

SCHWEITZER AND AFRICA*

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ABSTRACT. *This work analyses Albert Schweitzer's complex relationship to Africa, and places him within the context of medical missionizing. Although he worked in Africa for over fifty years, Schweitzer was strangely indifferent to the continent's culture. Unlike his fellow missionaries, he never learned native languages, and his service was primarily grounded in a Nietzschean rejection of European conventionalities and a desire to develop his unique 'ethical personality'. Schweitzer's self-belief enabled him to create a village-hospital where the sick could come with their families for treatment and refuge, and contributed to his idea of the 'reverence for life', a secularized ethics of compassion and environmental protection that made him famous in the West. The village-hospital enabled him to tend the sick more effectively, but after the First World War it became more hierarchical and depersonalized. Schweitzer's missionary experiment in Lambaréné was simultaneously radical and conformist, daring and self-protectively conservative. His desire to serve was as profound as any of his clerical colleagues, but it was built, as will be seen, upon rebellious ethical foundations. Schweitzer stands out not so much for his therapeutic innovations (though these were important), as for his later formulation of a neo-Christian ecologism that assured his fame in Europe and America.*

By the mid-1950s, the Alsatian pastor, doctor, and musician Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) was at the height of his fame. Described by *Life Magazine* as the 'greatest man in the world alive'¹ and as a 'saint',² he won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952 and was lauded in his final years for his campaign against nuclear weapons.³ He had earned his reputation as the greatest humanitarian of the day by giving up his brilliant career in Europe to tend the sick of Equatorial Africa. Away in Lambaréné (Gabon) during both world wars, he seemed untainted by the excesses of European violence. When he intervened

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¹ 'The greatest man in the world', *Life Magazine*, 6 Oct. 1947, pp. 95–8.

² Winthrop Sargeant, 'Albert Schweitzer', *Life Magazine*, 6 Oct. 1947, p. 77; the saintly image remained despite growing criticism: George Silk, 'The white wizard's goth', *Life Magazine*, 19 Feb. 1965, pp. 83–94.

³ See 'The Schweitzer declaration', *Saturday Review*, 18 May 1957, pp. 13–20, broadcast worldwide on 23 Apr. 1957.

in the politics of nuclear disarmament, he was cheered as a rational, Christian voice struggling against the madness of a world hell-bent on destruction.

Although he worked primarily in Africa for over fifty years, Schweitzer's quasi-sanctification was grounded in a strange indifference to the continent's culture. His relationship to Africa was unusual among medical missionaries, combining a Nietzschean rejection of European conventionalities with a Christian vision of service. He went to Africa primarily to develop his ethical personality and escape the moral and social hierarchies of a decadent civilization. He saw himself as Jesus' 'slave',⁴ and sought to emulate this ethical superman through exemplary sacrifice – hence his decision to work in what was widely regarded as one of Africa's more benighted and insalubrious regions.

After he arrived, Schweitzer's self-belief – which put him at odds with his fellow missionaries and the French administration – enabled him to break new ground. He created a village-hospital where the sick could come with their families to find treatment and refuge. In these early stages, his sojourn in the magnificent rainforest de-stabilized his vision of the world and contributed importantly to his idea of the 'reverence for life', a secularized ethics of compassion and environmental protection that would make him famous in the West. However, there was a profound ambivalence at the heart of his enterprise. The village-hospital enabled him to tend the sick more effectively, but, when he returned to Africa after the First World War (he was deported by the French in the last year of the conflict), it became more hierarchical and de-personalized as it expanded. In order to play the organ, write philosophy, and study Indian religion, he isolated himself in the 'primeval forest' both from the 'native' patients and to a certain extent from his staff. White-haired, mustachioed, garbed in pith helmet and baggy trousers, he protected his personal ethical and spiritual journey in the rainforest, and ultimately came to resist moves towards de-colonization.⁵

When visitors came to Lambaréné in greater numbers in the 1950s, they found it difficult to square the myth of the benevolent 'grand Docteur' with the hospital's less appealing reality. They were disturbed by Schweitzer's authoritarianism, disquieted by his refusal to train local physicians, and disapproved of the untidy, and what they regarded as technologically primitive, facilities.⁶ By the time he died in 1965, the village-hospital was increasingly seen as a relic of missionary imperialism. Once a giant on the world stage, Schweitzer had become a figure of controversy and even embarrassment, his resistance to

⁴ Rhena Schweitzer Miller and Gustav Woyt, *The Albert Schweitzer–Helene Bresslau letters, 1902–1912* (Syracuse, NY, 2003), p. 60, letter 53. He felt that Jesus had put him in chains.

⁵ See Erica Anderson's *The world of Albert Schweitzer: a book of photographs* (New York, NY, 1955).

⁶ See 'Albert Schweitzer: an anachronism', *Time Magazine*, 21 June, 1963, p. 31, and Gerald McKnight, *Verdict on Schweitzer: the man behind the legend of Lambaréné* (London, 1964), pp. 21, 31, 54–5.

change regarded as out of step with de-colonization, civil rights activism, and the struggle against apartheid.

To understand him better, I will first examine how his intellectual and ethical trajectory was very different to that of other medical missionaries. The historiography of missionaries in the period reveals the complexity of their interaction with African populations, a richness of exchange and negotiation that goes beyond the somewhat static notion of 'colonial encounter'. Such work seeks to avoid the triumphalism and hagiography associated with the 'civilizing mission', while also demonstrating the missionaries' vulnerability and humanity. Few historians now believe that such people merely imposed themselves and recognize how fearful they were of being 'swamped' by an alien world. In South Africa among the Tswana, for example, the nonconformists of the London Mission Society realized that their efforts at 'translation' were foiled by their lack of fluency in indigenous languages.⁷ They feared their conversions were superficial and, with the Khoekhoe in the Eastern Cape, realized that Christianity was largely spread through African intermediaries,⁸ whom they could not fully monitor.⁹ Similarly, missionaries sought to negotiate the complex relationship between conversion, healing, and science.¹⁰ In places like Malawi and the Zambia, they were at first disdainful of local medicine but later grew to appreciate aspects of African practice.¹¹ Missionaries reordered indigenous knowledge with their grammars and natural histories, but also reshaped their own assumptions, as the example of Henri Junod, a Swiss missionary and pioneering anthropologist, reveals.¹²

⁷ See Jean and John Comaroff, *Of revelations and revolution: Christianity, colonialism and consciousness in South Africa*, 1 (Chicago, IL, 1991), pp. 172–250, who focuses on the difficulty of securing conversions and the fluidity of 'translation'; P. Landau, *The realm of the word: language, gender and Christianity in a southern African kingdom* (Portsmouth, NH, 1995), concentrates on religion and language, and their relation to sacred power, gender, and local and elite autonomy; see also Derek R. Peterson, *Creative writing: translation, bookkeeping, and the work of imagination in colonial Kenya* (London, 2004); and T. Falola, *Christianity and social change in Africa: essays in honor of J. D. Y. Peel* (Durham, NC, 2005), particularly part E.

⁸ Elizabeth Elbourne, *Blood ground: colonialism, missions, and the contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799–1853* (Montreal, 2002).

⁹ Adrian Hastings, *The church in Africa, 1450–1950* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 264–6; Toyin Falola, *Christianity and social change in Africa*, particularly part E.

¹⁰ Patrick Harries and David Maxwell, eds., in *The spiritual and the secular: missionaries and knowledge about Africa* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2012); see also Charles Good, *The steamer parish: the rise and fall of missionary medicine on an African frontier* (Chicago, IL, 2004), pp. 46–7, 297–8; and W. T. Kalusa and M. Vaughan, *Death, belief and politics in central African history* (Lusaka, 2013), especially ch. 4.

¹¹ See Marku Hokkanen, 'Scottish missionaries and African healers: perceptions and relations in the Livingstonia Mission, 1875–1930', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 34 (2004), pp. 320–47, and Walima T. Kalusa, 'Language, medical auxiliaries, and the re-interpretation of missionary medicine in colonial Mwinilunga, Zambia, 1922–1951', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 1 (2007), pp. 57–78.

¹² See Patrick Harries, *Butterflies and barbarians: Swiss missionaries and systems of knowledge in South-East Africa* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 10–34; for more on this process elsewhere, see n. 7.

In this context, Schweitzer's missionary experiment in Lambaréné was simultaneously radical and conformist, daring and self-protectively conservative. His desire to serve was as profound as any of his clerical colleagues, but it was built, as will be seen, upon rebellious ethical foundations. Schweitzer stands out not so much for his therapeutic innovations (though these were important), as for his later formulation of a neo-Christian ecologism that assured his fame in Europe and America. Revered in the West for what was seen as his progressive humanitarianism, in Africa he maintained an abiding belief in European aesthetic norms, visions of craftsmanship, notions of textuality, and theology born during his Edwardian coming-of-age. These preoccupations were central to his mission and never substantially shifted, any more than his conviction that Africans occupied a lower rung on the ladder of cultural evolution.

