview with Jeremy Corbyn, *Tribune Magazine*, 19 August 2020, https://tribunemag.co.uk/2020/08/1-proudly-socialist-a-conversation-with-jeremy-corbyn, accessed: 31 January 2024.

> Morris contradicts that because he thought that everything should be aestheticized…he did not mean this in the same way that fascists aestheticized politics, but in the sense that everyday activities — electing local representatives, organizing the workplace, or organizing leisure as a collective rather than an individualized, consumerist activity — become a kind of collective, collaborative art form. It would be one that requires our imaginative and creative input as well as some more mechanical and administrative ones.[886]

According to Morris, Capitalism destroyed art, and with it the beauty of the earth. Welfare reform is fundamentally affecting the cultural landscape of Britain. Literary scholar Alex Niven, in 'Britain's Ever-Harsher Welfare System Means That Now Only the Rich Can Afford to Make Art' (*The Guardian*, 29 May 2023), wrote that young artists including authors and poets are often 'caught-up in the "Kafkaesque" perfect storm of a punitive benefits system, an intractable housing crisis and an unforgiving work culture - all of which can leave very little time or space for creative experiments.' He said the 'most successful creative practitioners in all art forms now tend to be those with access to private resources (money, education, contacts).' Those on 'the margins of society – working-class people, disabled people, people from minority ethnic backgrounds, the non-connected' have 'vanishingly few' opportunities to enter these creative spaces.[887] As a result, they are deprived of the opportunity to bring their experiences to the fore or access the political affordances of fiction.

In terms of form, the romance has remained an effective way to conscientize. One of the 2023 bestsellers in Britain was Colleen Hoover's *It Starts With Us* (2022), the sequel to her 2016 novel *It Ends With Us*. In both novels, Hoover used the romance to house a socially conscious engagement with domestic abuse. *It Starts With Us* was written after readers called for a happy ending to the story. They wanted the standard romance formula to remain intact, not to negate the message of the prequel, but to offer hope for survivors that a fulfilling life is possible after trauma. In other words, it allows them to imagine themselves in a different future. The novels could not, by any stretch of the imagination, be described as 'great' literature. Regardless, they launched salient conversations about something that affects an estimated 1,7

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[886] D. Finn, 'The Socialism of William Morris Brought Ecology and Class Struggle Together: An Interview with Matthew Beaumont', *Jacobin*, 8 October 2023, online: https://jacobin.com/2023/10/william-morris-ecosocialism-romanticism-labor-news-from-nowhere, accessed: 30 January 2024.
[887] A. Niven, 'Britain's Ever-Harsher Welfare System Means That Now Only the Rich Can Afford to Make Art', *The Guardian*, 29 May 2023, online: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/may/29/britain-welfare-rich-art-artists-housing-social-security, accessed: 30 January 2024.

million women in the United Kingdom.[888] The value of Hoover's novel, as was the case for Mannin's romances, lies in how it argues in the socio-political context in which it was written.

Contributing to the limitations placed on literary production by class, race and economic inequality, the morally driven culture wars have returned with a vengeance. There are ever-increasing calls to censor or ban books coming from the left and right for different reasons that are equally concerning. To date, the conflict has been driven by the public without government support, but a poll conducted in 2021 found that 40 per cent of respondents would be in favour of government bans on books containing sexist, homophobic or racist content.[889] In principle this appears to be progressive, but the books in question would not be limited to those written with the intent to promote hate speech.

*The Telegraph* reported that in 2022 the Universities of Essex and Sussex had removed classic books such as August Strindberg's *Miss Julie* (1888) from courses because they contained content that students might find upsetting. In addition, content warnings routinely appear on course lists containing literature by William Shakespeare, Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, and others.[890] British Librarians have reported receiving death threats for not removing specific texts that deal with race, empire and Britain's colonial heritage from their collections. Meanwhile, right-wing activists, emboldened by the book-banning crisis unfolding in the United States, are behind requests for the removal of books that deal critically with race or contain Queer characters or themes from libraries.[891] In September 2023, a human chain of far-right protesters formed around Cork City Library to demand that Queer literature be removed from its shelves.[892]

In addition to targeted campaigns against libraries, and calls for content warnings in universities, social media is profoundly affecting the publishing industry. British author Sir Kazuo Ishiguro expressed his concern for 'the younger generation of writers' who live 'under

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[888] National Centre for Domestic Violence, 'Domestic Abuse Statistics UK', online: https://www.ncdv.org.uk/domestic-abuse-statistics-uk/, accessed: 7 February 2024.
[889] Steerpike, 'New Poll Reveals Public Back Greater Censorship', *The Spectator*, 21 July 2021, online: https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/new-poll-reveals-public-back-greater-censorship/, accessed 31 January 2024.
[890] *The Telegraph*, 'Universities Admit Purge of "Challenging Books" to Protect Students', 9 August 2022, online: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/08/09/universities-admit-purge-challenging-books-protect-students/, accessed: 31 January 2024.
[891] S. Shaffi, 'Third of UK Librarians Asked to Censor or Remove Books, Research Reveals', *The Guardian*, 20 April 2023, online: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/apr/20/third-of-uk-librarians-asked-to-censor-or-remove-books-research-reveals, accessed: 31 January 2024.
[892] S. Shaffi, 'Third of UK Librarians Asked to Censor or Remove Books, Research Reveals', *The Guardian*, 20 April 2023, online: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/apr/20/third-of-uk-librarians-asked-to-censor-or-remove-books-research-reveals, accessed: 31 January 2024.

