Etsuko   Colored Empires in the 1930s:
Taketani   Black Internationalism, the U.S. Black Press,
                and George Samuel Schuyler

Italy's invasion of the East African kingdom of Ethiopia on 3 October 1935 showcased the globe-carving forces of Western imperialism in a gross—and engrossing—manner. In a pageant of blatant aggression, Benito Mussolini's army and Blackshirt militia, a modern force supported by aircraft armed with poison gas, raided Africa's only remaining stronghold of independent black civilization. No other world event had ever aroused the political passions of the African American public as did this fascist assault on the motherland of Ethiopia (formerly known as Abyssinia). As John Hope Franklin observes, "Almost overnight even the most provincial among the American Negroes became international-minded."[1] In any argument about the black internationalism of the 1930s, the Italo-Ethiopian War must be placed first in the chronological table of relevant world affairs.[2] As one of the decisive moments in the articulation of diasporic thought and politics, the war galvanized black communities throughout the Atlantic hemisphere around a perceived racial solidarity and anti-imperial activism. George Samuel Schuyler, America's most prominent black journalist of the day, stood in for such international-minded black Americans at the vanguard of the pro-Ethiopian campaigns.

For all its obvious concerns with issues of black internationalism raised by the Italo-Ethiopian War—and though it gripped the black popular imagination of its time—Schuyler's *Black Empire*, originally serialized from 1936 to 1938 in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, has not attracted much attention from modern critics, even since its 1991 republication in book form.[3] Indeed, the silence of the scholarly community on this narrative of the liberation of Ethiopia from white colonization has

been sufficiently pronounced that, as Kali Tal contends, "the refusal to discuss the book seems less accidental than the result of deliberate avoidance."[4] The foremost cause for the reluctance of critics to address this work is no doubt the blazoning race hatred and vengefulness, as well as a megalomania bent on world conquest, fascism, and empire building, that *Black Empire* depicts. In its fantastic narrative, the black genius and messiah Dr. Henry Belsidus masterminds a "Black Internationale" force that wipes the European colonial empires from the face of the earth and establishes (or restores) a black empire in Africa. The story also envisages an impending World War II as a racial Armageddon in which white people meet their fate at the hands of the Black Internationale. While Schuyler critics agree that *Black Empire* is historically and thematically tied to the Italo-Ethiopian discord and ensuing war, as well as to the mass black internationalism ushered in by the conflict, they are also much troubled by the uncomfortably violent race war fantasies at the heart of Schuyler's serial fiction. As John Williams observes in his foreword to *Black Empire*, Belsidus, "in the final analysis, is a dictator, a fascist, though his goals are established as moral ones" (*BE*, xiv).

My interest in *Black Empire* begins precisely where criticism has fallen silent. I am intrigued by the challenge the work presents to our tendency as critics to associate blackness automatically with the political ideals of anti-imperialism and antifascism. It is this tendency that problematizes any theoretical accounting of the connections and continuities of the imperial rhetoric, emotive violence, black internationalism, and anticolonialism that constitute the singular text of *Black Empire*, and that constituted the pro-Ethiopian movement in the African American community that Schuyler represented. I am especially interested in questioning, via Schuyler, historical narratives of the Italo-Ethiopian War—a primal, galvanizing moment that engaged African diasporic communities around the Atlantic—that have equated black internationalism with anti-imperialism.

Conceding that there is no return to any origin that is not already a construction (and hence, that the originary status of the Italo-Ethiopian War is a kind of retrospective invention), I view it as beyond question that the fascist invasion of Ethiopia that informed Schuyler's serial fiction was a decisive moment in the black internationalism of the 1930s. But toward what end was the mass mobilization of black interest in foreign affairs catalyzed by the Ethiopian crisis directed? Certainly,

opposition to empire, colonialism, and fascism in world affairs were central concerns. Brenda Gayle Plummer argues that "[l]ike no other issue of the era, the Italo-Ethiopian War . . . prepared the ground for anticolonial protest in the next decade," and that the war "constituted a focus for anticolonialist and anti-imperialist discourses." In Penny Von Eschen's account, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia opened "a new chapter in the organizational history of anticolonialism," spurring the formation of numerous groups such as the Ethiopian World Federation; Von Eschen's own first chapter in *Race against Empire* thus begins with a discussion of the Ethiopian crisis.[5]

Yet in campaigning against empire through their efforts to rescue Ethiopia, the African American public lent support to a black empire and its ruler, Emperor Haile Selassie.[6] Moreover, even as those calling African Americans to arms in defense of the Ethiopian imperial government worked to mobilize public opinion against empire, many (including Schuyler) invoked the Japanese empire as a potential Ethiopian ally. How are we to understand a mass black internationalism that galvanized racial solidarity in the theater of the Italo-Ethiopian War through alliance with two colored empire-nations, Ethiopia and quasi-fascist imperial Japan?

Consider the view that imperialism in the twentieth century is a practice of, and has its roots in, Western civilization. We have been all too willing, in delineating the contours of black internationalism, to accept this view as a central assumption. Indeed, scholarly discourse on African American responses to the Ethiopian conflict often looks no further than black alliance campaigns against Italy's neo-Roman empire and the complicity of other Western imperialist powers in that empire. Such discourse implicitly assumes that black thought and politics are defined as always already counter to—and hence dependent on—the forces of Western imperialism that work against them and that created the black diaspora in the first place. Thus, Michelle Stephens argues that "[e]mpire . . . provided the material conditions for black solidarities to emerge across nation, language, gender, and even class." In Stephens's frame, empire is assumed to be European and American, with an "international reach and global designs" that enable a (racially marked) black empire representing multiracial and multinational worlds of color. Understood strictly in a transatlantic context, Stephens's black empire is adversarial and dependent, "resisting empire and carrying its tropes along in their wake."[7] In this concep-

tion, the primacy of the West in relation to the colored empire-nations of Asia and Africa is necessarily posited as a material reality and as a rallying point of reference for black Americans.

In theorizing the black internationalism of the 1930s, I want to go beyond such (often Eurocentric) assumptions surrounding race and empire by explicitly addressing African American ideological alignments with colored empires in a global context—alignments for which the U.S. black press vigorously campaigned during the Italo-Ethiopian War. In my view, historical narratives of race and empire in the Ethiopian crisis need to be reexamined along both transatlantic and transpacific vectors in light of the dynamics of black internationalism, as well as at the essentially indissociable levels of both material life and cultural fantasy. During the years leading up to the conflict, the intimacy of the two empire-nations of Japan and Ethiopia was a factor—one often overlooked today, but understood world-wide then—that altered the dynamics (and the implications) of the war. In the words of Selassie biographer Harold Marcus, "Tokyo and Addis Abeba were sentimental about each other."[8] In focusing on this largely forgotten factor, my aim is to draw attention to what one might call the affective geopolitics of race relations in the 1930s, which complicated the relationship of black internationalism to the empire, fascism, and colonialism that it denounced in its critique of Mussolini's occupation of Ethiopia. Schuyler and the black press offer a lens through which to examine this politico-affective racial order and the black American reimagining of the relationships between race and empire. The view this lens affords of these reimagined relationships differs from Stephens's perspective (especially in regard to black Americans of Caribbean descent).

Specifically, I propose in this essay to reconstruct the axis forged between Tokyo, Addis Ababa,[9] and Harlem during the Ethiopian conflict that shaped Schuyler's—and the collective black—internationalism. In delineating this axis, however, I do not propose a differently complexioned (Asian) route to a black internationalism that is already widely understood to have been multifarious and multilayered. Rather, I wish to reevaluate the mutually implicated perceptions of race and empire, and of anticolonialism and violence, that informed the black internationalism arising from the Ethiopian crisis.