Perhaps because of the difficulty of categorizing him, the historiography surrounding Schweitzer has tended to alternate between condemnation and neglect. The reissue of James Brabazon's 1976 biography over fifteen ago testifies to the paucity of broad new scholarship in English,¹³ while French work remains ill at ease with a man who often seemed more German than French.¹⁴ Perhaps because Schweitzer cut such a titanic figure in the West, the biographies seem strangely de-contextualized, detached from the larger histories of tropical medicine and even from fashionable trends in imperial history, transnational history, and humanitarianism.¹⁵ Remarkably, he appears almost not at all in the massive new scholarship surrounding missionizing precisely because he does not seem to 'fit in'. Indeed, the recent work that has appeared focuses on his personal development and his impact in Europe. Nils Ole Oermann studies Schweitzer's intellectual milieu and trajectory, and also analyses the Schweitzer cult in post-war Germany.¹⁶ My own work has recently examined Schweitzer's intellectual formation, and the way he linked musical, theological, and philosophical themes to a fascination with Indian religion while living in Africa.¹⁷ James Carleton Paget is the first to reconsider Schweitzer's theology and relationship to the Jews. He has recently begun to explain why Schweitzer seemed so uninterested in Africa.¹⁸

¹³ J. Brabazon, *Albert Schweitzer: a biography* (2nd edn, Syracuse, NY, 2000).

¹⁴ See Pierre Lassus, *Albert Schweitzer* (Paris, 1995); Robert Arnaut, *Albert Schweitzer: l'homme au-delà de la renommée internationale* (Paris, 2009).

¹⁵ In *Empire of humanity* (Ithaca, NY, 2011), for example, Michael M. Barnett has no entry for Schweitzer.

¹⁶ See Nils Ole Oermann, *Albert Schweitzer, 1875–1965: eine Biographie* (Munich, 2009). In both East and West he represented, especially for the young, the continuity of German *Bildung*, despite war and holocaust. See pp. 241–2, 271–87.

¹⁷ R. Harris, 'The allure of Albert Schweitzer', *History of European Ideas*, 40 (2014), pp. 804–25.

¹⁸ James Carleton Paget, 'Albert Schweitzer's second edition of "The quest of the historical Jesus"', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 88 (2006; imprint 2009), pp. 3–39; idem, 'Theologians in context: Albert Schweitzer', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 62 (2011), pp. 116–31; idem, 'Schweitzer and Paul', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 33 (2011),

I

Despite the joys of his life as a young adult in Strasbourg, Paris, and Berlin, Schweitzer believed that intellectual and artistic pleasures were insufficient for an ethical life. Born into a dynasty of Lutheran pastors in Alsace in 1875, he had written controversial works on critical theology and had engaged fully in the disputes surrounding biblical scholarship. His radical work on the historical Jesus, for example, espoused decidedly avant-garde ideas.¹⁹ Not only did he emphasize the apocalyptic dimension of Jesus' message – and hence Christ's Jewish origins – he also immersed himself in the philological debates that swirled around the study of the Gospels. In this regard, he provides a contrast with the Swiss, Henri Junod, whose thesis, *The perfect holiness of Jesus Christ* (1885),²⁰ exemplified a more common theological conformity.

Nor was the nature of his biblical scholarship the only area in which Schweitzer diverged from the norm. His serious philosophical studies, and especially his examination of Kant, had led him to criticize intellectual abstraction and to advocate a practical morality in which 'head' and 'heart', rationality and sympathy, were fused, ideas that were central to the ethical philosophy he later developed in Africa.²¹ In addition, he had long distinguished himself as one of the most promising organists of his generation by creating an audience for Bach's organ repertoire in France, where the composer's music and the Lutheran theology which underpinned it were both misunderstood. His fame within European musical circles as an innovator and performer contributed to his exceptional profile within the missionary world.²²

His decision at the age of thirty to become a medical missionary shocked his friends and colleagues, who could not understand how he could give up his career(s) as theologian, philosopher, and musician. Schweitzer explained that he had made a secret vow in 1896 (when only twenty-one) to serve humanity. But his inspiration was neither as immediate nor as decisive as he claimed. Letters to Helene Bresslau, the woman he would ultimately marry, reveal that at intervals he tried to look after orphaned children, the homeless, and released criminals. Although he read the *Journal des missions évangéliques* of the Paris Missionary Society (PMS), he toyed with other charitable endeavours and

pp. 223–56; idem, 'Albert Schweitzer and Adolf von Harnack: an unlikely alliance', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 122 (2011), pp. 257–87; idem, 'Albert Schweitzer and Africa', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 38 (2012), pp. 277–316.

¹⁹ His most important contributions were *Das Messianitäts- und Leidensgeheimnis: eine Skizze des Lebens Jesu* (3rd edn, Tübingen, 1956); *The mystery of the kingdom of God*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Amherst, MA, 1985); *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen, 1906); and *The quest of the historical Jesus: a critical study of its progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery (London, 1954).

²⁰ Harries, *Butterflies and barbarians*, p. 2.

²¹ See A. Schweitzer's *Die Religionsphilosophie Kant's von der Kritik der reinen Vernunft bis zur Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft* (Freiburg, 1889).

²² Harris, 'The allure of Albert Schweitzer', pp. 807–9.

held on to his newly acquired position as the head of the Lutheran Theological College in Strasbourg.²³

In 1905, Schweitzer finally approached the head of the PMS and negotiated with its directing committee. Founded in the 1820s as part of an interdenominational evangelical movement, the Paris Mission included Calvinists, Lutherans, and 'foreigners', mainly British and Swiss evangelicals.²⁴ Although rocked by schisms and financial difficulties, it had none the less managed to establish ventures in Lesotho and later in China, Tahiti, and Mauritius.²⁵ It came into its own after 1881, however, when Jules Ferry launched his imperial policies almost at the same time as his anti-clerical campaigns, and when French Protestants began to lose their sense of social and political marginality.²⁶ Under Alfred Boegner, the newly elected head, money flowed in (between 1890 and 1901–2, donations nearly tripled from 475,000 to 1,260,000 francs), and new missions began in Zambezi, New Caledonia, and Madagascar.²⁷ Schweitzer's application caused ructions, however, precisely because the missions' fate was tied to the recovery of French *grandeur*; not unreasonably, the directing committee wondered why he insisted on joining a French organization when he could easily have gone through Switzerland or Germany. Schweitzer responded that, like his father, he was a devotee of Eugène Casalis, a French Protestant missionary who had gone into the interior of Southern Africa in 1833, and that he applied to the Paris Mission for sentimental reasons.²⁸

Schweitzer's request was provocative in 1905 because it came during the First Moroccan Crisis and just after the signature of an Anglo-French Entente Cordiale (1904).²⁹ The committee wondered if Schweitzer meant to subvert France while in the colonies under an Alsatian cloak, and turned him down. However, when Schweitzer reapplied in 1911, letters to his fiancée suggest that he may indeed have had a veiled political agenda, even if it was different to the one the Mission imagined. Schweitzer's fixation with the PMS may have revealed a deep-seated hatred of nationalism, and an assertion of Alsatian identity that was simultaneously particular and transnational. During

²³ Miller and Woyt, *The Albert Schweitzer–Helene Bresslau letters*: for the theological college, see 3 Mar. 1903, pp. 17–18, and 26 Nov. 1903; for his loss of academic motivation, see pp. 32–3 and 21 Dec. 1904, for indecision over Africa, pp. 57–8; see also Carleton Paget, 'Albert Schweitzer and Africa', pp. 281–4.

²⁴ André Encrevé, *Les protestants en France de 1800 à nos jours* (Paris, 1985), pp. 45–8, 59, and Jean-François Zorn, *Le grand siècle d'une mission protestante: la Mission de Paris de 1822 à 1912* (Paris, 1993), pp. 565–89.

²⁵ René Blac, Jacques Blocher, and Etienne Kruger, *Histoire des missions protestantes françaises*, III (Namur, 1970), pp. 28–33.

²⁶ See Patrick Cabanel, *Le Dieu de la République: aux sources protestantes de la laïcité (1860–1900)* (Rennes, 2003); Marianne Carbonnier-Burkard and Patrick Cabanel, *Une histoire des protestants en France, XVI–XXe siècle* (Paris, 1998).

²⁷ Blac, Blocher, and Kruger, *Histoire des missions protestantes françaises*, p. 70.

²⁸ Jean-François Zorn, *The transforming gospel: the mission of François Coillard and Basuto evangelists in Barotseland* (Geneva, 2004).

²⁹ Zorn, *Le grand siècle d'une mission protestante*, p. 592.

the Second Morocco Crisis of 1911, he protested against renewed Teutonic sabre-rattling to Helene, whom he chided for siding with the Germans.³⁰ He thus again set himself apart from the usual pool of candidates by wishing, as a German subject by conquest, to serve French Protestantism in the French empire. From the outset, his application revealed an unorthodox combination of loyalties that underscored his own unconventionality.³¹

However, it was not only his German citizenship that worried the committee when he first applied in 1905. His liberal theology and admiration for German biblical scholarship concerned them too.³² Schweitzer defended his ‘calling’ by maintaining that his piety was evangelical, even if his theology was critical: ‘I became always more simple and child-like, and realized ever more clearly that the only truth and happiness is to serve our Lord Jesus Christ, there where He has need of us.’³³ Schweitzer cleverly capitalized on the name of the Mission’s publication, *Le Réveil* when he wrote: ‘And you say that the French missions have emerged out of *Le Réveil*. I know what it is to be awakened, because I feel that it is Jesus who has woken me when I was plunged in my intellectual work to tell me, “Go where I have need of you.”’³⁴

When the Mission remained unconvinced on his first application, Schweitzer bided his time while training as a doctor. When he tried again in 1911, Boegner was in favour of his candidacy (and, by this time, more tolerant of unorthodox currents), but he died before he could let Schweitzer through. A few committee members now demanded that Schweitzer take French nationality. Schweitzer refused, thus defying what he saw as an illiberal French Protestant establishment. The committee finally accepted a letter in which he promised not to teach ‘improper’ doctrines and to remain as ‘mute as a carp’, an ironic reference, perhaps, to the stuffed fish of Christmas feasts in Central Europe.³⁵

Schweitzer went to Gabon as a ‘guest’ physician, but he quickly ignored the Mission’s attempt to limit his activities. Africa he found to be an ideal place ‘to preach the essential of the Gospel of the Sermon on the Mount’.³⁶ He saw the move to Africa as reparation for the horrors perpetrated against ‘savages’ by Western imperialism. True atonement, he believed, had value if the sacrifice sought to equal the crimes; this is why he began *On the edge of the primeval forest* to chronicle – even flaunt – his efforts: ‘I gave up my position of professor in the University of Strasbourg, my literary work and my organ-playing, in order to go as a doctor to Equatorial Africa.’³⁷

³⁰ Miller and Woyt, *The Albert Schweitzer–Helene Bresslau letters*, pp. 212–15.