a climate of fear [that] an anonymous lynch mob will turn up online and make their lives a misery.'[893] American Author Elizabeth Gilbert pulled her novel *The Snow Forest* from publication in 2023 after more than 500 people, none of whom had read the book, posted negative reviews on *Goodreads.* The reason given by her critics was that the story is set in Russia, and publishing it would be insensitive to Ukrainians caught up in Putin's Imperial war. The novel is reportedly about resistance to Soviet oppression, but this appears to have made no difference.[894] When a novel is treated in this way, right-wing Anti-Communists like Andrew Sullivan (*The Weekly Dish*, 29 April 2022) use the opportunity to make claims about the 'double standards of the woke left' in articles like the one claiming that Marx should be vilified as 'one of the most repellent anti-Semites and racists of the 19th century.'[895]

Context is crucial, and not only for facilitating a move away from the value judgements resulting in the omission of rich areas of literary production in the study of literature. Analysing literature in context also has the potential to intervene in efforts to ban books that hold value because they provide insights into historical moments, and highlight societal conflict. Hull's *The Sheik* is a violently racist novel that glamourises sexual assault, and glorifies imperialism. When placed alongside Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness,* however, it enhances a discussion of the systemic homophobia, sexism, and hypocrisy of the State-sanctioned moral crusade in interwar Britain. Notably, *The Sheik* would classify as a book that some on the Left would see banned. The Right would call for the removal of the undeniably Queer *The Well of Loneliness* from library collections.

A revived interest in literature arose from the COVID-19 pandemic which altered the reading habits of millions. Literature re-entered the sphere of entertainment in unprecedented ways. Attridge notes that during the pandemic, 'newspapers, magazines, and web publications [were] filled with recommendations for reading.' As a result, 'countless homes have become sites of literary encounters.'[896] TikTok, Instagram and other social media platforms are inundated with reels of content creators showing off book collections, personal libraries, or

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[893] F. Specter, '"It's an Ongoing Challenge": Will the Culture Wars Come for Britain's Books?', *The Independent*, 2 December 2023, online: https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/book-bans-uk-us-censorship-b2456957.html, accessed: 31 January 2024.
[894] F. Prose, 'Elizabeth Gilbert is Pulling a Novel Set in Russia From Publication. That's Unsettling', *The Guardian*, online: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jun/15/elizabeth-gilbert-the-snow-forest-russia, accessed: 31 January 2024.
[895] A. Sullivan, 'When Will They Cancel Karl Marx?', *The Weekly Dish*, 29 April 2022, online: https://andrewsullivan.substack.com/p/when-will-they-cancel-karl-marx-55c, accessed: 31 January 2024.
[896] Attridge, 'Introduction: Criticism Today', p.1

POVs (points of view) where they struggle to leave bookstores with only one book. Being a reader is in vogue.

Growing readerships, and the revival of utopian socialism in the political imagination, suggest that it is once again possible for storytelling to become an effective form of activism. Fiction has the potential to contribute to the process of aestheticising politics. As Beaumont identified in his assessment of Morris' value in contemporary society, change happens when creativity and imagination are introduced into 'electing local representatives, organizing the workplace, or organizing leisure as a collective rather than an individualized, consumerist activity.'[897] The cooperative imagining and making of a new world involves cultivating creativity in all sectors of society, from the arts to politics to industry. Literature asks readers to imagine themselves as other than they are, and in doing so, asks them to imagine a different future which is achievable given the will and work to realise it.

However, reminiscent of the mid-20th Century highbrow critic's concerns about the reading habits of middlebrows and lowbrows, Attridge laments that it is likely that only a small percentage of the books being read 'would count as "great" literature, or even as inventive rather than formulaic literary works.' At the same time, he is pleased by the idea that it is also 'likely that large numbers of people are discovering, or rediscovering, the deeply pleasurable experience of engaging with the kind of literature that offers challenges and surprises, that inspires admiration for its craft and subtlety, and that takes the reader into unaccustomed realms of thought and feeling.'[898] It is these works, he says, that he refers to when he uses the term '*literature*' (his italics).[899] The implication, of course, is that literature that doesn't sit well with the 'greats' doesn't evoke any sort of complex reader response, hinting uncomfortably at the idea now well over a century in circulation that readers of popular genres lack the intelligence to identify or engage in sophisticated ways with '*literature*.' They're reading, but they aren't *reading*.

Sales fuel the critic's panic about reading habits. The 10 bestselling books of 2023 were a mix of popular genres, including fantasy, crime, celebrity autobiographies, and romance. The number one bestseller was a quintessential romance novel, *Happy Place*, by Emily Henry. The bestselling book in the United Kingdom was Prince Harry's *Spare*. The popularity of Harry's

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[897] D. Finn, 'The Socialism of William Morris Brought Ecology and Class Struggle Together: An Interview with Matthew Beaumont', *Jacobin*, 8 October 2023, online: https://jacobin.com/2023/10/william-morris-ecosocialism-romanticism-labor-news-from-nowhere, accessed: 30 January 2024.
[898] Attridge, 'Introduction: Criticism Today', p.1
[899] Attridge, 'Introduction: Criticism Today', p.2

self-indulgent (at times uncomfortably oedipal) memoir is unsurprising considering the Royal Family's centrality in British national identity, a fascination with royal scandals, and the death of Queen Elizabeth II in 2022 which ignited a feverish and disturbing patriotism – and resistance.