Schuyler and the Ethiopian Crisis

Appearing in sixty-two installments written under the pseudonym Samuel I. Brooks, *Black Empire* ran as two serials in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, an African American weekly, between November 1936 and April 1938. *Black Empire* thus began shortly after the end of the Italo-Ethiopian War, when it was no longer possible to save Ethiopia. The narrative of the first serial, "The Black Internationale," climaxes with Ethiopia's liberation from the Italian occupation force, and the second, "Black Empire," with crushing defeats for Italy. This fantastic prospect enthralled the readership of the *Courier*, and Schuyler's pulp fiction gained immense popularity. Such was the groundswell of enthusiasm for the serials that the circulation of the *Courier*—already increased by interest in its coverage of the war—skyrocketed from 40,920 in 1935 to 250,000 in 1937, making the *Courier* the nation's largest black weekly (only 20,000 readers of the paper were local Pittsburgh residents).[10] In their afterword to *Black Empire*, Robert Hill and R. Kent Rasmussen note that Schuyler had "an uncanny psychological ability to plumb the desires and fantasies of his black audience" (*BE*, 267). Significantly, Schuyler's was also one of the most outspoken, militant voices supporting the Ethiopian cause in the African American community.[11]

The story of Schuyler's emergence as the standard-bearer of the Ethiopia campaign is well known. In the summer of 1935, when Ethiopia's survival in the face of fascist Italy was "the topic of angry debate in poolrooms, barber shops, and taverns" in Harlem,[12] Schuyler was initially skeptical of the outpouring of support for Ethiopia by African Americans (*BE*, 270). But the New York–based writer and popular columnist for the *Courier* did not prove immune to public sentiment. In Hill's words, "Schuyler underwent a sudden and remarkable political conversion."[13] In his *Courier* column, "Views and Reviews," Schuyler writes on 27 July 1935 that "the Ethiopian-Italian embroglio [*sic*] will very likely be the match that will touch off the world powder keg again"—a war by which "the great exploiting powers of the world . . . stand to lose everything" and the "exploited blacks and browns and yellows stand to gain much." "Another World War will finish Europe," he predicts in his column of 17 August 1935, reasoning that while Europe "is engaged in committing hari-kari, the colored peoples everywhere, in all colonies, will revolt." "As an old soldier,"

Schuyler fantasizes about "press[ing] a machine-gun trigger on the Italian hordes as they toiled over the Ethiopian terrain."[14] Schuyler's weekly columns during the period of the Ethiopian situation closely anticipate the theme of the international race war in *Black Empire*.

Schuyler's shift from skeptic to vanguard of anticolonial protest during the summer of 1935 parallels the rise of the mass black internationalism engendered by the Ethiopian crisis, as scholars usually describe it (the crisis itself is also typically defined in terms of the rise of the anticolonial movement). I find little to question in such historical narratives but suggest that they must account for the violence of the fantasies marking and delimiting Schuyler's (and black America's) anticolonial crusade, as well as the pro–Ethiopian empire sentiment to which it was yoked. As Hill and Rasmussen point out, "Violent revenge fantasies suffused Schuyler's weekly columns during this crisis period, forming a thematic basis for the international race war that underlies *Black Empire*" (*BE*, 271), a war in which the Black Internationale commands superior, futuristic military technologies such as biological and chemical weapons and electric ray machines for eradicating white people. Schuyler's "kill-the-white-people" fantasy was part of what enabled *Black Empire* to "attract a devoted readership whose interest kept the series alive for two years," according to Kali Tal.[15] It is interesting that the political ideals of anticolonialism, racial equality, and justice that motivated the contemporary black internationalism movement are seemingly inseparable from the uncomfortably violent race war fantasies that animated and sustained that movement. What are the mutual implications of the violence of these fantasies and the political ideals of "anticolonialism" that are curiously conflated in Schuyler's black internationalism? My criticism of Schuyler's historical narratives and the collective black "political conversion" during the Ethiopian conflict begins with this question.

Hill's observation that Schuyler underwent a "sudden" conversion from skepticism at best implies a lack of clarity regarding Schuyler's motivations in joining the black internationalist cause. Hill and Rasmussen explain Schuyler's move to the vanguard of anticolonial alliance campaigns in the summer of 1935 as follows:

As the black world waited through the anxious summer of 1935, watching the military and diplomatic maneuvering that every day

tightened Italy's noose around the neck of Ethiopia, Schuyler initially adopted a skeptical attitude toward "the clamor of Aframericans" to come to the aid of "dear, old Ethiopia." While such ventures appeared to him quite impractical, his criticism was directed far more against "big imperialist powers" and their official impediments to western blacks' attempts to fight in Ethiopia. Ethiopia's bravery in the face of such bullying inspired him nonetheless to a sort of reverie of racial solidarity. (*BE*, 270)

It is not entirely clear from Hill and Rasmussen's description how Schuyler's political conversion took place, or even whether the word "conversion" applies to the shift in Schuyler's position. At first glance, it seems that in their account, "the clamor of Aframericans" cumulatively reached a boiling point in the summer of 1935, at which time Schuyler was also touched by the situation of Ethiopia's brave but poorly equipped warriors as they confronted Mussolini's modern war machine, and that this converted him to racial solidarity in opposition to the fascist march. But by Hill and Rasmussen's logic, Schuyler's conversion was to a position, "a sort of reverie of racial solidarity," of which he was initially skeptical, and which "appeared to him quite impractical." In the end, Schuyler's conversion during the Ethiopian crisis cannot readily be explained in terms of a change in his personal conviction alone. Without an understanding of the shift in the historical context in which the "reverie" became viable, it is not possible to understand his transformation.

When and how exactly did reverie transform into anticolonial politics? An analysis of the *Pittsburgh Courier* and other black newspapers of the time exposes a contextual shift in which the reverie of a race war to set right (or avenge) through Ethiopia the universal oppression of the world's colored peoples became more than an intransitive daydream. On 27 July 1935, the *Courier* makes the following front-page observation of an unexpected phase that the Italo-Ethiopian dispute had entered: "Japan, 'dark-menace' of the fighting world and the most powerful nation of the Far East, may aid Ethiopia! . . . And as Japan's attitude became painfully clear to the western world, fear of another world war . . . a war between races . . . loomed in the offing."[16] This remark was prompted by Tokyo's disavowal of Italy's claim that Japanese Ambassador Yotaro Sugimura had assured Mussolini that Japan had no intention of interfering in the coming Italo-Ethiopian conflict.

This disavowal, the *Courier* reports, precipitated a furor in the Italian press, including the inflammatory charge that "Japan, in championing the Abyssinian cause, was setting herself up as a leader of Asiatic and African peoples against white civilization" and that "the Nipponese were dreaming of world conquest."[17] (The black weekly *New York Age* reports that the Italian press moreover "called upon the white races to present a united front against the colored races."[18]) With Japan stepping into the picture, the *Courier* anxiously concludes, "another world war is inevitable"; "This time it appears to be a 'war of races' and nothing can stop it."[19]

The intensity of the Italian clamor for race war—reported in the black weekly *Courier* as resulting from Japan's apparent alignment with Ethiopia—is reflected in contemporary reports about the Italian press that appeared in the mainstream *New York Times*. According to a 23–24 July 1935 *Times* report from Rome, the Italian press en masse (including Mussolini's own newspaper, *Il Popolo d'Italia*), angered by Japan's new posture of friendliness toward Ethiopia, charged Japan with long harboring designs to "make that corner of Africa her base for a vast economic offensive against Europe."[20] As the Italian newspaper *Tevere* puts it, Africa was "contiguous to Italy, the country of a white race and the champion of that race."[21] Yet "[w]ith impudence approaching temerity," the *Messaggero* observes, "Japan claims the right of tutelage over all colored men and does so in a tone that seems to herald an offensive against our civilization." It is against "this . . . almost apocalyptic background that the Italo-Ethiopian conflict must be viewed," the newspaper concludes. By gaining control over Ethiopia, Italy, in fine, would be "forestalling Japan"[22]; thus the Italian press recast (and justified) the Italo-Ethiopian War. "One has the sensation," the *Tevere* provocatively declares, "of finally learning why so many races have been created with only one in the image and likeness of the Creator and why, among other variously colored ones, one is of the color of betrayal." Such inflammatory coverage of the war was "posted on walls throughout [Rome]," according to the *New York Times*. Fascist troops and police had to be deployed to guard the Japanese embassy from the threat of violence aroused by the anti-Japanese sentiment in the press.[23]