³¹ Zorn, *Le grand siècle d’une mission protestante*, pp. 594–5.

³² An earlier liberal theologian had been rejected in 1897, *ibid.*, pp. 589–90.

³³ Cited in Zorn, *Le grand siècle d’une mission protestante*, p. 592.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 593.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 595.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 598.

³⁷ A. Schweitzer, *On the edge of the primeval forest: the experiences and observations of a doctor in equatorial Africa* (London, 1953), p. 7; *idem*, *Zwischen Wasser und Urwald* (Munich, 1925),

The trajectory which led him to Africa – quarrels with the PMS, dislike for nationalism, and his ultimate abandonment of European fame – were all part of the Nietzschean reconstruction of a self that sought a unique ethical path. He had explained to Helene as early as 1905 that he no longer aspired to scholarship, but rather to become ‘more – *simply a human*’ (italics in the original). Around 1900, he had begun to write his *Wir Epigonen* (*We inheritors of the past*), an unpublished work in which he had expressed the fear that his own generation had been eclipsed by men of greater purpose and brilliance.³⁸ He wrote to Helene that ‘we are not true humans, but beings who live by a civilization inherited from the past... Our humanness...is killed by our calculation for our future, by our social position and rank’.³⁹ He used the term ‘*Zivilisation*’, with its negatively charged, contemporary associations, to represent Western decadence.⁴⁰ Africa, he hoped, would enable him to throw off such constraint. In distancing himself from European conventions, he was thus similar to other adventurers and explorers of more openly imperialistic mind.⁴¹

He gave up on *Wir Epigonen* in 1918 after the First World War had confirmed his worse fears,⁴² and turned instead to the writing of *The philosophy of civilization* (1923). He now employed the term ‘*Zivilisation*’ very differently. He wished to step outside the sterile ‘*Zivilisation*’ versus ‘*Kultur*’ dichotomy which dominated philosophical discourse in Germany and resurrect instead what he felt was its ‘true’ eighteenth-century meaning as the embodiment of high-minded ethics and justice.⁴³ Condemning both nationalist passions and the ‘over-organization of public life’,⁴⁴ he focused on the Nietzschean reconstruction of the ‘individual personality’, rejecting the rigid hierarchies associated with institutions, and pressing for civilization’s rejuvenation through ethical experiments detached

p. 5: ‘Die Lehrtätigkeit an der Universität Strassburg, die Orgelkunst und die Schriftstellerei verliess ich, um als Arzt nach Äquatorialafrika zu gehen.’

³⁸ David K. Goodin, *The new rationalism: Albert Schweitzer’s philosophy of reverence for life* (Montreal, 2013), p. 15.

³⁹ Miller and Woyt, *The Albert Schweitzer–Helene Bresslau letters*, 26 [25] Feb. 1905, p. 65.

⁴⁰ Pim den Boer, ‘Civilization: comparing concepts and identities’, *Contributions to the history of concepts*, 1 (2005) p. 57.

⁴¹ See Edward Berenson, *Heroes of empire: five charismatic men and the conquest of Africa* (Berkeley, 2011).

⁴² It was finally edited by Ulrich H.J. Körtner and Johann Zürcher, *Wir Epigonen: Kultur und Kulturstaat* (Munich, 2005).

⁴³ Den Boer, ‘Civilization’, p. 55; see Schweitzer’s preface to *The philosophy of civilization*, trans. C. T. Campion (New York, NY, 1960), p. xii.

⁴⁴ Schweitzer, *The philosophy of civilization*, p. 16; Albert Schweitzer, *Verfall und Wiederaufbau der Kultur* (Munich, 1923), p. 16: ‘übermäßigen Organisation unserer öffentlichen Verhältnisse’.

from mass movements of all kinds.⁴⁵ He concluded that '[e]thics is the activity of man directed to secure the inner perfection of his own personality'.⁴⁶

II

This striking formulation revealed how Schweitzer saw exemplary service as almost subordinate to this primary, personal odyssey, and Africa was his means of achieving inner perfection. He arrived in Gabon in 1913 after two generations of imperialists had explored and exploited the region. In 1874, American Presbyterians had established a mission and nine years later the French explorer Savorgnan de Brazza created an administrative outpost in Lambaréné. The French Holy Ghost Fathers built a chapel in 1886, when some workshops were also established.⁴⁷ The Americans ceded their place to the Mission to comply with the administration's insistence that French be taught in schools. But the Mission's achievements were uneven amidst the administration's brutality and the exploitations of the rubber and timber trade.⁴⁸

Schweitzer arrived only a few years after the local Fang tribes had been pacified by the French. In the 1840s, French explorers had been struck by the extreme egalitarianism of Fang society, the quality of their artisanship, bravery, and nobility. The Fang were traduced as cannibals no doubt by different coastal tribes who sought to retain their position as commercial middle-men with the Europeans. The Fang impressed the English woman explorer, Mary Kingsley. Though she spoke often of African inferiority and called herself a Darwinian, she did not believe in a straight line from the 'primitivism' of fetishism to the sophistication of Christianity.⁴⁹ She not only recognized African intellectual prowess but acknowledged that African fetishism was not about material objects, but rather about the action of spirit upon spirit. Indeed, like Schweitzer later, she concluded that Europeans were more preoccupied with things, while Africans found it difficult to think in such concrete terms.⁵⁰ Her work contributed to the idea of the 'noble cannibal'.

⁴⁵ Schweitzer, *The philosophy of civilization*, p. 44; Schweitzer, *Verfall und Wiederaufbau der Kultur*, p. 46: 'Einzelindividualitäten', 'Regeneration der Kultur hat nichts mit Bewegungen zu tun, die den Charakter eines Massenerlebnisses an sich tragen.'

⁴⁶ Schweitzer, *The philosophy of civilization*, p. 57; Schweitzer, *Verfall und Wiederaufbau der Kultur*, p. 58: 'Ethik ist die auf die innerliche Vollendung seiner Persönlichkeit gerichtete Tätigkeit des Menschen.'

⁴⁷ Christopher Gray and François Ngolet, 'Lambaréné, Okoumé, and the transformation of labor along the middle Ogooué (Gabon, 1870–1945)', *Journal of African History*, 40 (1999), pp. 87–107. See Blac, Blocher, and Kruger, *Histoire des missions protestantes françaises*, pp. 157–66.

⁴⁸ Blac, Blocher, and Kruger, *Histoire des missions protestantes françaises*, pp. 157–69.

⁴⁹ See Mary Henrietta Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa Congo Français, Corisco and Cameroons* (ebooks@Adelaide, 2012), chs. 12–16.

⁵⁰ James W. Fernandez, *Bwiti: an ethnography of the religious imagination in Africa* (Princeton, NJ, 1982), pp. 30–40.

French traders, however, hated the Fang for pillaging goods in transit, and called on the administrators to punish them, even though French officials recognized that European merchants had created de-stabilizing desires for consumer products and transgressed commercial treaties. Though unwillingly, colonial officials destroyed villages, acts of violence which Schweitzer's missionary colleagues deplored. The Fang were not mere victims (they played the Americans off against the French and fought whenever they could), but their de-centralized village society was overwhelmed. The 'noble cannibal' now became a colonial subject, vilified as ugly, dirty, and impoverished, without ability in craftsmanship or agriculture.⁵¹

Between 1910 and 1920, mission post, factory, and trading concession transformed the spatial and cultural landscape of the region along the Ogouée River as local structures buckled under tremendous commercial, military, and migratory pressures. When the administration attempted to take a census to facilitate tax collection, people fled, only to be tracked by undisciplined colonial militiamen who forced entire villages deep into the forest. The pre-colonial bonds between clans – in which dependants in a district were exchanged – were destroyed by massive migration to the timber centres. With this exodus of young male labourers, *mwiri* rituals of initiation (obligatory, collective, and sexually segregated) were subverted, and clan chiefs became unable to impose their authority.⁵² Massive migration caused famine and disrupted the breeding grounds of the tsetse fly, which now infected a weakened labour force with sleeping sickness.⁵³

III

Schweitzer thus came to Lambaréné at a moment of increasing demoralization. His only helpmate was his wife, Helene Bresslau, a Christian of Jewish origin. Accomplished and thoughtful, Helene had been essential to his work, aiding him in his important volumes on Bach, among other projects.⁵⁴ For twelve long and often emotionally debilitating years, he had refused to marry her, and Helene ultimately suffered a disabling depression. In 1905, he coldly told her that she should think of marrying someone else if she wanted to be a 'complete woman'; a few months later, he admitted that she was the most precious thing in the world to him.⁵⁵ He maintained that he wanted to live for humanity alone, but he pursued an emotional intimacy that for her meant

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 41–8.