Fans of the Republic of Ireland's (Poblacht na hÉireann) most successful football team, Cumann Peile Ruagairí na Seamróige (Shamrock Rovers) were filmed chanting 'Lizzy's in a Box' at games and in pubs, hinting at lingering animosity over centuries of wars fought against the British for independence, most recently the ethno-nationalist 30-year war, Na Trioblóidí (The Troubles), which took place from the late 1960s to 1998.[900] Oral traditions persist in such moments when politics and solidarity are expressed in songs and chants that travel from group to group. What may seem like a relatively insignificant event happened at a time when Irish politics was starting to shift in Northern Ireland.

The Irish Republican Army (IRA) was primarily Marxist. It officially decommissioned its weapons, and ended its armed campaign in 2005 but its socialist political wing, Sinn Féin (founded in 1905) stayed active in politics. In 2022, the Party took the most seats at an assembly election. After a two-year battle for recognition, Sinn Féin's Michelle O'Neill now holds the job of First Minister, Northern Ireland's top political office. This has led to speculation about a future vote for a united Ireland. The position has historically been held by Unionists intent on keeping the North and South independent.[901]

The majority of readers globally might, as Attridge says, prefer popular genres but this doesn't mean that these genres reign supreme in all countries. The bestselling book in Ireland in 2023 was the Booker Prize winner *Prophet Song* by Paul Lynch. Lynch's political novel follows Eilish Stack in her efforts to protect her family after her husband, a trade unionist, is taken by The Garda National Services Bureau (Ireland's newly formed secret police) at a protest calling for better wages for teachers. In the book, Ireland is in the grips of a totalitarian government. Lynch artfully interlaces the oppression of an authoritarian regime with commentary on gender politics as Eilish struggles to navigate work, family and her husband's disappearance.

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[900] *Irish Independent*, 'Shamrock Rovers Fans Seen Chanting 'Lizzie's in a Box' Again Despite Condemnation From Club', 15 September 2022, online: https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/shamrock-rovers-fans-seen-chanting-lizzies-in-a-box-again-despite-condemnation-from-club/41992486.html, accessed: 5 February 2024.
[901] M. Specia, 'Northern Ireland Has a Sinn Fein Leader. It's a Landmark Moment', *The New York Times*, 3 February 2024, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/03/world/europe/northern-ireland-sinn-fein-michelle-oneill.html, accessed: 5 February 2024.

Lynch's novel responds to an age of misinformation, conspiracy theories, and a shift in European politics as Far-Right Parties gain footholds in countries like Sweden and Italy. Co-Founder of the Brothers of Italy, Ignazio Benito La Russa, was elected President of the Senate of the Republic in 2022. He is the son of Antonino La Russa, who served as secretary of Mussolini's National Fascist Party. In a video filmed in the year of his election, he showed off his fascist relics, boasting that 'there's even a communist symbol, but we put it beneath the feet of the Mussolini statue.'[902] Deeply conservative Parties currently run Hungary and Poland.

In another striking parallel between our time and the 1930s, Spain's socialist government is threatened by rising Fascism. As part of efforts to prevent the glorification of Spain's totalitarian past, the remains of General Franco and José Antonio Primo de Rivera were exhumed and reburied in 2019 and 2023, respectively. After Primo de Rivera was relocated, Leader of the right-wing Vox Party, Santiago Abascal, accused Spain's government of moving a 'patriot' who 'gave his life for Spain.' Primo de Rivera's exhumation took place as a group of right-wing activists chanted and gave fascist salutes.[903]

Lynch's novel has the critic's seal of approval. Ironically, the techniques that Lynch uses to construct the political landscape in his book are reminiscent of socialist political novels in the interwar period, including those written by popular authors like Mannin. Although Dublin is mentioned on occasion, the setting is not always clear, and Lynch makes no direct references to specific political events or contemporary Irish politics. He also locates much of the narrative in Eilish's home, a space that resembles the homes of many of his readers, globally. In this way, he speaks to an international audience. Lynch hints at this when Eilish's father tells her that,

> Tradition is nothing more than what everyone can agree on – the scientists, the teachers, the institutions, if you change ownership of the facts, you can alter the structure of belief, what is agreed upon…it is really quite simple, the NAP is trying to change what you and I call reality, they want to muddy it like water, if you say one thing is another thing and you say it enough times, then it must be so, and if you keep saying it over and over people accept it as true – this is an old idea, of course, it really is nothing new, but you're watching it happen in your own time and not in a book.[904]

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[902] *The Socialist Worker*, 'Why We Say the Brothers of Italy are Fascists', 22 October 2022, online: https://socialistworker.co.uk/features/why-we-say-the-brothers-of-italy-are-fascists/, accessed: 5 February 2024.
[903] P. Smith, 'Spain Exhumes Fascist Leader Primo de Rivera as it Confronts Far-Right Past', *NBC NEWS*, 24 April 2023, online: https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/spain-exhumes-fascist-leader-primo-de-rivera-franco-rcna81076, accessed: 5 February 2023.
[904] P. Lynch, *Prophet Song*, London, UK, Oneworld, 2023, pp.20-21

Lynch wants the reader to watch what is unfolding in their 'own time and not in a book' – to recognise the repetition of history, and note where it differs. *Prophet Song* is a work of fiction that encourages moments of recognition so that readers can connect what they are reading and their own socio-political landscape. He resists muddying the water. Mannin used a similar technique in 'Love's Winnowing' and other early works where she did not present the reader with an overtly political story, instead relying on them to discover it for themselves. Cunard's 'A Lost Night' does similar work, as does Pankhurst's 'Thrift'.