The perception of Japan as Africa's new ally elicited as dramatic a response from U.S. blacks as it did from the fascist Italian press, only to opposite effect. Japan's foreign minister in Tokyo received a

telegram from New York that read, "Blacks accalim [*sic*] Japan leader [of] colored world expect aid Ethiopia arms munitions."[24] For several weeks in July and August of 1935, Japan was on the front page of leading African American newspapers, in headlines such as "Japan Prepares to Aid Ethiopia," "Ethiopian, Italian Armies Face Each Other in Africa . . . Hostilities Expected Any Minute as Emperor Turns to Japan," "Japanese Hit at Mussolini," "Japanese Scored by Italians: Attitude of Tokyo Called Hostile," and "Japan Looms as Bar to Italy," among others.[25]

The fantasy of race war initiated in the Italian press by the Sugimura affair thus found corresponding canonical expression in the black U.S. press, in which the *Pittsburgh Courier*, where Schuyler served as chief editorial writer and columnist, ranked foremost. In early August, the *Courier* carried a follow-up on the earlier report (quoted above) from Addis Ababa, capital of Ethiopia, as its lead story, under the banner headline "JAPAN ARMING ETHIOPIA." It states, "Japan, mightiest military power of the Far East, is arming Ethiopia! This information, which is authentic, was given to the people of this country early Monday [5 August] and flashed to the four corners of the earth." Japan was supplying the African empire, the account continues, with "'a very large consignment' of arms and ammunition, with the express intention of 'speeding up modernization of the Ethiopian army.'" According to the *Courier* correspondent in Addis Ababa, "Japanese patriotic societies, public and newspapers have shown decided favoritism for Ethiopia in the present quarrel."[26] A cartoon on the *Courier*'s editorial page shows Mussolini standing with a lawn mower against the backdrop of a rising sun labeled "JAPAN," his efforts to mow over Ethiopia frustrated by a thick cover of Japanese swords sticking up from the ground (fig. 1).

In the *Chicago Defender*, a black weekly, the race war anticipated in the black and fascist Italian presses alike was envisioned as the fulfillment of the scriptural prophesy of Armageddon. For the *Defender*, the Italo-Ethiopian War would consummate the prophesy of Daniel, which foretold a conflict between the king of the North and the king of the South (read Mussolini and Selassie).[27] Daniel's reference to the "intervention of Eastern powers" prefigured Japan's military aid to the King of the South, who would win the final victory. The *Defender* of 13 July reported, under the scare headline "TROOPS MASS FOR WAR!," "Europe has now suddenly awakened to the realization of the fact that the Japanese navy has been carrying on deep-sea maneuveurs [*sic*] in the Red
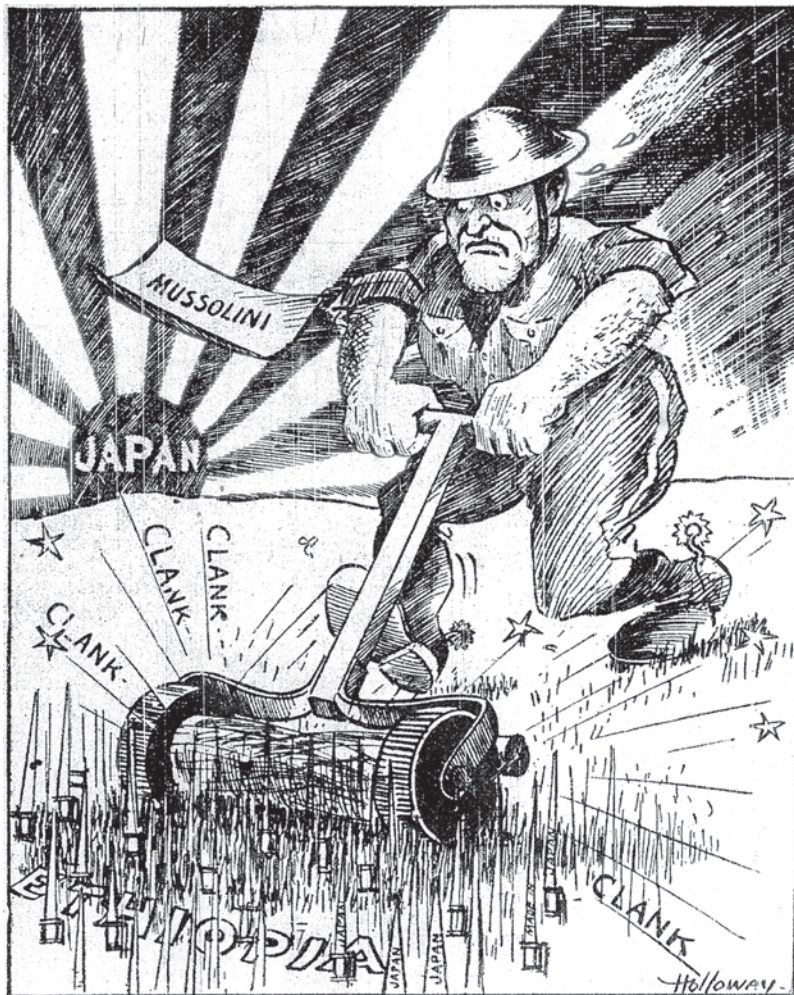
Figure 1 "Tough Going," editorial cartoon by Wilbert L. Holloway. Reprinted with permission from the *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 August 1935, 10. *Pittsburgh Courier* Archives.

Sea . . . for several months," and "[w]ithin a week's notice scores of these swift relentless cruisers from the third largest navy in the world, can dump tons of explosives under Mussolini's very nose in Africa." In the event of war, claims the *Defender*, "thousands of Japanese, most modernly equipped and highly trained soldiers of the world today, will go tramping through African hinterlands to the aid of their darker

brothers on the lofty plateaus of Ethiopia."[28] "Nordic supremacy," the *Defender* predicts breathlessly, was "fast approaching its doom."[29]

The black cultural moment of such mediagenic war projections provided the context for Schuyler's political conversion. This is not to suggest that Schuyler's newfound anticolonial activism centered on a conviction that Japan and black America would forge a united front in the event of race war. Schuyler's black internationalism is by no means a simple one, as I shall discuss. My point is that it is not possible to isolate the surge of the "reverie of racial solidarity" among African Americans in the summer of 1935—in which Schuyler shared—from the worldwide (and in particular the fascist) racial tension evoked by the Sugimura affair.

An intriguing aspect of the circulation of the race war fantasy in the media is the credibility the scenario therein gained. In retrospect, one might wonder how such an improbable situation as the Japanese army massing to intervene on behalf of far-off Ethiopia gained any credibility at all. How was such a scenario, which ultimately informed the production of Schuyler's near-future science fiction, *Black Empire*, passed off as a near-future likelihood in both the black and fascist presses?