⁵² Christopher Gray, *Colonial rule and crisis in equatorial Africa: southern Gabon, ca. 1850–1940* (Rochester, NY, 2002), pp. 133–69.

⁵³ See Maryinez Lyons, *The colonial disease: a social history of sleeping sickness in northern Zaïre, 1900–1940* (Cambridge, 1992).

⁵⁴ See Verena Mühlstein, *Helene Schweitzer Bresslau: ein Leben für Lambarene* (Munich, 1998).

⁵⁵ François Überfill, 'Schweitzer (Albert) Bresslau (Hélène), *Correspondance 1901–1905: l'amitié dans l'amour*', *Revue d'Alsace*, 132 (2006), p. 573.

marriage. He acknowledged his love for her, and then sought to remove himself at the same time. He wrote that he wanted to remain aloof from conventional sentimentality, but was not always able to do so where she was concerned. As he explained:

How wonderful it is to have somebody who has the right to wish you a happy birthday and puts so many thoughts into this one wish. I forget that I want you to detach yourself from me and tell you that I went to sleep happy as a child.⁵⁶

When she trained as a nurse in order to accompany him, she was finally able to become his wife, as the PMS required a marital bond to ensure respectability. When he and Helene arrived, they quickly tidied up an old chicken coop and set to work. Turf wars with the other missionaries ensued, but in a few months he had created a consulting room, a place to operate, and a dispensary which Helene managed. She was also in charge of the laundry and ran the household. All this activity, however, did not entail much personal connection with Africans. He may well have sought to distance himself from his predecessor, Robert Hamill Nassau, an American who was also a minister and physician. Nassau developed a deep curiosity about African cultures, producing the pioneering *Fetishism in West Africa* (1904), as well as works on the flora and fauna;⁵⁷ he also wrote primers on the local Fang language and knew the language of the Galoa, the tribe which had dominated the region before 1900. He took his Galoan catechists to meet the Fang to translate and evangelize.⁵⁸ In learning the language and translating scripture, he thus relied on African informants to create an Africanized Christianity. He had lost two wives in Gabon, but his daughter (the first child of European origin to be born in Equatorial Africa) was raised by a local woman Anyentyuwe Fando, a Christian convert. After he criticized his fellow missionaries for their treatment of Africans, however, he was accused of sexual misconduct with his daughter's nurse, a charge he always denied.⁵⁹ His reputation suffered gravely none the less.

We cannot be certain if Schweitzer feared being compromised in the same way, but there is no doubt that he was determined not to lose his authority in this alien world.⁶⁰ Schweitzer was unusual in not learning the native languages,

⁵⁶ Miller and Woyt, *Albert Schweitzer–Helene Bresslau letters*, 19 Jan. 1904, p. 65.

⁵⁷ See John M. Cinnamon, 'Missionary expertise, social science, and the uses of ethnographic knowledge in colonial Gabon', *History in Africa*, 33 (2006), pp. 413–32.

⁵⁸ See Comaroff, *Of revelations and revolution*, 1, pp. 172–250; Elbourne, *Blood ground*; Harries and Maxwell, eds., *The spiritual and the secular*; Landau, *The realm of the word*; Hastings, *The church in Africa*, pp. 273–5; Peterson, *Creative writing*; and Falolo, *Christianity and social change in Africa*, particularly part E.

⁵⁹ J. M. Cinnamon, 'Robert Hamill Nassau: missionary ethnography and the colonial encounter in Gabon', *Le Fait Missionnaire: Social Sciences and Missions*, 19 (2006), pp. 37–64.

⁶⁰ Schweitzer, *On the edge of the primeval forest*, p. 27: 'One arranges at once in Africa (so the missionaries impress on me from the beginning) that the blacks shall be in the white people's quarters as little as possible.' Idem, *Zwischen Wasser und Urwald*, p. 31: 'Man richtet sich, so

and seemed ignorant of the work of progressive missionaries such as Edwin Smith, who in the 1920s saw such knowledge as key to penetrating the 'African soul'.⁶¹ While missionaries struggled to communicate – and were laughed at for speaking so poorly⁶² – Schweitzer never remedied his ignorance. His inability to converse meant that he continued to miss many subtleties of African culture. By the 1930s, he had modified his tone in his sermons and no longer railed against the deceitful, thieving, and lying nature of the people he treated, but he still resisted the elaborate palavers that were essential to African negotiation of conflict.⁶³ Other missionaries shifted their vision of African society more profoundly, perhaps because they learned more from their informants as their linguistic skills improved.⁶⁴

His distance may also have veiled a frightening dependence. In the early stages especially, he relied utterly on a brilliant and multi-lingual African amanuensis, about whom it is difficult – if not impossible – to glean more information except through Schweitzer himself. Joseph Azoawani spoke French, English, and eight tribal languages, and seemed to have acquired some anatomical knowledge from learning butchery from the French.⁶⁵ Nor was Joseph always a docile assistant: he intermittently walked off when his pay was cut, and disappointed Schweitzer when he 'wasted' money on fashionable clothes.⁶⁶

Some sense of how Schweitzer reflected on his role can be gleaned from a 1928 article in which he pondered the 'relations of the white and coloured races' and justified colonialism in the name of the 'conservation and protection and the exercise of the rights of man'.⁶⁷ The article revealed his quandary, his belief that rather than simply extracting raw materials to increase European wealth, Westerners were responsible for helping 'these folk' create a 'new political organization' through the exercise of just 'moral authority'. He recognized, however, that such aims were compromised by European rapaciousness. The article sought to limit the evils of forced labour ('I do not believe at all in the educative value of forced labour'⁶⁸) but acknowledged that it was a necessity

belehren mich die Missionare gleich von Anfang an, in Afrika so ein, dass die Schwarzen die Wohnräume der Weissen so wenig als möglich betreten.'

⁶¹ See his *The Christian mission in Africa* (New York, NY, 1926), pp. 19, 37–41, 45–6.

⁶² For the problems of (mis)communication, see Nancy Rose Hunt, *A colonial lexicon of birth ritual, medicalization and mobility in the Congo* (Durham, NC, and London, 1999).

⁶³ Steven E. G. Melamed and Antonia Melamed, 'Albert Schweitzer in Gabon', in Michael C. Reed and James F. Barnes, eds., *Culture, ecology and politics in Gabon's rainforest* (New York, NY, 2002), pp. 172–5 for sermons; p. 172 for palavers. The Melameds uncritically accept Schweitzer's vision of these parleys as 'pointless, destructive, Gabonese arguments'.

⁶⁴ See Hokkanen, 'Scottish missionaries and African healers'.

⁶⁵ For more on the likes of Joseph, see Kalusa, 'Language, medical auxiliaries, and the re-interpretation of missionary medicine'.

⁶⁶ Schweitzer, *On the edge of the primeval forest*, pp. 59–60.

⁶⁷ A. Schweitzer, 'The relations of the white and coloured races', *Contemporary Review*, 133 (1928), p. 65.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

if any progress in the larger project of ‘conservation and protection’ was to be achieved. The circularity of his argument was plain. He sought to balance the evil consequences of European domination with an equally strong critique of the failings of the African population, preserving his cardinal belief that Europeans should be paternal.⁶⁹ He held out hope for a kind of patriarchal collaboration between the ‘best’ in both societies.

Schweitzer clearly saw himself as an educator, and hence emphasized his healing mission and its exemplary potential. He experienced genuine joy when his medical treatments worked. He performed hernia operations, prescribed digitalis for heart conditions, used methyl violet (a dye) for wound healing, and had some success with skin diseases, malaria, sleeping sickness, leprosy, elephantiasis, and suppurating injuries.⁷⁰ He admitted that he sometimes purposely used spectacular interventions to improve his reputation (we do not know how Africans viewed such showmanship) and to prove the power of Western medicine over local healers and their practices. He recalled an early operation when a ‘poor, moaning creature’ awoke from the anaesthesia and felt no more pain, and Schweitzer explained that his relief was the result of the ‘Lord Jesus who has told the doctor and his wife to come to the Ogooué [to] ...cure the sick Negroes’.⁷¹

Missionary aims thus remained integral to his medicine.⁷² Here and in later works, he portrayed himself as a scientific hero of Christian principles, bravely advancing the frontiers of tropical medicine virtually alone in the ‘primeval forest’. But again he was ambivalent. In his early memoirs, he boasted of his effectiveness, but later became suspicious of ‘distorting’ African development with too many European innovations – hence his resistance to the electrification of the hospital. He constantly alluded to the need for indigenous African craftsmen and agriculturalists to create a ‘blend of the intellectual and the manual adapted to the needs of citizenship in a primitive society’.⁷³ What was right for Europe was not right for Africa. Medicine in Africa was less for research (he did not publish scientific papers) than for promoting ethical possibility.

⁶⁹ Manuel M. Davenport, ‘The moral paternalism of Albert Schweitzer’, *Ethics*, 84 (1974), pp. 117–27.

⁷⁰ Schweitzer, *On the edge of the primeval forest*, p. 31; Schweitzer, *Zwischen Wasser und Urwald*, p. 36.

⁷¹ Schweitzer, *On the edge of the primeval forest*, p. 70; Schweitzer, *Zwischen Wasser und Urwald*, p. 84: ‘dass es der Herr Jesus ist, der dem Doktor und seiner Frau geboten hat, hier an den Ogowe zu kommen und dass weisse Menschen in Europa uns die Mittel geben, um hier für die Kranken zu leben’.