An editorial in *The Guardian* (30 November 2023) published shortly after Lynch won the Booker Prize praised the *Prophet Song* before critiquing a trend in contemporary literature to use dystopias as frameworks for social critique. The editorial called for a return to 'the cultural tradition that gave us Thomas More's *Utopia*, *News from Nowhere* by William Morris and the early feminist visions of Charlotte Perkins Gilman.'[905] According to the author, utopian thinking is more important than ever:

> …excessive realism can be as culturally debilitating and unhelpful as idle dreaming. As Prof Ruth Levitas, one of Europe's foremost scholars of utopian thought, has written: "Utopia helps us … by providing that double vision between present and future. We can imagine a future society with a different ethic, and look at our own practices from that standpoint." *News from Nowhere*, in which Morris's Victorian narrator, William Guest, visits a 21st-century Britain where acquisitive, competitive instincts have withered away, along with the State, employs this critical method.

In 2018, Michael Rosen wrote a short article for *LitHub* explaining how British Socialists used fairy tales to 'get the message out.' He used Morris' newspaper, *Commonweal*, as an example of the type of weekly that published stories, and serials with political messages contained in 'traditional literary forms like the fairy tale, the fable, the parable, the allegory, and the moral tale.'[906] The article was accompanied by a short story, 'Nightmare Bridge' (1910), by Glanville Maidstone. Having read the article, readers could engage with the story having developed a better understanding of its form and content.

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[905] *The Guardian*, 'The Guardian View on Utopias: News From Nowhere Can Help Us Here and Now', 30 November 2023, online: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/nov/30/the-guardian-view-on-utopias-news-from-nowhere-can-help-us-here-and-now, accessed: 5 February 2024.
[906] M. Rosen, 'For British Socialists, Fairy Tales Were the Best Way to Get the Message Out', *LitHub*, 28 November 2018, online: https://lithub.com/for-british-socialists-fairy-tales-were-the-best-way-to-get-the-message-out/, accessed: 8 February 2024.

Popular magazines have started using their reach to conscientize by combining politics and entertainment. Youth-oriented fashion magazine, *Teen Vogue,* has been publishing articles about socialism, and supporting other publications that do the same. In early 2023, readers were encouraged to seek out *Hammer and Hope*, a new socialist magazine that focuses on race and class.[907] The first volume of *Hammer and Hope* (2023) included a piece emphasising the connection between art, revolution and the importance of imagined futures. Quoting Robin D. G. Kelley, Nia T. Evans writes that 'Revolutions…are not forged only through political struggle; they are dreams in action, imaginations unleashed. In this way, transformative social movements share much in common with great works of art. Both require…"poetic knowledge," or the ability to "enable participants to imagine something different, to realize that things need not always be this way."'[908]

It is significant that those advocating socialism in the 21st Century are returning, as International Socialists did, to the utopianism of the late 19th Century before it was perverted by the despots that Anti-Communists hold up like emblems. Renewed interest in Pankhurst, Mannin, and Cunard's work in scholarship is also renewed interest in the tradition of the utopian socialism that they inherited from Morris, who inherited it from those who contributed to its making, beginning with More.

Moreover, this interest isn't confined to the academy. It has entered the public imagination, and with it the revival of activism that encompasses journalism, fiction, and art. This is not a case of 'history repeating itself' – a phrase that has been so overused that it has become phatic. Rather, this is a continuation of a rational response to political tension in all sectors of society that was in no way resolved after World War II. As Paul Tillich describes it in 'Critique and Justification of Utopia' (1966), the idea of Utopia is about moving forward, not looking back:

> The present, for men who have no utopia, is inevitably constricting; and similarly, cultures which have no utopia remain imprisoned in the present and quickly fall back into the past, for the present can be fully alive only in tension between past and future. This is the fruitfulness of utopia - its ability to open up possibilities.[909]

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[907] M. Retta, 'Hammer & Hope is The New Magazine Focused on Race and Class', *Teen Vogue*, 1 March 2023, online: https://www.teenvogue.com/story/hammer-hope-profile-taylor-parker, accessed: 8 February 2024.
[908] N. Evans, 'Revolution is a Great Work of Art', *Hammer & Hope*, no.1, 2023, online: https://hammerandhope.org/article/faith-ringgold-children, accessed: 8 February 2024.
[909] P.Tillich, 'Critique and Justification of Utopia', F. Manuel, F (ed), *Utopias and Utopian Thought*. Cambridge, UK, The Riverside Press, 1966, p. xxi

Engaging with Pankhurst, Mannin and Cunard's work, lives, and moreover how they incorporated their poetry and fiction into their activism reveals the power of storytelling. Inspired by Morris, and continuing the tradition that he and they inherited, they asked their readers to imagine a different future. The socialist fiction and non-fiction that they produced speak more clearly to politics today, and to their own time, than the literary experiments of the avant-garde.

Although high art holds an important place in literary studies, there are equally important arenas of literary production that are often dismissed because of widely accepted ideas about genres, forms, periods, and specific modes of criticism. Close engagement with the ways that International Socialist authors, and Pankhurst, Mannin, and Cunard in particular, used art as activism unsettles these ideas. These authors were expertly manipulating form. What appeared to be a traditional romance was actually a cleverly crafted work of political fiction that revealed the authors keen understanding of form. Poems and short stories that seemed archaic and contrived contained within them rich literary histories.