The answer to this question lies in what I have referred to as the affective geopolitics of race relations in the 1930s. To understand this politico-affective world order from which the fantasy derived its power and resonance, let us turn to the news of a seemingly odd connection between Tokyo and Addis Ababa that broke in headlines around the world during the height of the Ethiopian crisis. When it emerged in July of 1935 that Japan might intervene in the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, the *Chicago Defender* carried two photographs under the umbrella title "Japanese Remember Shattered Romance." Over the caption "Objections of Mussolini to union of Japan and Ethiopia through marriage . . . shattered the international planned romance," the photographs show an Ethiopian "prince" and a daughter of a member of the Japanese peerage whose marriage Il Duce had allegedly derailed the previous year.[30]

Announced in January 1934, the engagement of Lij Araya Abeba (a cousin of Salassie) and "picture bride" Masako Kuroda (daughter of a Japanese viscount) redrew the emotional geography of race relations in the 1930s. The planned marriage—which for many would symbolize the rapprochement of Ethiopia and Japan—had its roots in an unparalleled intimacy between the two empire-nations, often forgotten today,

that developed rapidly after the 1930 coronation of Emperor Selassie, based on cultural affinities (both prided themselves on their uniquely ancient "unbroken lines of emperors") and growing economic ties.[31] I will not survey the international response to news of the planned marriage here, except to point out that the wedding was cancelled in the face of the fierce opposition it engendered.[32] Many believed that fascist Italy, operating behind the scenes, effected the cancellation, and Italy's perceived involvement had significant implications for the way in which the Italo-Ethiopian War was projected and viewed. That Mussolini took the planned marriage to be unsavory cannot be doubted. In a meeting with Japanese ambassador Sugimura in December 1934, Il Duce protested, "Japan is supplying arms and ammunition to Ethiopia, sending a crown princess, and a newspaper in Tokyo is vigorously advocating the maneuvering of Japanese-Ethiopian friendship."[33] For some (including Mussolini), the courtship of the international couple—though a personal matter since it was not a royal marriage and involved no diplomatic arrangement between Ethiopia and Japan as was rumored—clearly raised racial, economic, and political concerns, and it functioned as a gestural provocation of race war. As O. Tanin and E. Yohan allege, "Through the marriage of an Abyssinian prince to the daughter of a Japanese noble the Japanese were enabled to equip airdromes in Abyssinia and to receive a cotton concession there."[34]

The implications of the planned marriage were not lost on Schuyler. In his *Courier* column of 3 February 1934, he surmises that the marriage would give Japan "a foothold on the continent of Africa." Schuyler predicts that "[a]ssociated with Japan, the Ethiopian kingdom will doubtless become a power in Africa, albeit similar to Manchukoa [*sic*] and Korea"—a course of events that Great Britain, France, and Italy "will not like."[35] The news that the marriage had been cancelled through the intervention of a "certain power" widely believed to be Italy soon followed,[36] confirming for Schuyler that his reading of the marriage was correct.

The deep, bilateral historical roots of the tensions between Italy and Ethiopia notwithstanding, contemporaries thus made sense of the discord through the affective geopolitics of race relations this episode reflects.[37] In September 1934, when reports first emerged that Italy was sending soldiers and ammunition into the colonies of Somaliland and Eritrea (on the pretext of protecting its interests from Selassie), the

black press quickly sniffed out Italy's apprehensions over Japan as an underlying cause of its military actions. A *New York Age* editorial makes the inference that Japan's "penetration of Abyssinia" was at the root of Italy's actions, observing that the planned Ethio-Japanese marriage had recently been cancelled due to "[o]bjections by Rome."[38] Along the same lines, the *Chicago Defender* editorializes, "the most important of all the reasons which occasion Italy's alarm has been caused by the manifest interest of Japan in the social and economic affairs of Abyssinia." The proposed marriage, according to the *Defender*, had the effect of arousing a suspicion in European circles that "back of this social amenity would be found a political understanding between the darker people of the Asiatic world."[39] Let us recall that it was, finally, the breaking off of the engagement—the "shattered romance"—that the *Defender* viewed as the key indication that Japan would intervene militarily in the Italo-Ethiopian dispute in July 1935.

Established authorities on African affairs of the 1930s, including Schuyler's colleagues Joel Rogers and George Padmore, also understood this Tokyo–Addis Ababa nexus as a source of the Ethiopian crisis. Writing in the February 1935 issue of the *Crisis*, the official organ of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Rogers contends that in undertaking to arbitrate the dispute, the League of Nations "will be faced with the toughest nut in its history," for "if Geneva succeeds in cracking the outer shell it will find within a kernel of dynamite, namely Japan."[40] Padmore, also writing in the *Crisis* (May 1935), ascribes "[m]uch of Ethiopia's present difficulties" to "her friendly relations with Japan." According to Padmore's conspiracy theory, Britain and France had "assigned" Mussolini the "task to intervene in Ethiopia and break up the ties between herself and Japan before it [was] too late."[41]

Whatever the direction in which one pursues this discourse, it is certain that a politico-affective racial order emerged from the conflict as something that required policing—such that the proposed marriage of an Ethiopian to a Japanese, taken to signal new ties binding the destinies of African and Asian empires, was proscribed by a cluster of forces that included media slander, admonition through diplomatic channels, and threats of war. The Ethiopian crisis was never simply a consequence of the bilateral animosity between Italy and Ethiopia arising from Ethiopia's defeat of Italian forces in the battle of Adowa in 1896. It occurred within, and reshaped, a matrix of forces that also

generated a race war fantasy, one that derived its power and reso-
nance from the significant redrawing of race relations that resulted
from the accord of the Ethiopian and Japanese empires. Schuyler and
other black journalists (as well as the fascist Italian press) made sense
of the situation in this milieu, and in overlooking it, we risk missing
crucial implications of the black internationalism the crisis ignited. To
address the seemingly objectionable fantasies that suffuse Schuyler's
Black Empire, then, is to confront the origins of black internationalism
in the race war fantasy that gained global currency in the mid-1930s,
then mutated after the Italo-Ethiopian War, at which point it was no
longer possible to save Ethiopia from fascist aggression.

Post-Empire

For all its futuristic elements, Schuyler's pulp science fiction, *Black
Empire*, reads as a historical archive of the global race war schema
that stood in the collective media as an impending futurity during the
Ethiopian crisis. The symbolic valence that Japan carried in this fan-
tasy resonates in the closing moments of *Black Empire*; the sweep-
ing victory of the Black Internationale over the white powers in World
War II invokes Japan's 1905 victory over Russia (*BE*, 250). Four months
after completing his *Black Empire* serials, in an essay published in the
August 1938 issue of the *Crisis* that he called his "most significant
article" from the period,[42] Schuyler heralds the historic rise of a real
"Black Internationale of liberation" that encompassed the "sturdy and
canny Nipponese."[43]

  Schuyler's historical Black Internationale was by no means idiosyn-
cratic as a form of post-Ethiopia black internationalism that accommo-
dated Japan as an ally of the African diaspora. Groups that similarly
embraced Japan in the pre–World War II epoch included the Nation
of Islam, the Ethiopian Pacific Movement, and the Peace Movement
of Ethiopia, among other black organizations. The black journalist Roi
Ottley observes in 1943 that "the [Negro] nationalist organizations,
those groups which evolved from them, and the factors which kept
them in motion . . . are the main sources of much . . . pro-Japanese
sentiment."[44] Whether or not Ottley's assessment is correct, I pro-
visionally align Schuyler's historical Black Internationale here, as a
matter of interpretation, with these black nationalist organizations
under the umbrella of black internationalism, the global race war fan-

tasies of which problematized its own anticolonial political episteme by embracing imperial Japan.