⁷² I tend here to disagree with James Carleton Paget. He may have refrained from using the term because in his first missionary contract he was a ‘visiting physician’. See ‘Albert Schweitzer and Africa’, pp. 287–8. See also M. Vaughan, *Curing their ills: colonial power and African illness* (Cambridge, 1991); David Hardiman, ed., *Healing bodies, saving souls: medicinal missions in Asia and Africa* (Amsterdam, 2006); Christoffer H. Grundmann, *Sent to heal: emergence and development of medical missions* (New York, NY, 2005); and N. Etherington, ed., *Missions and empire* (Oxford, 2008).

⁷³ Schweitzer, ‘The relations of the white and coloured races’, p. 70.

Schweitzer also realized that the colonial situation gravely compromised his medical practice because Africans had so little control over their bodies. By requisitioning labour, condemning polygamy, and reorganizing sacred burial grounds in line with 'hygienic' imperatives, the worst European imperialists remained insensitive to African fears.⁷⁴ In contrast, he defended polygamy as a means of protecting widows and orphans.⁷⁵ He sensed too that Africans may have feared that Europeans traded in body parts,⁷⁶ and for this reason, he was wary of amputating, even when the patient's life was threatened.⁷⁷ Schweitzer acknowledged that in 'many districts of Equatorial Africa it is difficult, or even impossible, to persuade the natives to let themselves be operated on' for fear of what the white man would do to them.⁷⁸ Only rarely could he induce an African to bury those who died in his hospital,⁷⁹ and refused to lay to rest their dead in the Edenic graveyard which he later landscaped in Lambaréné.⁸⁰

But there were also strong limits to his comprehension and empathy. He knew that blood and corpses were seen as potentially polluting or entailing the possibility of sorcery, but he did not see how such 'superstitions' might be linked to the shattering experience of forced labour and violence.⁸¹ He willingly treated healers, as he did other Africans, but he claimed to learn little from their practices. He may well have incorporated much knowledge from Joseph, who translated by Schweitzer's side, and who in turn sought to convey what Schweitzer was trying to do. European physicians of long service, who understood the languages better than Schweitzer, acknowledged the power of the local pharmacopoeia and bedside manner of African colleagues.⁸² Schweitzer instead mocked African beliefs, but enjoyed being known as the great Oganag, or fetish man, who healed but was also dangerous in his power.⁸³ He revelled in tales of skulls acquired through murder to protect villagers from their enemies, and recounted how two missing (African) people may

⁷⁴ For more on these hygienic imperatives, see Philip D. Curtin, 'Medical knowledge and urban planning in colonial tropical Africa', in Steven Feierman and John M. Janzen, eds., *The social basis of health and healing in Africa* (Berkeley, CA, 1992), pp. 235–55.

⁷⁵ Schweitzer, *On the edge of the primeval forest*, p. 93.

⁷⁶ See Florence Bernault, 'Body, power and sacrifice in equatorial Africa', *Journal of African History*, 47 (2006), pp. 207–39.

⁷⁷ A. Schweitzer, *More from the primeval forest* (London, 1958), p. 62.

⁷⁸ In the Belgian Congo, where the ravages of the rubber trade made sleeping sickness more virulent, doctors performed compulsory lumbar punctures, with the 'natives', convinced that they were injected with poison. Given that diagnosis required isolation, their fears were hardly irrational. Lyons, *The colonial disease*, pp. 188–90.

⁷⁹ Schweitzer, *More from the primeval forest*, p. 25.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁸¹ Hunt in *A colonial lexicon of birth ritual*, discusses these beliefs, p. 7.

⁸² Hokkanen, 'Scottish missionaries and African healers'; for a good example of the healers' effectiveness, see p. 332, and Kalusa, 'Language, medical auxiliaries, and the re-interpretation of missionary medicine'.

⁸³ Schweitzer, *On the edge of the primeval forest*, p. 30.

have been eaten alive. Such anecdotes suggest that African fears about European rapaciousness may well have stoked Europeans' belief in native cannibalism.⁸⁴

At this early juncture, he navigated this foreign world through a mixture of path-breaking innovation and stubborn resistance, his first sojourn in Africa revealing the contradictions both of imperialism and of his personality. Without the restraining influence of either the PMS or European hospital medicine, he was able to construct his ethical experiment without the supervisory and regulatory hierarchies of Western society. His greatest idea was a village-hospital where patients could cook for their relatives, a strategy which protected him from accusations of vampirism and poisoning.⁸⁵

The village-hospital revealed the extent to which Schweitzer – despite his inability to communicate with his patients – sensed that he could not make headway without adjusting to African customs, beliefs, and daily habits. If he remained a ‘verandah’ physician – unwilling to treat by travelling to the villages – he none the less embraced the crowded and untidy conditions of village life filled with animals, children, and relatives. Schweitzer depended on families to tend his patients. Nor was he unique in innovating in this way – the missionary hospital at Kalene in Zambia, for example, was very similar.⁸⁶ This experiment, however, still left him in effective command. Because he fed the sick (later he often imported foodstuffs), he had a strong hold over them, and they were forced to labour in his hospital during their convalescence.

When the First World War began, Schweitzer had established his domain, and set himself against European decadence by annoying the French authorities, who in turn regarded him as a Teutonic interloper. He was almost immediately placed under house arrest as an enemy alien, only to be released again in November 1914. He worked in a kind of torpor, unable to see how the war would end, worried about dwindling supplies and disturbed by interrupted communications. At this juncture, he was touched by the Africans who asked him to explain why ‘the Great White Chiefs’ did not follow the loving dictates of the Gospel and instead directed their warriors to murder each other so senselessly.⁸⁷ At this perilous moment, Schweitzer found the Africans’ incapacity to

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁸⁵ See Luise White, *Speaking with vampires: rumor and history in colonial Africa* (Berkeley, CA, 2000).

⁸⁶ W. T. Kalusa, ‘Missionaries, African patients, and negotiating missionary medicine at Kalene Hospital, Zambia, 1906–1935’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 40 (2014), pp. 283–94. This hospital, unlike Schweitzer’s, received a subsidy from the colonial authorities to train African physicians after 1926, a move that neither Schweitzer nor the French administration was to emulate.

⁸⁷ Schweitzer, *On the edge of the primeval forest*, p. 100; *idem*, *Zwischen Wasser und Urwald*, p. 121: ‘Dass viele Eingeborene die Frage in sich bewegen, wie es möglich sei, dass die Weissen, die ihnen das Evangelium der Liebe bringen, sich jetzt gegenseitig morden.’

comprehend the extent of the bloodletting comforting, and a sign of an admirable African humanitarianism.

But he was even more overwhelmed by the natural environment. The contrast between the materialism and ferocity of European civilization and the abundance of organic life in the rainforest revealed the cycle of continual renewal, despite the destruction that the rainforest contained. Life on the Ogooué made him feel as if he were ‘dreaming’; he could hardly believe that ‘pictures of antediluvian scenery which elsewhere had seemed to be merely the creation of fancy are now seen in real life’.⁸⁸ He could not discern ‘where the river ends and the land begins’,⁸⁹ and was astounded by the size of the enormous leaves and boughs, and the infinite wildlife that it sheltered. Nature in the ‘primeval forest’ was often brutal and relentless, but its beauty drew him to the conclusion that salvation was at hand. There was a ubiquitous will-to-live, an indestructible affirmation of life.

Again, he was not unusual among missionaries in being fascinated by the natural environment. But while they catalogued the flora and fauna, Schweitzer used his academic training to look to Africa to supply a basis for an ethical philosophy that would make sense of the war’s bloody progress. His early philosophical work in Strasbourg had concentrated on Kant’s *Critique of practical reason* and a morality primarily concerned with human obligation and contentment.⁹⁰ Schweitzer wanted to create moral values that also applied to Nature and to foster an ethical system that would safeguard civilization’s material legacy from the thoughtless vandalism of contemporary barbarism (ideas integral to his dislike of capitalism and his celebration of craft traditions).⁹¹ He condemned the abstractions of Kantian morality, and argued instead that a new ethics should be grounded in the spontaneity of daily interactions and mutual sympathy.

In *The philosophy of civilization*, he condemned the heedless brutality which he felt had overtaken Europe.⁹² He tapped into his older theological interest, especially his study of eschatology, to strengthen the mixture of ‘optimism and pessimism’ that he believed was essential to moral conversion.⁹³ He had argued that Jesus’ ethical revolution had emerged out of his Jewish apocalyptic vision, a belief that the end of the world was imminent and that moral transformation and destruction were almost simultaneous, with the former essential

⁸⁸ Schweitzer, *On the edge of the primeval forest*, p. 21.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁹⁰ See Schweitzer, *Die Religionsphilosophie*.

⁹¹ Schweitzer was a leading figure in the Organ Reform Movement or *Orgelbewegung* in the early twentieth century. Worried by the industrial production of organs (especially in Germany) that, he felt, blurred sound and subtlety in favour of volume, he advocated restoration and new organs created by great craftsmen.

⁹² Schweitzer, *The philosophy of civilization*, p. 21; in German, *Verfall und Wiederaufbau der Kultur*, p. 21: ‘gefährlichen Gemenge von Kultur und Unkultur’.