The holistic approach that I took to exploring these author-activists' lives and work did not necessitate compromising the intellectual process of close reading, and literary analysis. Instead, combining in-depth literary analysis with histories of ideas, people, time periods, and genres opened up new avenues for exploring politics and literary production in interwar Britain. Those explorations opened further avenues into literary production and politics in contemporary society. The elite academic space need not be separate from the public world of weeklies, monthlies, news media, and a growing reading public primed to receive ideas about politics and literature. It is possible to write an informed introduction to a story by Mannin in a popular magazine, and publish an article about Eliot in an academic journal – or an introduction to a work by Eliot, and an article about Mannin. Provided the critic can free him or herself from the performative professionalism of academia, these activities need not be mutually exclusive.

The basic principles of socialism, and the worlds that Utopian Socialists imagined, were premised on a universal equality ahead of its time, and evidenced by a returned need to seek out Utopia, ahead of our time. If a new generation of activists are to mount the stage of history, and take up the search for Utopia, its message needs to be clearly articulated, and grounded in language that in Mannin's words, 'will make meaning clear…language that does not merely

photograph actuality but interprets it.'[910] The literary critic could harness that language, and expand their work to include those who speak to the masses through their creative work, but only if he or she is willing to look outward.

[910] Mannin, *Privileged Spectator*, p.73

# Appendices

**Appendix I:** Walter Crane, 'Political Independence – The Key to Economic Emancipation', *Labour Leader*, 19 June 1897.[911]




[911]Content provided by THE BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. With thanks to The British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk).

**Appendix II:** Edward Burne-Jones, Illustration to William Morris' *A Dream of John Ball*, Wood Engraving, 1888. [912]




[912] Edward Burne-Jones, Illustration to William Morris' *A Dream of John Ball*, 1888 [online photograph] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William.Morris.John.Ball.jpg, accessed: 22 August 2020.

**Appendix III:** *Workers' Dreadnought*, 16 December 1922.[913]

WORKERS' DREADNOUGHT.—SATURDAY, December 16th, 1922.

# Facts about Mussolini.


# Workers' Dreadnought

Founded and Edited by SYLVIA PANKHURST.

VOL. IX. No. 40. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1922. Weekly—PRICE ONE PENNY.


## LE JEUNE BARBAROUX.

By John Barlas.

Passenger, pilgrim in the land of fear,
The sound of Death's feet growing in thine ear,
The sight of Death's face rising on thy view,
What change in thee since this time yesteryear,
Young Barbaroux.

Bright-haired Apollo, with the hero's eyes,
That dreamest dreams too fair for earthly skies,
Man free and equal, all things fair and true,
What shadows dark across thy dream arise?
Young Barbaroux.

Where now thy France? Where now the chosen band
Of thy companions? Where the fair Roland?
All these are gone, and what thing left to you?
Perchance the gallows in some foreign land,
Young Barbaroux.

They come again to thee, the old sweet days,
Back in a tear-dimmed vision of dead praise:
The spires of Paris rise through morning's hue
Clad with the world's hope to thy spirit's gaze,
Young Barbaroux.

Thy word went forth, and all France heard the cry,
"Send me six hundred men prepared to die!"
To arms the marseillese that moment flew,
For Greek blood burns yet 'neath Massilia's sky,
Young Barbaroux.

From sabres old they scour the gathered rust:
Who bids them die but the one man they trust?
The dusty roads have heard an anthem new,
Destined to shake the old world into dust,
Young Barbaroux.

Upon the Feast of late loud chimed the bell,
But Paris burns with smothered fires of hell.
For hopes may fail, and chiefs may prove untrue;
They enter Paris with a tiger's yell,
Young Barbaroux.

"Strike down the tyrant: citizens, to arms:
Form your battalions!" What high note alarms
The traitor snakes in Freedom's breast that grew?
Who now shall shield his France from all her harms?
Young Barbaroux.

And now 'mid strangers, with a broken pride,
Craving the crust withheld, the draught denied,
The straw begrudged beneath thine head to strew,
Thou wanderest through the great world black and wide,
Young Barbaroux.

Faithful to death, unchanged by fear or grief,
Clinging, brave boy, to thy sublime belief,
Clasp to thine heart the poor red, white and blue,
The seed shall spring yet from the ruined sheaf,
Young Barbaroux.

The flag, that covered France too short a while
With holy shade, now fear and blood defile,
And through the world deep threatening storm-clouds brew.
Look through to clearer heavens beyond, and smile,
Young Barbaroux.



Drawing by Edward Burn Jones, 1895.

When Adam delved and Eve span, Who was then the gentleman?

This drawing, published as a calendar, price 9d., may be obtained from the "Dreadnought" Bookshop, 152 Fleet Street, E.C.

## The Trades Facilities Act.

### AN INIQUITOUS MEASURE.

### UNJUSTIFIABLE SUBSIDIES TO CAPITALISM AT HOME AND ABROAD. PUTTING AUSTRIA IN PAWN AND PREVENTING SOCIAL PROGRESS IN AUSTRIA.

### Why Did Ramsay Macdonald Support the Bill, when other Labour Members Exposed Its Iniquities?

### Why Did the Labour Party Fail to Oppose It?

The Trade Facilities and Loans Guarantees Bill, which was rushed through its Second Reading last week will do three things, each of them bad:

(1) It increases the limit of the aggregate loans which the Government may make to Capitalists from £25,000,000 to £50,000,000.