From the viewpoint of this black internationalism, the coming Second World War was not the "good war" of democracy over the fascism of normative memory, but rather a race war to avenge and set right a worldwide order of white oppression—such as that which the Italo-Ethiopian War promised but failed to become in actuality. The Nation of Islam, whose black nationalistic mythologies Henry Louis Gates Jr. compares to Schuyler's *Black Empire*,[45] offers an example of a black nationalist organization that regarded Japan from a similar perspective. As Karl Evanzz documents in a full-length biography of Elijah Muhammad, early leader of the Nation of Islam, the esoteric teachings of the organization in its formative years were peppered with references to Japan; for instance, Muhammad described the Mother Plane—Ezekiel's wheel in the Holy Bible—as "built in Japan" to carry out the destruction of the white world.[46] In the years before Pearl Harbor, Muhammad repeatedly foretells of the impending destruction of the white world through an apocalypse in which "[t]he Japanese will slaughter the white man." In a sweeping gesture of jihadist optimism, Muhammad tells his black Muslim audience that it was "Japan's duty to save you; they have been given the power by the Asiatic nation to save you in the West."[47] The many references to the Japanese in Muhammad's sermons reveal that what Schuyler called "a common bond of hatred of white exploitation, persecution and ostracism" was a crucial underpinning of eschatological beliefs of the Nation of Islam that encompassed Japan.[48] A more secular manifestation of a black internationalism that embraced Japan was the Harlem-based Ethiopian Pacific Movement, whose leader, Robert O. Jordan (also known as Leonard Robert Jordan), gave blatantly black nationalist speeches that shared with Muhammad's sermons a theme of vengeance against the white man's exploitation. Jordan not only expected to "chop foes' heads off," as the *New York Times* reports in 1942, but called for having "President Roosevelt picking cotton, and Secretaries [Frank] Knox and [Henry] Stimson riding [him] around in rickshaws" when Japan crushed the United States in World War II.[49]

The intensity of the race war fantasy of the black internationalism of the pre–World War II period—as well as its yoking to pro-Japanese sentiment—is so unsettling that it is tempting to dismiss it with such apologetic explanations as the argument that U.S. blacks were mis-

guided by pro-Axis propaganda planted by Japanese agents. At the least, it is uncomfortable to acknowledge a link between black internationalism (which we associate with progressive, anticolonialist political ideals) and empathy for imperial Japan (with all the negative associations accompanying such an emotion). Yet important questions emerge upon setting this discomfort aside. What were the grounds of the appeal that empire—as opposed to democracy—held for American blacks in the prewar period? What possibilities were inherent in the mix of pro-empire sentiment and anticolonialist political ideals that suffused black internationalism? What sorts of postcolonial moments were prefigured in so unlikely a social text as a global race war fantasy? Approaching such questions requires, as I have suggested, an understanding of the complexity of the field of forces at work during the Ethiopian crisis, especially the potentials of a politico-affective race order enabling a strategic alliance of the Ethiopian and Japanese empires in the 1930s. But it also requires an understanding of how these potentials necessarily mutated after the demise of the black Ethiopian empire in 1936.

In a series of unpublished articles titled "Japan and the Negro," Schuyler writes, "Ethiopia was the acid test of Japan's love for the darker peoples." He observes that if Japan had "wanted to help Ethiopia she could have done so with arms, ammunition, planes and military instructors and Italy could not have stopped her." Yet with all the hyperventilated clamor for war in the summer of 1935, the rumored military aid from Japan never materialized, and "the sad fact remain[ed] that Japan left Ethiopia to her fate."[50] (As if this fact were not "sad" enough, Tokyo and Rome furthermore went on to exchange diplomatic recognitions of their respective conquests of Ethiopia and Manchuria, which led to Japan's alliance with the white Axis powers in World War II.[51]) Nevertheless, Schuyler, like Muhammad of the Nation of Islam, Jordan of the Ethiopian Pacific Movement, and other allegedly pro-Japanese blacks under FBI surveillance, continued to embrace Japan in accordance with the ideals of the historical post-Ethiopia Black Internationale.[52]

That Schuyler had personal contact with Japanese agents is certain. He was invited to dinner at the Nippon Club in New York on 18 April 1938,[53] where among the Japanese agents in attendance was journalist Masao Dodo, who had recently spoken in Harlem in defense of Japan's military operations in China. Dodo had swayed the opin-

ions of many African Americans in his audience, one of whom, Arthur Schomburg, was reported to declare, "If Japan will help the darker people to gain equal opportunities, I am ready to shoulder arms for Japan now."[54] Four months earlier, the *Pittsburgh Courier* had refused to print Schuyler's "Japan and the Negro" series, which it had commissioned. Schuyler, alluding to strong undercurrents of pro-Japanese sentiment among black Americans, not only asserts in this series that "the majority of thinking Negroes favors Japan," but maintains that Japanese victory in Asia offered "an immense psychological satisfaction to the teeming millions of oppressed colored people the world over"[55]—an opinion that publisher Robert Vann found too contentiously pro-Japanese and "injudicious" to print.[56]

   Such pro-Japanese sentiment can be viewed as a residue—and a tenacious one at that—of the reverie of an alliance of colored races forged through the rapprochement of the Ethiopian and Japanese empires. Yet from another perspective, such sentiment is precisely what Schuyler explicitly disavowed after the Italo-Ethiopian War. In "Japan and the Negro," he not only criticizes Japan for leaving "Ethiopia to her fate," but condemns a Japanese (colored) imperialism that "enslaved millions in Manchuria, Korea, Formosa and Eastern China." Indeed, according to Schuyler, the Japanese "ruthlessly murdered, raped and tortured without let" the Chinese, who are "also a colored people," thus evincing, as he writes with evident sarcasm, "a mighty strange way to show affection for China." While Schuyler clearly believed in the "good psychological effect" of the Japanese empire in Asia on the colored world, he was simultaneously a harsh critic of a Japan that "has been like all the other aggressor nations, including the United States." Even as Japan took the place of Ethiopia on the terrain of Schuyler's historical Black Internationale ("Here is no . . . Haile Selassie to be strafed into submission after a short period of terror"), Schuyler warned against a transnational alliance of black America and Japan such as Muhammad, Jordan, and other black nationalists envisioned: "Colored people are barking up the wrong tree if they think that Japan is out to help anybody except Japan." "American Negroes," writes Schuyler, "need to get the notion out of their heads that some Saviour is going to come from abroad to help them or that they can even look outside our borders for aid."[57] Obviously, Schuyler's Black Internationale reflects contradictory currents. Parallel to his scathing criticism of a colored empire in "Japan and the Negro" is his valoriza-

tion of it. This same contradiction characterizes *Black Empire*, which at once critiques and unnervingly echoes imperial and fascist rhetoric that Belsidus, masterminding a fictional Black Internationale, employs over the course of the narrative.

One simple but effective way to resolve this contradiction, at least in the case of Schuyler's post-Ethiopia Black Internationale, is to read *Black Empire* as a parody. Literary critic John Cullen Gruesser takes this approach, regarding the fiction as an important work of the critical imagination precisely because its parodic replication of black empire works to contest it affirmatively. By showing how the Black Internationale proves fascistic and hence "no better than (or just as bad as) a group of white fascists bent on establishing an empire for their own aggrandizement," Gruesser supports his argument that Schuyler "targets black oppression of black people" (as couched in Marcus Garvey's scheme to found a black empire in Africa, and practiced in Liberia, where Americo-Liberian officials exploited the native African population).[58] This line of argument offers a reassuring account of Schuyler's discomforting apparent embrace of Japan. But can *Black Empire* thus be understood as a parodic replication of the Japanese empire in an African setting (as much as it was of the Garvey movement and Liberia) that exposes colored oppression of colored people?

There is good circumstantial evidence to support such a reading. In autumn 1937, two ostensibly unrelated serials appeared atop the feature page of the *Courier*. In one of them, "Forum of Fact and Opinion," W. E. B. DuBois unflinchingly defends the Japanese empire and Japan's race war in Asia, maintaining that "Japan fought China to save China from Europe, and fought Europe through China and tried to wade in blood toward Asiatic freedom." Dismissing qualms about "killing the unarmed and innocent in order to reach the guilty," DuBois is adamant in his defense of Japan's actions, alleging that "the same spirit that animates the 'white folks' nigger' in the United States" motivated China to "prefer . . . to be a coolie for England rather than acknowledge the only world leadership that did not mean color caste," namely, "the leadership of Japan."[59] Printed across the page from DuBois's arguments for dismantling white hegemony through Japanese victory, Schuyler's *Black Empire* serials imagined a spectacular possible outcome of global racial oppression.