⁹³ Schweitzer, *The philosophy of civilization*, p. 38.

to hastening the Kingdom of God. Indeed, Schweitzer may well have envisaged the calamity of the First World War as the ‘time of woes’, the apocalyptic moment prior to Christ’s Second Coming. He wanted to find ‘the road that can bring us back from barbarism to civilization’ through the reanimation of moral conviction.⁹⁴ He had lost his belief in the power of knowledge to transform society, and instead argued for a humanitarian ethics that acknowledged the centrality of nature. He later claimed that he came to this revelation while travelling down the Ogooué in 1915 when, ‘lost in thought...on the deck of the barge’, he encountered a ‘herd of hippopotamuses’. His mind hit upon a phrase that was to become the essence of his philosophy, ‘reverence for life’ (‘Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben’). He believed that this flash of insight enabled him to join together ‘ethics and the affirmation of the world’, providing a practical philosophy devoid of needless abstraction.⁹⁵ In *The philosophy of civilization*, he characterized these ideas as a direct expression of a deep ‘will-to-live’, that almost intuitively opposed anything that was deleterious to ‘life’. Schweitzer maintained that ‘ethical mysticism’ was grounded in wide-eyed awe (much like the child-like faith he had written about to Boegner), a ‘will-to-love’ translated as a ‘reverence for life’.

Africa thus left a deep imprint on Schweitzer’s ethical formulations, expressed through his wonder at the African rainforest. When he considered the Africans around him, however, he admitted that their ‘immaturity’ irritated him, even while such traits enabled them to understand nature’s sublimity.⁹⁶ But he noted that, while Europeans recklessly annihilated each other in Europe, Africans worked tirelessly and travelled endlessly to bring the sick and dying to his doorstep.⁹⁷ Such comments suggest he had learned more than he was willing to acknowledge.

He also knew that Europeans – with their demands for porters, labourers, soldiers, and carriers – had brought epidemics and social chaos rather than liberating Africans and alleviating their suffering. He mocked witchcraft beliefs and despised fetishism, but somehow affirmed the African certainty in the interdependence of natural, supernatural, and human destinies.⁹⁸ As he witnessed the human and ecological catastrophes that overtook the region around Lambaréné in the decade before the Great War, he meditated on the way infinite beauty and infinite cruelty co-existed in the rainforest, and concluded

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ A. Schweitzer, *My life and thought*, trans. A. Campion (London, 1946), p. 156; idem, *Aus meinem Leben und Denken* (Leipzig, 1931), p. 136.

⁹⁶ See Carleton Paget, ‘Albert Schweitzer and Africa’, pp. 289–94, for some of the ambivalence, impressions which I share.

⁹⁷ Schweitzer, *On the edge of the primeval forest*, p. 83.

⁹⁸ There is no evidence that Schweitzer later read the path-breaking work of the Belgian Franciscan missionary Placide Tempels, whose *La philosophie bantoue*, trans. A. Rubbens (Elisabethville, 1945), analysed a distinctive African ontology.

that a reverence for life entailed an appreciation of both.⁹⁹ Schweitzer was moved by the unquenchable will-to-live and will-to-love of the local people, despite the endless hardships they endured. Such ideas were adaptations (and also a critique) of Nietzsche's notion of the 'will-to-power', the idea of the 'reverence for life' providing a secularized ethics that retained Christian ideals.

IV

Schweitzer's search for a new philosophy of civilization was not surprising given his own experience. In late September 1917, the French authorities made the Schweitzers board a steamer for France and then interned them as enemy aliens at the Catholic sanctuary of Garaison in the south-west. Schweitzer lived in difficult conditions but enjoyed making music with the gypsies. He also discovered that his wife was pregnant. When he returned to Alsace at the war's end, he was devastated to learn that his mother had been trampled to death by a troop of German cavalry and that his father had worked as a servant for German officers in the old family rectory. It seemed that the two countries to which he owed his patriotic and cultural allegiance had destroyed his family.

Some sources hint that Schweitzer collapsed, and only recovered slowly and painfully over the next five years.¹⁰⁰ There is no doubt that he was distraught over the destruction, and beset by career and financial worries. No longer a youthful protégé but a man in his forties, he had no position, a baby on the way, and debts that he had incurred for his hospital. He worked briefly in Strasbourg as a physician, and was treated by Oskar Pfister, a Swiss Lutheran minister and lay psychoanalyst (the sanitized version of their discussions appeared as Schweitzer's *My childhood and youth*).¹⁰¹ The Swedish archbishop Nathan Söderblom, a Nobel prize-winning scholar, asked Schweitzer to talk in Uppsala about his experiences in Africa. It was at this juncture that Schweitzer began his international lecture tours and popularized 'reverence for life'. He gave organ concerts again, using these funds to pay off his debts and finance a new African expedition. From then on, service in Africa rotated with European tours and later visits to Gunsbach, his home town in Alsace.

Schweitzer's return to Africa brought him into conflict once more with the Paris Mission which accused him of arrogance and of *bochophilie*. So fearful were they of his presence that they offered to ship a portable wooden house to Lambaréné so that he could be moved when he encroached on their

⁹⁹ Kalusa and Vaughan, *Death, belief and politics in central African history*, pp. 293–327.

¹⁰⁰ George Marshall and David Poling, *Schweitzer: a biography* (London, 1971), argue for the breakdown on pp. 148–54, while Brabazon, *Albert Schweitzer*, suggests a milder depression, pp. 286–7.

¹⁰¹ A. Schweitzer, *My childhood and youth* (London, 1960); idem, *Aus meiner Kindheit und Jugendzeit* (Munich, 1924).

territory.¹⁰² The lieutenant-governor of Gabon also opposed his return, but the minister of colonies learned that because of Schweitzer's reputation, the Rockefeller Institute had supplied him with tryparsamide, the new 'miracle drug' meant to 'cure' sleeping sickness;¹⁰³ keeping him out would reflect badly on the French administration. The episode showed again that Schweitzer could operate without the PMS or the despised imperial bureaucracy by deploying wide-ranging contacts against those who opposed him.

When Schweitzer did finally go back in 1924, the hospital had been overtaken by the rainforest: 'I walk up to the hospital like one in a dream. It might be Sleeping Beauty's place of concealment! Grass and brushwood are growing where once stood the wards which I constructed with so much trouble.'¹⁰⁴ He realized too that the Africans' plight was even worse than that of his devastated hospital. In the first pages of this return narrative, he referred to the savage Leopard Cults where, he reported, men dressed as leopards would kill by slashing, gnashing, and mauling their human prey with steel claws and knives. Extant before the First World War, these secret societies, he believed, were now more lawless and violent. Africa combined 'superstition, primitive fanaticism, and very modern Bolshevism', all 'expressions of an uncanny process of fermentation'.¹⁰⁵ Schweitzer used Bolshevism as a rough metaphor for the evils of revolt and subversion, and seemed to share with many other missionaries and European officials a bloodthirsty, and exaggerated, vision of pagan African beliefs.¹⁰⁶ In equatorial Africa men, disguised as leopards (animals which figured in the African imagination very much like wolves in western folklore), raided livestock and stores to supply lost tribute and feed famished and fleeing clans. At their worst (if some of the testimony is to be believed), they underwent poison ordeals which made them incapable of resisting the order to murder. Their targets were mostly women, now free to 'transgress' in a society where previous patriarchal controls and social hierarchy had collapsed.¹⁰⁷

Schweitzer returned to Lambaréné just when this wave of killings reached its height among the Fang.¹⁰⁸ But such murders were always a marginal, if terrifying, aspect of African culture. *Mwiri* initiation rituals for male children taught supplicants to resist pain and could involve ritual beatings and scarification. Such rites of passage were crucial to the induction into clan society, where

¹⁰² Arnaut, *Albert Schweitzer*, p. 173.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 176–7.

¹⁰⁴ Schweitzer, *More from the primeval forest*, p. 14; *idem*, *Mitteilungen aus Lambarene. Erster Teil: Frühjahr bis Herbst 1924* (Bern, 1925), p. 19.

¹⁰⁵ Schweitzer, *More from the primeval forest*, p. 13; *idem*, *Mitteilungen aus Lambarene. Erster Teil*, p. 18: 'Erscheinungen eines unheimlichen Gärungsprozesses in Afrika.'

¹⁰⁶ David Pratten, *The man leopard murders: history and society in colonial Nigeria* (Edinburgh, 2007), pp. 8–17, describes the different motivations and contexts in which these incidents occurred.

¹⁰⁷ Gray, *Colonial rule and crisis in equatorial Africa*, pp. 196–203.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 197–215.

authority over people and objects was decided. Their decline went hand in hand with the arrival of *bwiti* societies and chapels headed by Africans, often women who were enlisted by diminished clan leaders. *Bwiti* followers created new rites to rebalance older cosmological worlds with an African image of Christ and Christian ethics.¹⁰⁹ *Bwiti* promised rare spiritual insights, hallucinatory initiations, and wonderful miracles.¹¹⁰ Revivalists wanted to reopen the flow of protective benevolence with ancestors so disrupted by the white intruders.