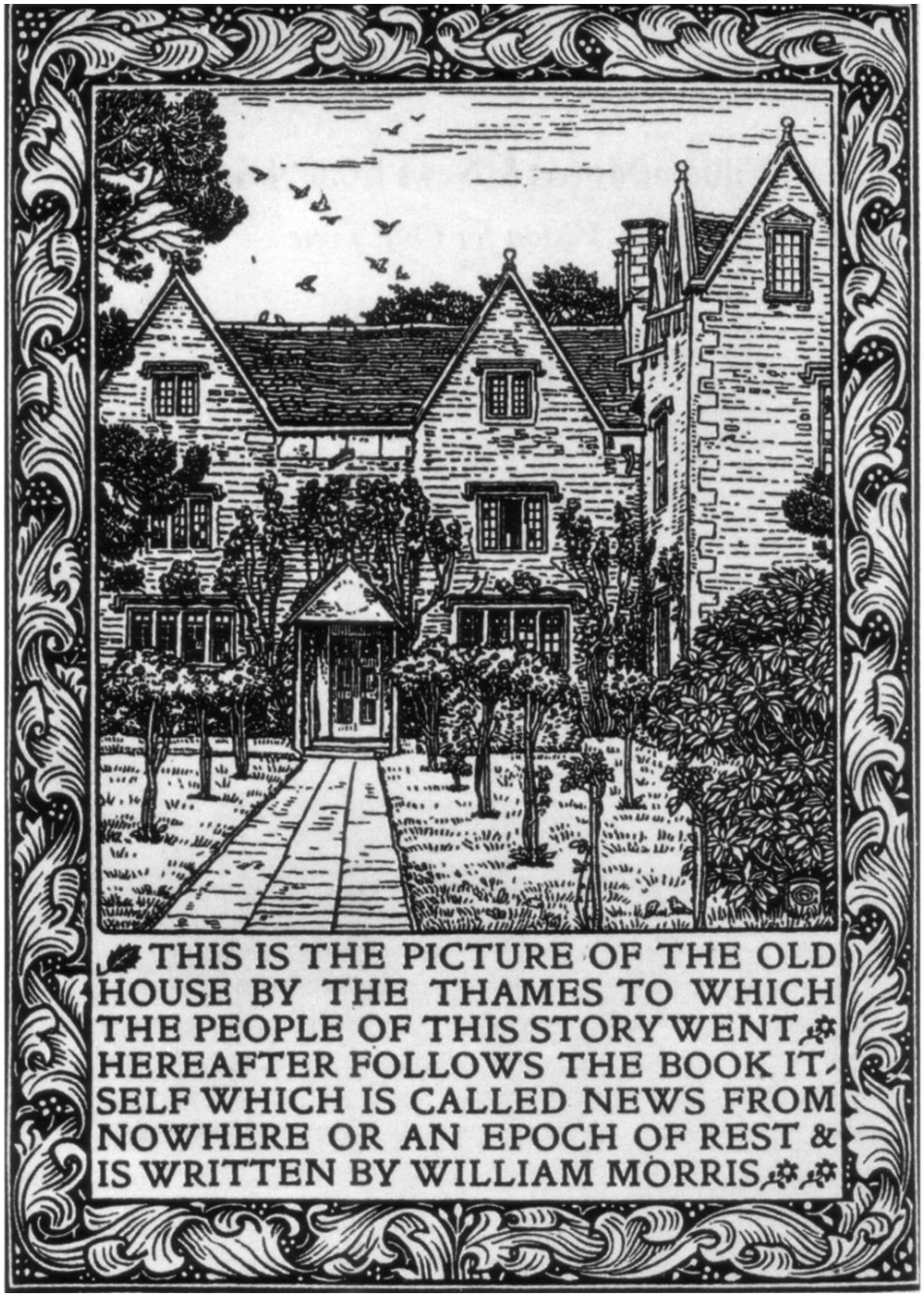
(2) It makes a loan to Austria, in return for which Austria is forced to abandon the freedom to manage her internal affairs, is debarred from progressive legislation, forced to hand certain State services over to private enterprise, and to accept the dictation of a Commissioner-General and a control Commission. As Mr. Rhys-Davies, a Labour Member put it, Austria is, in fact, placed "in pawn" as a condition of this loan.

(3) It gives the Government power to guarantee the principal and interest on a loan of £3,500 to the Soudan Government for the purpose of irrigating the Gizneh Plain in the interests of the Soudan Plan

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**Appendix IV:** Charles March Gere, Frontispiece to the Kelmscott Press edition of William Morris' *News From Nowhere*, Wood Engraving, 1893.[914]




[914] Charles March Gere, Frontispiece to the Kelmscott Press edition of William Morris' *News From Nowhere*, 1893 [online photograph] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/News_from_Nowhere#/media/File:Kelmscott_Manor_News_from_Nowhere.jpg, accessed: 24 October 2021.

**Appendix V:** 'Thrift', *The Woman's Dreadnought*, 20 June 1914, p.2.[915]



54 THE WOMAN'S DREADNOUGHT.

I wish to become a member of the EAST LONDON FEDERATION OF THE SUFFRAGETTES.

Name .....

Address .....

I enclose 1jd. to cover membership and postage.

ADVERTISE IN OUR PAPER.
Deal with our Advertisers.

The president of the Incorporated Society of Advertisement Consultants said, on May 14th: "Woman is making her influence felt in the advertising business, and as most of the buying in the world is done by women, it is natural that man, the amateur buyer, should be easily influenced by advertising conducted by women, who are the professional buyers." For the same reason, a WOMEN'S paper, such as the WOMAN'S DREADNOUGHT, managed and read by women is an excellent advertising medium for household requisites.