Colored empire, race war, the overthrow of white hegemony—one might well surmise that DuBois's Japan and Schuyler's Belsidus,

appearing side by side in the same weekly, were de facto embodiments of the same revolutionary agency. It is perhaps no coincidence that when the second *Black Empire* serial began its run in the fall of 1937, Ira Lewis, business manager of the *Courier*, solicited from Schuyler the series of articles that would become "Japan and the Negro." Lewis wrote to Schuyler, "The Negro is becoming interested in the foreign situation because somewhere beyond the physical horizon, he has visions of the Japanese becoming the new leader of the dark peoples."[60] Upon reading the first of the three installments of Schuyler's "Japan and the Negro," Lewis offers Schuyler his opinion that "the tocsin has been sounded, and the Japanese invasion of China and later India is but a beginning of the self-determination and self-assertion of the darker races lead [*sic*] by the Japanese."[61] One might speculate on the toll the Japanese imperial army exacted on the beliefs of *Courier* staff and readers—especially against the backdrop of Belsidus's military conquest of Africa as it unfolded in Schuyler's pulp fiction. Thus, the *Black Empire* serials can justifiably be read as a parodic running commentary on the Japanese imperialism that the "majority of thinking Negroes"—including DuBois and perhaps Schuyler himself—"favors." (If this sounds too far-fetched, recall how Belsidus's empire, in hindsight, eerily anticipated Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, a bloc of Asian nations "liberated" from Western imperialist powers that in the end exposed the Japanese as no less overweening and often even more oppressive than white colonialists.)

   The rendering I have just offered of *Black Empire* as a satiric parody of colored empire, building on Gruesser, helps explain and exorcise the haunting presence of what is notionally suspect in the terrain of Schuyler's Black Internationale. But precisely because it is detached from the pro-Ethiopian matrix from which Schuyler's (and a collective) black internationalism developed in the mid-1930s, such an interpretive narrative eerily approximates the profascist propaganda employed to justify the Italo-Ethiopian War. The rhetoric of the Ethiopian empire as "black oppression of black people," as in a parodic reading of *Black Empire*, is the very rhetoric profascist apologists such as Baron Roman Procházka found most serviceable to their cause. In his libelous pamphlet, *Abyssinia: The Powder Barrel* (1936), Procházka contends, "[T]he opponents of Imperialism should bear in mind that the numerous non-Amharic native tribes in Ethiopia, and these con-

stitute by far the greater part of the total population of the empire, are themselves the victims of *Abyssinian imperialism*. It is therefore utterly mistaken to represent the Abyssinian usurpers as being in any way oppressed and worthy of protection." In the end, says Procházka, "[t]he empire of the Negus had been built up by conquest and forcible annexation."[62] Thus did fascist propagandists depict the black empire as an oppressive political system of control over colored people.

It seems beyond question that Schuyler is to some extent mocking his readers' (and perhaps his own) naive faith in race war—and their related view of Japan as racial savior—but there are clear limits to reading *Black Empire* as parodic. At issue here is how we theorize the appeal that colored empire held in the post-Ethiopian context. Granted that the union of the African and Asian empires was the vital ground of both the race war fantasy and the black internationalism of the 1930s, the downfall of Ethiopia necessarily caused the signification of colored empire to mutate. How can we, pending the eventual sublation of this empire, reconstrue Schuyler's Black Internationale and his near-future war fantasy, which climaxes with the establishment (or restoration) of a black empire in Africa, as policy-relevant—as something like a projection into the postcolonial future? With this question in mind, I now turn to a closer analysis of Schuyler's *Black Empire*.

Black Empire

Written in the mid-1930s, when demagogy suffused the policy sphere in international relations, and the media in fascist Italy, black America, and elsewhere anticipated global race war, Schuyler's *Black Empire* closely engaged the war fantasies circulating in the media. Narrated in the first person by Carl Slater, ex-reporter for the *Harlem Blade*, *Black Empire* presents a rendition of such a war, thereby both participating in and parodying the production of the mediagenic fantasy it reflected in the aftermath of the Italo-Ethiopian War.

There is much to offend in Schuyler's serialized work, which is rife with murderous actions against whites. Violence is a fundamental force, even a stroke of poetic justice, in the scheme of the Black Internationale to liberate Africa from colonialism. In *Black Empire*, the zero hour is deliberately set for a great African uprising in which one race will exterminate or be exterminated by the other. A huge map of Africa displayed on the wall of Belsidus's headquarters marks every

important town in electric lights "set to turn green if in our hands and red if remaining in the hands of the whites" (*BE*, 124). In this Manichean framework of green or red (read black or white), the subjugated strike back at the subjugators through the calculated use of bloodshed to cleanse Africa of colonialism and its structural violence. The Black Internationale attacks white civilization in Africa using aircraft-carried bombs, but the greater part of the "work" of destroying white civilization is willingly taken on by African natives who slaughter white men, women, and children at close quarters and with great brutality (*BE*, 129).

That anticolonialism can be imagined through the violence of colonialism is an interesting paradox. The staging of violence in *Black Empire* suggests that in Schuyler's frame, nonviolence is no alternative to the structural violence of colonialism. Rather than equating anticolonialism with antiviolence, Schuyler uses the trope of violence to link the experiences of colonialism and racial injustice to progressive social causes. This rhetorical transformation of revolutionary violence into work resonates with the classic analysis of violence offered by the Caribbean-born Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963). In his discussion of the process of decolonization, violence is inevitable and necessary. For Fanon, there is no transition from the socially constructed Manichean world of black and white that is colonialism; rather, there is only substitution, and violence is the only means to break down the colonial machinery: "[I]f the last shall be first, this will only come to pass after a murderous and decisive struggle between the two protagonists," that is, colonizer and colonized. The production of violence for Fanon is the "work" through which colonized people liberate themselves from the passivity of the "thing," the product of work for which they have been condemned to labor. On the collective level, the practice of violence unifies a people on a national (and sometimes a racial) basis, as it "introduces into each man's consciousness the ideas of a common cause." Such solidarity alone can overcome the regionalism and tribalism that colonialism not only circumscribes but exploits, dividing the colonial world into "compartments" in which each of the colonized, conditioned to "stay in his place, and not to go beyond certain limits," is imprisoned.[63] Schuyler similarly envisions the creation of a new black man and a unified black nation—or empire—through the work of violence that is, in Fanon's phrasing, "in action all-inclusive and national."[64]

In *Black Empire*, as in Fanon's work, anticolonialism is no less anti-colonial for being violent. Yet the correspondence between Schuyler and Fanon must be carefully considered in terms of the convoluted relation between violence in the "real world" and its fantastic representation. As I have emphasized, *Black Empire* is a work of pulp fiction and fantasy. Is the production of a graphic race war scenario tantamount to the production of violence in the flesh in the colonial world of Fanon's analysis? What is the work of a violent reverie and what are its implications for resisting subordination? In "'That Just Kills Me': Black Militant Near-Future Fiction"—one of the first critical texts to trace a distinguishable, if submerged, vein of "kill-the-white-people" fantasy and speculative fiction in the African American literary tradition—Kali Tal observes that Schuyler's work is "deeply uncomfortable for black and white critics alike, most of whom do not seem inclined to acknowledge that this level of hostility may exist."[65] Yet Tal, for one, chooses to face Schuyler squarely, and to take what she sees in his hostile work as a reflection of the social injustices blacks suffer. She approaches Schuyler's pulp fiction as what social scientist James Scott terms a "hidden transcript," a discourse that takes place "offstage," enacting the anger and reciprocal aggression denied in actual relations of domination.[66] In Tal's view, the reception of *Black Empire* by Schuyler's black audience suggests that "not only is the oppression of blacks still vigorous in the United States but that African Americans have stored up enough anger and hatred for white people" to embrace such a hostile vision.[67] The public enthusiasm for *Black Empire*, which outpaced Schuyler's own expectations and even control, may indicate that the emotionally charged hidden transcript at its heart reproduced a long-established discourse among black Americans that required only the form of his pulp fiction to rapidly become collective fantasy.