Schweitzer was aware of the *bwiti*, knew of the iboga plant used in the initiation ceremonies, and condemned the mystical experiences that took initiates 'into another world'.¹¹¹ He was angry that they engaged in such practices while also appearing at chapel in the Mission, and was uninterested in the cosmological and ritual integration that the *bwiti* cults embodied. Nor could he see how chapel-going – in some sense mandated by European dominance at the village-hospital where Schweitzer preached – might fit into a set of non-exclusive spiritual possibilities. African Christianity, as historians repeatedly demonstrate, was remarkable in incorporating many prophetic and charismatic elements alongside those which Schweitzer might have condoned.¹¹²

In sum, Schweitzer concluded that the Africa of his return was *more* debased than when he had left. He recorded in despair how he treated – in fits of anguish and fury – the new migrants that overwhelmed his hospital. These 'savages...[who] have moved hither from the interior, and now work in...the white man's timber-felling centres in the forest [are] homeless proletarians in the saddest and worst sense of that word'.¹¹³ Torn from the open uplands, unsuited to work in the equatorial humidity, and intensely homesick, the Bendjabis were unable to digest the poor rice, unskilled (many had never used an axe), and prone to beriberi and dysentery. Schweitzer could find few translators, which meant that patients went under the knife thinking the doctor was a white cannibal. Schweitzer pitied them, but wrote that the Bendjabis were 'brutish humans who have become more like animals'.¹¹⁴ He protested to Joseph (now back on the scene): 'What a blockhead I was to come out here to doctor savages like these!'¹¹⁵ Ill from painful ulcers on his

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., and James. W. Fernandez, *Bwiti: an ethnography of the religious imagination in Africa*.

¹¹⁰ Gray, *Colonial rule and crisis in equatorial Africa*, p. 203.

¹¹¹ Arnaut, *Albert Schweitzer*, pp. 260–5.

¹¹² Hastings, *The church in Africa*, outlines the many different African 'prophetism' and 'independency' movements, pp. 493–539.

¹¹³ Schweitzer, *More from the primeval forest*, p. 41; idem, *Mitteilungen aus Lambarene, Zweiter Teil: Herbst 1924 bis Herbst 1925* (Strasbourg, 1926), p. 9: 'Heute besteht ein grosser Teil meiner Kranken aus Wilden, die aus dem Inneren zugezogen sind und...auf den Holzplätzen der Weissen im Urwald arbeiten. Es sind heimatlose Proletarier im traurigsten und auch im schlimmsten Sinne des Wortes.'

¹¹⁴ Schweitzer, *More from the primeval forest*, p. 51; idem, *Mitteilungen aus Lambarene, Zweiter Teil*, p. 10: 'vertierte Menschen, nicht nur Wilde'.

¹¹⁵ Schweitzer, *More from the primeval forest*, p. 79; idem, *Mitteilungen aus Lambarene, Zweiter Teil*, p. 57: 'Was bin ich doch für ein Dummkopf, dass ich der Doktor solcher Wilden geworden bin.'

feet, Schweitzer in the early months of his return rushed madly between doctoring and building, exasperated by the lack of labour, angry that his patients felt little gratitude and horrified by the spread of dysentery.

In these worsening conditions, Schweitzer sought new solutions. In the end, the hospital became more institutional, as he tried to tend more people and enlarge his domain. Although he honoured a few Africans in his writings, Joseph and an African carpenter called Monenzalie, he continued to tend white patients in a separate ward – English, Dutch, Swedish, Canadian, Americans, and fellow Alsatians and French – and recruited a pool of assistants that reinforced the authorities' suspicions that he was bent on creating an Anglo-Saxon/Teutonic colony within a colony. Noel Gillespie, a chemistry undergraduate of American origin, came from Oxford,¹¹⁶ the physician Victor Nessmann¹¹⁷ came from Alsace, while the surgeon Mark Lauterberg arrived from Switzerland. In the years that followed, Schweitzer would find most of his physicians among Dutch, Swiss, Alsatian, and Hungarian practitioners, though after the Second World War there was a sprinkling of Jews and even a physician from Israel.¹¹⁸

Helene was replaced by the Alsatian maternity nurse, Mathilde Kottman, who now supervised the kitchen, trained the African chefs and varied the diet for the white patients. Gillespie administered intravenous drugs (and did anything else required), while Schweitzer operated, prescribed, supervised, and, above all, built. When, in 1925, the overflow threatened to wreck relations with the missionaries, he chose a larger site farther away. Kottman not only supplied him and the workers with food, she sometimes supervised the building herself. At the end of February 1927, five buildings were ready and the move began. This new hospital was Schweitzer's base of operations until his death in 1965. In 1925, the teacher Emma Hausknecht arrived. Plump and jolly where Kottman was thin and severe, she was able to fill mattresses, repair shoes, fix motors, pour concrete, build on her own account, and second Schweitzer in the operating room. She oversaw the hospital during his long sojourns in Europe and was famous for the large and beautiful garden that improved Lambaréné's fragile nutrition.¹¹⁹

The appearance of these women was part of the hospital's transformation. Helene had remained behind in Europe after the First World War both

¹¹⁶ Noel Gillespie, 'With Schweitzer in Lambarene: Noel Gillespie's letters from Africa', *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 54 (1970–1), pp. 166–203.

¹¹⁷ Nessman became a résistant and was tortured by the Gestapo.

¹¹⁸ See Arnaut, *Albert Schweitzer*, pp. 591–2, for a list of the physicians.

¹¹⁹ For more on the gender and racial hierarchies in colonial and mission hospitals, see Anne Digby, *Diversity and division in medicine: health care in South Africa from the 1800s* (Oxford, 2006); she explains how imperial medicine kept a rather strict racial and gender divide (pp. 116–87), though there were instances where enterprising women could become almost as dominant as Schweitzer (Nurse Ida Gordon, pp. 74–84); the training of female African nurses (elsewhere in the continent seen as a male profession) also took time, pp. 229–66.

because of ill health and to raise their daughter Rhéna, but when she tried to rejoin her husband in 1929, her tuberculosis obliged her to return to Germany. He avoided her on trips back to Europe, and was unhappy when she arrived without his 'permission' during the Second World War.¹²⁰ Instead, Kottman and Haussknecht were jokingly called the 'two old number one wives' by the Africans.¹²¹ While away from Lambaréné, Schweitzer lived in his childhood village in Gunsbach where Emmy Martin, an Alsatian woman who shared Schweitzer's musical interests, became his confidante and assistant. Schweitzer showed a remarkable ability to connect with women of talent and intelligence, while Helene, now seriously estranged from her husband, continued to serve through fundraising trips to America.¹²²

But with his increasing separation from his wife, there was rivalry for his attention and approval in the little world where his authority remained unquestioned. Even those, like Louise Jilek-Aall, a keen admirer who worked as a pediatrician at Lambaréné in the 1960s, recognized the fierce competition among his acolytes and their fervent desire to protect him from the mounting criticism of his methods.¹²³ While there were no accusations of sexual impropriety, there were remarks about Schweitzer's brusqueness with his wife and almost complete disengagement from his daughter, Rhéna. They contribute to a portrait of a man who avoided intimate connection, and whose single-minded attention to his undertaking left bruised feelings and bitter rivalries.¹²⁴

The changing world of the hospital showed that Schweitzer, who had done so much to escape from European organization, had created his own rule-bound world. Surrounded by trusted white people, he withdrew into the role of chief physician and village designer. He had long acknowledged that the barriers dehumanized the relations between him and those he hoped to serve.

I daresay we should have fewer difficulties with our savages if we could occasionally sit around the fire with them and show ourselves to them as men and not merely as medicine men and custodians of law and order in the hospital. But there is not time

¹²⁰ See Lassus, *Albert Schweitzer*, pp. 87–94, for Helene's difficulties in seeing her husband.

¹²¹ James W. Fernandez, 'The sound of bells in a Christian country: in quest of the historical Schweitzer', *Massachusetts Review*, 5 (1964), p. 542.

¹²² Arnaut, *Albert Schweitzer*, p. 338.

¹²³ Louise Jilek-Aall, *Working with Schweitzer: sharing his reverence for life* (Surrey, BC, 1990), pp. 26, 28–9, 51–5, 75–7; on the separation from Africans, and the incomprehension between the local people and the staff, see pp. 114–32, and her attempts to bridge the gap, pp. 133–43.

¹²⁴ Edouard Nies-Berger, *Albert Schweitzer as I knew him* (New York, NY, 2003), sought to deify Schweitzer as an incomparable genius, but revealed his ambivalence when he noted the authoritarian and manipulative way the Great Man created competing fiefs among his collaborators both in Africa and in Alsace. On p. 26, he recounts the laments of Helene; for more on the tension with his wife, see Brabazon, *Albert Schweitzer*, p. 389; Trudi Bochsler, who worked with the lepers, was one of the few who seemed able to defy Schweitzer and win his respect, but she was cast out later (p. 394); on the mistrust of the other women towards Erica Anderson who became a new favourite in the 1950s (p. 395); and the jealousy of Helene towards Mme Martin (p. 397).

for that. We have been sentenced to carry out the fight against illness and pain as a demanding trade which makes everything else fall [sic] short.¹²⁵

In making this fatal, even tragic, admission, Schweitzer revealed the complexity of a personality that was strikingly acute in acknowledging that the brutalizing work had led to a kind of ethical imprisonment. 'Reverence for life' had stalled in the search for routine, hierarchy, and structure. The chance for the simple human connection he craved as part of his new ethical adventure fell victim to the effort to serve. Locked cupboards (from his earliest time in Africa), evening meals served on china with black staff in attendance, and evening hymns on an old piano in later decades all ensured that the colonial flavour of the hospital remained firmly intact.