HERE IS OUR ADVERTISEMENT PRICE LIST

SCALE OF CHARGES.

| | £ s. d. |
|---|---|
| Charges per inch : | |
| Front Page | 0 3 6 |
| Back Page | 0 3 0 |
| Other Pages | 0 2 6 |
| Charges per column : | |
| Front Page | 2 2 0 |
| Back Page | 2 0 0 |
| Other Pages | 1 15 0 |
| Charges per page and half-Page : | |
| Front Page | 8 0 0 |
| ,, Half Page | 4 10 0 |
| Other Pages | 6 10 0 |
| ,, Half Page | 3 10 0 |

Classified advertisements (small type) 1s. for 12 words, 1d. a word after. Four insertions for price of three.
The above prices are less 5 per cent. for 13 or more insertions.

A. GLOSTEN,
*Advertisement Manager.*

The
Woman's Dreadnought.
*Published by the East London Federation of the Suffragettes,*
321 ROMAN ROAD, BOW, E.
*Telephone EAST 422.*

Agents:—INTERNATIONAL SUFFRAGE SHOP, 13 Adam St., Strand, W.C., LONDON & SUBURBAN PUBLISHING Co., St. Bride's Churchyard, E.C.; Messrs. HODGETT MARSHALL & Co., Tremble Avenue, E.C.

Can be obtained of the Booksellers of Messrs. W. H. SMITH and SONS, and Messrs. WELLING.

Annual Subscription: Post Free, 6s. 6d.

No. 14.—Saturday, June 20th, 1914.

**Bravely and willingly we bear our share of the World's burdens. Who, then, dare us the right to vote, which would dignify our labour and increase our Power of Service.**

## THRIFT.

It was in a wide park and the path led through wonderful old oaks and chestnuts and broad open spaces, where there were flocks of sheep and deer.

Where the ground dipped into a hollow were two little cottages covered with a tangled mass of roses and honeysuckle, and with their little garden plots ablaze with close-growing old-fashioned flowers. In the most flowery of these two cottages lived an old woman, well over 80 years of age. Her clothes were always of plain black stuff and her dresses, copied one from another, were always made with the skirt full, the bodice very straight and plain, and the sleeves without a cuff, as country women wore them when she was young.

Her father worked on this estate all his life, managing one of the nearby farms for the Lord who owns the park. Her mother worked, too, and she and all her sisters, milking and caring for the lambs and poultry; but only her father was paid a wage.

Her husband had also been employed here from a boy and in time had become the principal game-keeper. For years, in addition, he and she had managed a large farm for the Lord with numbers of men and women under them. All this time her husband was never paid more than a pound a week, and she nothing at all. Yet she, like her mother before her, had washing and cooking and cleaning to attend to for the workpeople, and milking, and dairying, and poultry keeping beside. The children from the great house had always found a welcome in her kitchen, and had come to her regularly on baking day for home-made cakes.

"That work at the farm was a bit too much for us, it turned us into old people, for, of course, he had always the game to think of beside, and had most of the farm to see to, the last years when he began to get ill." Very often she said this to me, but always added: "I've worked hard for Lord ... and now he does a lot for me."

After her husband died the agent had at once told her that she must leave the cottage, and only a personal appeal to the Lord had won her the right to stay. Then the Lord had said that she might live rent free in the cottage and have as much skim milk from the farm as she could drink.

"It's little enough to give you, after all your years of unpaid work?" I used to say to her, but she would smile and answer: "Lord ... doesn't understand all that I've done for us."

She was still wonderfully quick and active, when I first knew her, in spite of her ninety odd years, and could climb nimbly over the five barred gates and stiles. She lived alone in the cottage and did all her own housework and, as she could wonder, she lived largely on the Lord's skim milk, which she always kept warming in a jug on the hob. Until quite recently she had made her own dresses, and still was always busy with darning, or mending, or patchwork quilts.

She was able even to do a little mending and cooking for her son who lived next door and who worked for the Lord, as his father had done, and had a big family of sons. His wife had just died and one of his daughters, who was engaged to be married in a week's time, came home to stay a few days with her father and brothers, and on her wedding morning finished cleaning down the house, and was pumping water from the well and whitening the doorstep when an hour of her wedding.

"People ask me if I am not lonely and whether I am not afraid to live by myself," the old woman said to me, "Of course I am not lonely, I should be very wicked if I were." Haven't I got my dear son living next door to me? It's true he and the boys are out all day, but look at the beautiful flowers and the birds I have got all around me. Listen to that dear little thing singing away there now! Who should I be afraid indeed? Nobody wants to harm me. God can look after me just the same wherever I am and I'm sure I shan't die until he wants me to." So she would talk on, rambling as solitary people do, who are glad to have found someone to listen well, and always she spoke kindly and seemed sweet tempered and generous to all.

Sometimes she mentioned her son's wife, who had just died of phthisis, with the gentle sorrow and regret for a friend and companion who was gone. But one morning she seemed strangely agitated and for a time seemed hardly able to speak. Then she began to talk of the dead woman. Her son had just discovered that his wife had been owing £5 to the tradespeople. "She hadn't been dowing right for a long time," said the old woman. "I'd watched her and I knew she wasn't going straight. People like us can't afford to go putting beef steak on for dinner for a lot of hungry men, as she did, instead of making it into a pudding so as it'd go further. She got that she hadn't strength to take trouble as she should, and when she knew she was going, she let things slide. But she should have had more thought for those who'd be left when she was gone. Many a time I've seen her stop and lean with her hand on the table and gasp for breath, and I've asked her 'can't you get on with your work?' 'Oh I'll manage, she'd say, and then I've seen her go out and cough.' The old woman spoke with bitterness as though her daughter-in-law's physical weakness had been a shameful fault. We used to take the bread in for each other, she went on "and more than once the man has asked me when she was going to pay." I never said anything, but I knew things weren't going right. And I know where some of that money's gone to, and I've told my son." Then she explained that her son's eldest daughter was married to a man who was chronically out of work and had three little children. She had been always coming round to ask the mother for food or money. Her father said that she had thrown her own lot and that nothing was to be given to her, but her mother had gone on helping her in secret whenever she could.