Yet *Black Empire* is more than an imagining of violent revolution in the tradition of the black militant near-future novel, that is, an imagining that draws its social appeal and force from the shared hidden transcript nurtured by that tradition. It is also made possible by the emergence in the mid-1930s of race war as a reciprocal fantasy of the black and fascist Italian presses, the product of the broad and violent fascination with a "colored empire" triggered by the rumored alliance of Ethiopia and Japan. Capturing both the colonial and anticolonial imagination as it engaged the hope and threat of a colored empire, the fixation on race war reflected the reality portrayed in the media,

which provided the mobilizing force to establish black internationalism even as it served different purposes in fascist Italy in relation to its invasion of Ethiopia. Outside of the enabling context of this mediated (and mediagenic) rendering of race war in which reciprocity rules—reciprocity ironically denied in "peaceful" race relations—the work of Schuyler's fantasy in *Black Empire* cannot be fully apprehended or appreciated.

Not often noted of *Black Empire* in its post-Ethiopian context is how its signification of colored empire mutated from groundwork and origin to an end that lies in the future for black internationalism, accompanied by a corollary shift in the nature of the power—or violence—of black internationalism. A colored empire, which undergirded the power of black internationalism during the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, and from which race war derived its legitimacy, is displaced in *Black Empire* to a planned end, a future establishment, in relation to which the violence of the Black Internationale—however criminal or inhumane—is justified. It is this displacement that renders the Black Internationale of *Black Empire* less a galvanizing breakthrough movement, as it would have been during the Ethiopian crisis, than a means to an end—a means that is moreover subject to the dictating will of the charismatic race leader Belsidus.

If any genius informs Belsidus's scheme in *Black Empire*, it lies in his systematic reconstruction and reworking of the remnants of the affective race relations of the post-Ethiopian context, which gave way to a surge of black internationalism. With no imperial Ethiopia-Japan axis functioning in the world of the story (that axis having collapsed in the realm of reality), Belsidus's elaborate, strategic manipulation of racial sentiment forges the basis of black internationalism in the fiction. Through a network of quasi-religious "Temples of Love," Belsidus reaches the black diasporic population around the world "through their emotions" and commands them to love one another (*BE*, 36, 65–66). He similarly harnesses anger—which offers yet another common ground for members of the colored race—to power the economy of black solidarity, assembling to work under him black scientists and engineers who "possess . . . hatred and resentment, that fuel which operates the juggernaut of conquest" of the white world (*BE*, 15). The war Belsidus instigates likewise does not end in the physical destruction of white civilization, but rather in the terror he produces in the white race through violence. This terror reflects their hegemony, which is

clothed as democracy but sustained through slavery, Jim Crow, and lynching. Belsidus thus prosecutes his race war in the United States by inflaming hatred and terrorism among white Americans until it "roll[s] along under its own momentum" to their self-destruction (*BE*, 83). In Europe, white people die "like flies" in the "bestial fear and terror" of the Second World War, killing each other off and thus committing, to borrow from Schuyler's *Courier* column of 17 August 1935, racial "hari-kari" (*BE*, 138). In view of the performative role of terror in the fiction, one begins to understand the fine line upon which Japan stands in Schuyler's notion of the post-Ethiopia Black Internationale. Schuyler championed the Japanese (colored) empire because of its "psychological" impact on a white Western hegemony perpetuated in the name of prosperity, order, and peace. In the essay in the *Crisis* discussed above, "The Rise of the Black Internationale" (which Hill and Rasmussen read as an "ideological companion piece" to *Black Empire* [*BE*, 279]), Schuyler observes how blacks in the United States see "erstwhile haughty whites cowering in the shell-holes of Shanghai, a British ambassador machine gunned on the road to Nanking and an American gunboat bombed to the bottom of the Yangste [*sic*] River without reprisal from a Caucasia become panic-stricken and paralyzed." Japan's war in Asia, Schuyler predicts, in tandem with resistance in other parts of the darker world, would set the stage for the arrival of a "New Negro" who is "[n]o longer . . . terrorized" but "waits, schemes and plans" to launch a "Black Internationale of liberation"[68]— a development that Belsidus rehearses in the realm of fiction.

In Schuyler's first *Black Empire* serial, Belsidus's race war accomplishes its intended end. The Black Internationale crushes Italy and other imperialist powers and brings about the establishment of a futuristic Empire of Africa. Belsidus defines this end as a restoration, proclaiming upon its achievement that "Africa belongs once more to the Africans" (*BE*, 140). With this restoration of black rule, symbolically coterminous with a regained Ethiopia, a form of racial harmony between blacks and whites is recovered. Belsidus delivers the following address to delegates assembled from all parts of the colored world: "Now that we have ousted the white man from Africa, let us not waste time hating the white man. . . . Let us stay out of his lands and be sure that he stays out of ours. The world is plenty large enough for both of us. If we properly take care of our part, we shall maintain our independence forever and forever" (*BE*, 141). The race leader thus envisions

in the Empire of Africa what looks like a postcolonial condition of race relations, one that justifies all of the violence of the race war that he instigated and waged.

Inspired by the Ethiopian crisis, the first serial ends with the restoration of Ethiopia and racial harmony, coupled together—an ending that is reprised in the second serial. Yet this restorative ending marks an incongruous moment in *Black Empire*, since the real black empire—Ethiopia—never afforded any such precursory interracial accord to which white and colored people might return. Operating as the ground from which black anticolonial campaigns launched, but mutating into an end that lies in the future, a restored Ethiopia, or black empire, does not in Schuyler's fiction ultimately promise postcolonial interracial harmony as the original state of race relations presumed to exist before the downfall of Africa's oldest independent black civilization. Invented and yet nostalgically remembered as restored, the colored empire that enables race harmony at the close of *Black Empire* amounts to no more than a signifier reminding us that Belsidus and his Black Internationale will never attain that to which it points.

It is this subtle ground that the colored empire occupies, and from which the articulation of something like a counterdiscourse to racism and colonial oppression becomes possible in a post-Ethiopian context. What I have proposed in this essay is to reclaim this ground that Schuyler reconnoitered by clarifying the cultural work of the signifying colored empire and the race war fantasy it engenders. Arguing as I have for a violent fantasy that marked and delimited black internationalism as it revolved around an axis of colored empires—the empires of Ethiopia and Japan in the 1930s—is admittedly a slippery project. The global scenario, though imagined as a near future likelihood in the black and fascist presses alike, was later advocated and lived out by only a handful of pro-Japanese, FBI-surveilled black nationalist organizations. In the *Courier*, it was supplanted by the "Double V" campaign that the weekly launched after Pearl Harbor in 1942. Yet the scenario, as enacted (and parodied) in *Black Empire*, should not be consigned to historical oblivion. Envisioned to restructure politico-affective race relations in the post-Ethiopian era, Schuyler's near-futurist pulp fiction gave the signifying colored empire—as both the basis for a militant black anticolonial crusade and a projection into a postcolonial future that justifies race war—full play in the black imagination. *Black Empire* thus affords a deeper understanding of what the black inter-

nationalism of the mid-1930s was fighting for in its violent fascination with empire and race war.