These 'failures' must be judged against the healing enterprise that he undoubtedly created. When he and Helene arrived, they treated 2,000 patients in the first three-quarters of the year; by 1938, there were five doctors, African orderlies, nurses, and perhaps even an African nurse on staff. At least 5,000 in-patients were treated annually, and as many again on an out-patient basis.¹²⁶ In 1931, Schweitzer delegated Emma Haussknecht to go into the region between N'gouiné and the sea to offer health care to those who could not come to the village-hospital, a perilous enterprise that she undertook despite her doubts.¹²⁷ It is not clear if this was a long-lasting undertaking, but it reveals Schweitzer's desire for some innovation. Africans and their families came in the thousands to his hospital, and, as the donations increased, Schweitzer out-performed the ever more stretched colonial medical administration.¹²⁸ The devotion of his staff, and the discipline they internalized from his powerful example, seem to have had real therapeutic benefits.

V

As the roads and transport links improved, Schweitzer's hospital became more of a reality than a legend. In 1953, the journalist James Cameron visited and, instead of a saintly healer, saw a somewhat self-important man who presided over an ugly and dirty hospital. Despite the distaste that pervades his account,

¹²⁵ Schweitzer, *More from the primeval forest*, p. 51; idem, *Mitteilungen aus Lambarene, Zweiter Teil*, p. 19: 'Vielleicht hätten wir im Spital weniger Schwierigkeiten mit unseren Wilden, wenn wir uns zuweilen zu ihnen um das Feuer setzen könnten und uns ihnen gegenüber auch als Menschen, nicht nur als Medizinmänner und Wächter der Spitalordnung geben könnten. Aber wir vermögen nichts dawider. Vorläufig sind wir dazu verurteilt, den Kampf gegen Krankheit und Schmerz als ein aufreibendes Handwerk zu betreiben, bei dem alles andere zu kurz kommt.'

¹²⁶ Melamed and Melamed, 'Albert Schweitzer in Gabon', pp. 165–6.

¹²⁷ Arnaut, *Albert Schweitzer*, pp. 281–2.

¹²⁸ Rita Headrick, edited by Daniel R. Headrick, *Colonialism, health and illness in French equatorial Africa 1885–1935* (Atlanta, GA, 1994), pp. 191–272. The table which suggests Schweitzer's success is on p. 263. He had many more resources, and the Europeans also privileged his hospital.

even Cameron did not publish his impressions until Schweitzer's death,¹²⁹ afraid to tarnish the man's reputation and the values of the 'reverence for life' that he symbolized.

James W. Fernandez's narrative of his stay with Schweitzer in the early 1960s is in some ways more revealing because it is more balanced. Fernandez, a pioneering anthropologist who spent two years in Equatorial Africa doing fieldwork on the *bwiti* cult, was delighted by Schweitzer's welcome because it offered an extraordinary refuge. But Fernandez surmised that Africans would have looked askance at a hospital that had no African physicians and where the white staff took no interest in Africa. Whereas earlier the village-hospital had been praised for adapting to African culture, Schweitzer's resistance to modernization was now condemned. It was seen as reflecting an outmoded desire to refuse Africans the same treatment as Europeans, now available in the modern Presbyterian hospital in the Cameroons. Fernandez's account suggests that Lambaréné was more than just down at heel. He realized that it was accessible and therapeutic, but ultimately deficient because it was untidy and rigid simultaneously; above all, he was shocked to find that it had none of the vitality of an African village.

In resisting demands to modernize,¹³⁰ Schweitzer wanted to avoid the creation of the kind of de-personalized institution he had disavowed in his youth. However, Fernandez recognized that Schweitzer had still failed to foster the human bonds because of an unacknowledged 'Teutonic' desire for order. Despite his humanitarian ethic, Schweitzer remained the often inscrutable patriarch who imposed upon the 'ragged inmates' a system of impersonal control and direction associated with imperialism. Outsiders who visited Lambaréné could be forgiven for thinking that the wooden barracks that Schweitzer had so lovingly constructed looked little different from those built for the concentration camps in the Second World War.¹³¹

Fernandez also reflected the sea-change in attitude among progressive white Westerners who no longer saw any justification in imperialism's 'civilizing mission'. Fernandez concluded that despite his reverence for life, Schweitzer had created something depressing, almost decrepit. His obsession with building (almost seventy structures were put in place) revealed Schweitzer's belief in permanent settlement and his inability to comprehend a village society which moved every eight years to subsist from a meagre soil. For all that he claimed to hate the narrowing confines of 'organization', Schweitzer never adjusted to the migratory dynamism central to survival in Equatorial Africa.

¹²⁹ James Cameron, *Point of departure* (London, 2006), pp. 153–5.

¹³⁰ This debate went back decades. The physician, Frédéric Trens, who worked in Lambaréné between 1926 and 1927, had tried to convince his older colleague to install both a water purifier and electricity – all to no avail. See Arnaut, *Albert Schweitzer*, pp. 234–5.

¹³¹ Fernandez, 'The sound of bells in a Christian country', p. 557.

His apartness from people was echoed in his intellectual work. During the interwar years, he deepened his reflections on Indian religions, to the detriment of any study of Africa. He investigated Jainism and the idea of *ahimsa*, or non-aggression to all living things, which Gandhi had made famous in his campaigns of 'passive resistance'. Schweitzer saw the *ahimsa* commandment as the foundation of an ethics based on compassion, which he had updated with his 'reverence for life'.¹³² He exemplified this commitment through his attachment to the deer, pelicans, and the cats that were his pets, and he was widely photographed with them to underscore the ecological dimension of his ethics. When he died in 1965, he marked his grave with a palm tree, a species neither indigenous to Africa nor to Europe. We will never know if this was a statement about his need to feel apart from both continents, despite his deep association with both.

His strange search for 'solitude' in a hospital brimming with patients and staff was above all based on his commitment to the intellectual, cultural, and aesthetic norms of his youth. As a Protestant theologian, he saw Africa's lack of sacred texts as another proof of a low level of civilization, hence his preference for the Bhagavad Gita. After associating in his youth with the likes of Cosima Wagner and admiring the unifying aims of her husband's *Gesamtkunstwerk*, African music interested him not at all. He mentioned the omnipresence of African singing and drumming, but he never explored its tonalities or brought it back to Europe. Indeed, one evening while Schweitzer was playing Bach, a Gabonese drummer accompanied him, a perfect, improvised harmony that the 'grand Docteur' did not even notice.¹³³

One might be tempted to suggest that this cultural 'tone deafness' was integral to the mentality of the pre-First World War generation, and that Schweitzer should not be blamed for a lack of openness that so many others shared. Others, however, *were* more open. For example, André Gide, also a Protestant, shared many of Schweitzer's concerns about the brutalities of French imperialism and was also concerned to repudiate the same narrow moralism that Schweitzer despised. In his *Travels in the Congo* (1927) he recorded the unfamiliar cadences of the ubiquitous music, and knew that they were difficult to transcribe because they gave 'a polyphone impression of harmonic richness'.¹³⁴ Perhaps the comparison was unfair because Gide was interested in the 'exotic' and knew that African 'primitivism' was transforming the European avant garde. Schweitzer could simply not envisage African influence on Europe, and hence seemed unaware of the impact of African sculpture on

¹³² Harris, 'The allure of Albert Schweitzer'.

¹³³ Melamed and Melamed, *Albert Schweitzer in Gabon*, p. 180.

¹³⁴ André Gide, *Travels in the Congo* (Harmondsworth, 1986) p. 186.

modernist art;¹³⁵ of the growing importance of jazz music and modern dance in Europe;¹³⁶ or the development of ‘négritude’ in Paris.¹³⁷

Albert Einstein, who used to play violin with him, convinced him that his example of cultivating a ‘reverence for life’ in Africa uniquely qualified him to take up the role of disinterested spokesman. Schweitzer leapt into the fray. In 1957, he tried to influence the Soviet, American, and British governments to stop the atmospheric testing of atomic and hydrogen bombs. This campaign seemed all of a piece with his life work, and his view that ‘a fragmentary morality of concern for human life alone was like a single tone floating in the air, incomplete because the base tone to produce the harmony was missing. Reverence for life gives us the full chord, the harmony.’¹³⁸

But the style, location, and sincerity of this engagement revealed his preoccupation with Western ethical debates rather than with the momentous processes of de-colonization going on all around him. Again, Schweitzer remained apart from Africa at the very moment of his first committed political stand. Later, his ‘reverence for life’ was picked up by Rachel Carson in 1962, the ecologist and science writer who campaigned in America against the flagrant use of chemical pesticides. She prefaced *Silent Spring* with a quotation from a letter Schweitzer had written to a beekeeper whose bees had been destroyed by pesticides: ‘Man has lost the capacity to foresee and to forestall. He will end by destroying the Earth.’¹³⁹ Through Carson (and others) his most positive legacy infiltrated the Western ecological movement.

¹³⁵ See Jack D. Flam and Miriam Deutch, *Primitivism and twentieth-century art: a documentary history* (Berkeley, CA, 2003); Rupert Richard Arrowsmith, *Modernism and the museum: Asian, African, and Pacific art and the London avant garde* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 1–22.

¹³⁶ See Anne Anlin Cheng, *Second skin: Josephine Baker and the modern surface* (New York, NY, 2011).

¹³⁷ Carole Sweeny, *From fetish to subject: race, modernism, and primitivism, 1919–1935* (Westport, CT, 2004); Donna V. Jones, *The racial discourses of life philosophy: négritude, vitalism, and modernity* (New York, NY 2010), p. 1–26.

¹³⁸ *Albert Schweitzer and Rachel Carson: two courageous and inspiring people, georgianbayearth days.org.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*