For this reason, and because of her own growing weakness and lessened ability to cope with the cares of housekeeping, the debt so crushingly large to these poor people gradually accumulated.

"I don't know how George'll ever manage to pay off the money," the person old soul went on. "Its been a hard struggle to pay for the funeral as it is. He only found out last night that she owed anything." She hasn't been the good wife I thought her, mother," he said. "I didn't think she'd have done it."

And so they shook their heads together and wondered however that money was to be paid; and in their trouble they bitterly blamed, not the Lord for whom they had done so much in return for so little, but that poor dead woman who had gone on working until the day she died. How tragic, that after 30 years of sacrifice and labour for them, she should be thought to have lost all right to the affection and gratitude of her family, because of this paltry debt!

That never ending, painful contriving to make ends meet on little wages, with many mouths to feed, weighs down the hearts of poor working mothers, and warps the whole current of their lives. Where every penny must be closely counted, an accident, an illness, or misfortune, means getting into debt and borrowing from pawnbrokers and moneylenders who charge outrageously high interest to the poor.

Last week three cases of mothers' suicide were reported in the newspapers. One woman's husband had given way to drink, the husbands of the other two were out of employment. It was only just possible for these women to make ends meet when their husband's small weekly wages were coming in regularly. They could not face the future with an added load of debt that they might never be able to pay off.

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delusion. ... So far from it putting an end to militancy, I believe it would be the greatest incentive to militancy which could ever happen. For every militant who dies there would be scores of women who would come forward for the honour—as they would deem it—of earning the crown of martyrdom. ... They are hysterical fanatics, but coupled with their hysterical fanaticism they have a courage which, as part of their fanaticism, unhesitatingly stands at nothing; they would come forward, not merely to risk death but to undergo it for what they deem the greatest cause on earth. I am sure that if the general public opinion outside might be today in favour of allowing them to die, when there were, not 9 but 9 and more deaths in prison you would have a violent reaction of public opinion.

Let hon. members for a moment in imagination transport themselves to a prison cell and conceive of a prison doctor, a humane man, standing by watching a woman slowly being done to death by starvation and thirst, knowing that he could help her and keep her alive. If there are those who think that any doctor would go on with such action, or that we should be able to retain any medical men under such conditions in our service, I do not believe it. The doctor would think, as I should think if I saw her lying there: "What has been this woman's offence? It may have been obstructing the police, coupled with the obstinacy derived from fanaticism, which leads her to refuse food and water. Obstructing the police, and is she to die? I could not distinguish between them, and no Home Secretary could ever say that this woman is to die and that that woman should not. Once we were committed to the policy of allowing them to die if they did not take their food, we should have to go on with it, and we should have woman after woman whose only offence may have been obstructing the police, breaking a window, or even burning down an empty house, owing because she was obstinate. I do not believe that that is a police which will ever command itself to the British people, and I am bound to say for myself that I should never take a hand in carrying that policy out."

Mr. Mckenna then showed that: "Deportation did not get over the difficulty, as the women would still have the courage to hunger and thirst strike, and the island they were taken to would become a prison and the same difficulty would remain.

"He could not treat them as lunatics as medical men would certify them insane.

"The fourth proposition to grant them the franchise he dismissed as outside his province."

He said: "The complaint the Press generally raised was that the women were not punished for their offences, that they commit these crimes and go scot-free. There was never a greater delusion in this world. What do the first six or eight days mean under the self-inflicted torture? No food, no water; that is some punishment at any rate, and a very severe punishment. In my judgment, six or eight days of hunger and thirst strike, without food or water, is far more severe than two or even three months imprisonment under ordinary conditions of prison life. Perhaps they are discharged at the end of six or eight days, what happens then? Their sentence remains open, they are re-arrested in two or three weeks and go through it again; then they are liberated. If the offence has been a more serious offence, such as arson or the destruction of works of art, they are forcibly fed. That is continued as long as their health will stand it; they are then liberated and their sentence still remains open. Is not that punishment? And owing to their misconduct they are punished far more heavily than if they had served their sentence."

Mr. McKenna thus showed that he had a keen appreciation of the sufferings which the hunger and thirst strikers undergo. This fact makes his treatment of the women all the more horrible, and at the same time ought to make all those who heard what he said, or read it, realize that the only solution lies in the fourth alternative, i.e.—giving the franchise. If women do not fear torture or death, as he proves they do not, you cannot coerce them in any possible way, and the only alternative to coercion is to accede to their demands.

Miss Sylvia Pankhurst feels so deeply that this is the only remedy, and that the only way to bring about its realisation is for another woman to sacrifice her life, that she has staked her own in the hope of accomplishing it, and sounding the appalling amount of suffering which the women who are fighting for this great cause of humanity have had to endure. It is inconceivable that people who now acknowledge that women should have the vote can allow this debate to take place. Those who know this gentle and courageous woman realise to the full what her death will mean, not only to themselves, but to the whole cause of humanity. Surely it cannot be that there are human beings so lost to all sense of nobility, that they will suffer it to take place without raising a finger to prevent it. All possible pressure must be brought to bear upon Mr. Asquith to make him receive the deputation, in order that the price of its admission may not be Miss Pankhurst's life.

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