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Notes

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1   John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*, 3rd ed. (New York: Vintage, 1969), 574.
2   Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935–1960* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1996), 37; Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937–1957* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1997), 11.
3   George S. Schuyler, *Black Empire*, ed. Robert A. Hill and R. Kent Rasmussen (Boston: Northeastern Univ. Press, 1991). All references to *Black Empire* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *BE*.
4   Kali Tal, "'That Just Kills Me': Black Militant Near-Future Fiction," *Social Text* 20 (summer 2002): 79.
5   Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 51, 80; Von Eschen, *Race against Empire*, 11.
6   The Ethiopian emperor's name is also spelled Haile Sellassie.
7   Michelle A. Stephens, *Black Empire: The Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United States, 1914–1962* (Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 2005), 5, 13, 31.
8   Harold G. Marcus, *Haile Sellassie I: The Formative Years, 1892–1936* (1987; reprint, Lawrenceville, N.J.: Red Sea Press, 1998), 200 n. 46.
9   The capital of Ethiopia is variably spelled Addis Abeba or Addis Ababa. I use the latter spelling, which has been more commonly employed in English-speaking countries.
10   Andrew Buni, *Robert L. Vann of the "Pittsburgh Courier": Politics and Black Journalism* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1974), 224, 257.
11   Robert A. Hill, introduction to George S. Schuyler, *Ethiopian Stories*, ed. Robert A. Hill (Boston: Northeastern Univ. Press, 1994), 14.
12   Roi Ottley, *"New World A-Coming": Inside Black America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943), 109.
13   Hill, introduction to Schuyler, *Ethiopian Stories*, 14.
14   "Views and Reviews," 27 July 1935, 10; "Views and Reviews," 17 August 1935, 10; "Views and Reviews," 27 July 1935, 10.
15   Tal, "That Just Kills Me," 80, 79.
16   "Another World War Threatens as Japan Talks," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 27 July 1935, 1, 4.
17   Ibid., 4.

18   "'Civilizing' Ethiopia," *New York Age*, 3 August 1935, 6.

19   "Another World War Threatens," 4.

20   "Rome Press Turns Attack on Japan," *New York Times*, 23 July 1935, 12.

21   "Japanese Embassy Guarded," *New York Times*, 23 July 1935, 12.

22   "Rome Press Turns Attack on Japan," 12.

23   "Japanese Embassy Guarded," 12; see also "Attacks on Japan Continue," *New York Times*, 24 July 1935, 8.

24   Arden Brizan Lester Taylor (Nationalist Negro Movement) to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, telegram, 9 August 1935, Ref. B02031218800, Japan Center for Asian Historical Records (JACAR), National Archives of Japan, Tokyo.

25   "Japan Prepares to Aid Ethiopia," *Indianapolis Recorder*, 13 July 1935, 1; "Ethiopian, Italian Armies Face Each Other in Africa . . . Hostilities Expected Any Minute as Emperor Turns to Japan," *Chicago Defender*, 13 July 1935, 1; "Japanese Hit at Mussolini," *New York Amsterdam News*, 20 July 1935, 1; "Japanese Scored by Italians: Attitude of Tokyo Called Hostile," *New York Age*, 27 July 1935, 1; "Japan Looms as Bar to Italy," *Chicago Defender*, 27 July 1935, 1.

26   "Japan Arming Ethiopia," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 August 1935, 1.

27   "Is Ethiopia Stretching Forth Her Hand?" *Chicago Defender*, 20 July 1935, 10.

28   "Troops Mass for War!" *Chicago Defender*, 13 July 1935, 1.

29   "Is Ethiopia Stretching Forth Her Hand?" 10.

30   "Japanese Remember Shattered Romance," *Chicago Defender*, 13 July 1935, 1.

31   For Ethiopia-Japan relations during the early 1930s, see Richard Albert Bradshaw, "Japan and European Colonialism in Africa, 1800–1937" (PhD diss., Ohio University, 1992), 306–18; and Marcus, *Haile Sellassie I*, 200 n. 46.

32   For accounts of this engagement, see Kazuhiro Yamada, *Masukaru no Hanayome* (*The Bride of Maskal*) (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 1998); and J. Calvitt Clarke III, "Marriage Alliance: The Union of Two Imperiums, Japan and Ethiopia?" users.ju.edu/jclarke/wizzs.html (4 January 2008).

33   Yotaro Sugimura to Koki Hirota (Foreign Minister), 14 December 1934, Ref. B02031217400, JACAR. My translation.

34   O. Tanin and E. Yohan, *When Japan Goes to War* (New York: Vanguard, 1936), 14.

35   "Views and Reviews," 3 February 1934, 10.

36   "Italy Scotches African Prince's Plan to Take Japanese Bride," *Washington Post*, 3 April 1934, 1; Kendall Foss, "Japan's 'Conquest' of Ethiopia Halts at Il Duce's Frown," *Washington Post*, 8 April 1934, B1; "Abyssinian Ends Troth to Japanese," *New York Times*, 3 April 1934, 11.

37   In this regard, my account of the Ethiopian crisis differs from that of William R. Scott, who views Japan's role as no more than an "interest-

ing" historical footnote (*The Sons of Sheba's Race: African Americans and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935–1941* [Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1993], 249 n. 48).

38   "'Holy War' A Trade War," *New York Age*, 22 September 1934, 6.

39   "Watching Hailie [*sic*] Selassie," *Chicago Defender*, 22 September 1934, 14.

40   J. A. Rogers, "Italy over Abyssinia," *Crisis* 42 (February 1935): 38.

41   George Padmore, "Ethiopia and World Politics," *Crisis* 42 (May 1935): 157.

42   George S. Schuyler, *Black and Conservative: The Autobiography of George S. Schuyler* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1966), 248.

43   George S. Schuyler, "The Rise of the Black Internationale," *Crisis* 45 (August 1938): 277, 256.

44   Ottley, *New World A-Coming*, 104.

45   Henry Louis Gates Jr., "A Fragmented Man: George Schuyler and the Claims of Race," *New York Times Book Review*, 20 September 1992, 42.

46   Karl Evanzz, *The Messenger: The Rise and Fall of Elijah Muhammad* (1999; reprint, New York: Vintage, 2001), 118–19.

47   FBI headquarters file on Elijah Muhammad; quoted in Evanzz, *The Messenger*, 106.

48   Placard announcing *Black Empire*; quoted in Hill and Rasmussen, afterword to *BE*, 267.

49   "Revenge All Planned by Harlem Fuehrer," *New York Times*, 16 September 1942, 16; "Trial Bares Dream of a Harlem Nazi," *New York Times*, 16 December 1942, 11.

50   George S. Schuyler, "Japan and the Negro," 3 installments. Schuyler Family Papers: George S. Schuyler: Writings, Box 8, Folder 10, 1:4, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York.

51   J. Calvitt Clarke III, "The Politics of Arms Not Given: Japan, Ethiopia, and Italy in the 1930s," in *Girding for Battle: The Arms Trade in a Global Perspective, 1815–1940*, ed. Donald J. Stoker Jr. and Jonathan A. Grant (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003), 146.

52   Jeffrey B. Ferguson, *The Sage of Sugar Hill: George S. Schuyler and the Harlem Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2005), 27.

53   "Guests at Dinner" list, George S. Schuyler Papers, scrapbook, vol. 16, microfilm reel 6, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library, Syracuse, N.Y. Among the other black guests invited was Walter White, executive secretary of the NAACP.

54   "Sino-Jap Dispute Explained to Harlemites," *New York Amsterdam News*, 5 February 1938, 4.

55   Schuyler, "Japan and the Negro," 1:1, 2:1.

56   Ira F. Lewis to Schuyler, 29 December 1937. Box 1, Folder 2, George S. Schuyler Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library, Syracuse, N.Y.

57   Schuyler, "Japan and the Negro," 3:1, 2:3, 1:3, 2:4, 1:4, 2:4, 3:4.

58   John Cullen Gruesser, *Black on Black: Twentieth-Century African American Writing about Africa* (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 2000), 111, 116.

59   W. E. B. DuBois, "Forum of Fact and Opinion," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 23 October 1937, 11.

60   Ira F. Lewis to Schuyler, 22 November 1937, Box 1, Folder 2, George S. Schuyler Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library, Syracuse, N.Y.

61   Lewis to Schuyler, 29 December 1937.

62   Baron Roman Procházka, *Abyssinia: The Powder Barrel* (London: British International News Agency, [1936]), 1, 54.

63   Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 37, 93, 94, 51–52.

64   Ibid., 94.

65   Tal, "That Just Kills Me," 67, 80.

66   James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1990), 4, 37–38.

67   Tal, "That Just Kills Me," 79.

68   Schuyler, "The Rise of the Black Internationale," 275, 277. Schuyler reprises the gist of his idea in "Japan and the Negro," 1:3–4.