



Universidad de Valladolid

Facultad de Filosofía y Letras



**PROGRAMA DE DOCTORADO
EN ESTUDIOS INGLESES AVANZADOS**

TESIS DOCTORAL:

**THE POETICS OF CARIBBEAN AMERICANITY: CLAUDE
MCKAY AND POST 1960s CARIBBEAN-AMERICAN
LITERATURE**

Presentada por Mónica Fernández Jiménez para optar al grado de
Doctor/a por la Universidad de Valladolid

Dirigida por Jesús Benito Sánchez

Acknowledgements

I need to start these project's acknowledgements by conveying my most sincere thanks to my supervisor Jesús Benito Sánchez, who offered me his guidance and trust even before I knew which steps had to be taken in order to pursue a PhD, only that I loved literature and research and wanted to make the most of it. He saw and understood that, and for it I will be always indebted to him. Continuing with those who have provided constant emotional, intellectual, and vital support, I am most indebted to my parents, Carmen and Pablo, who handed down to me a love for books and languages since I was little, and who have been unconditional believers in all my projects. Without their encouragement and faith this thesis would have never been started, nor finished. They are my heroes and they have taught me kindness, honesty, empathy, and compassion. Likewise, I also thank my auntie Prado, who always spoils me with obscure publications in the shape of birthday or Christmas presents. To the rest of my family (my strong and feminist grandma Fidela, as well as cousins, aunties and uncles) I am also most grateful, as well as to my childhood and adolescence friends (Irina, Celia, Diego, Gema, Teresa, Miriam, Alicia, Julián, Daniel, Juan, Pedro, and Carolina), who always manage to keep me sane.

As I grew up and went to university, I met people who have eventually become indispensable companions, some of whom have also joined this PhD adventure. It is such a delight to be able to work with friends who make work a safe, hospitable space. I would like to thank Paula Granda, Sofía Martincorena, Inés Paris, and Lucía Bermejo for our endless conversations. It is most certainly you who can change the world. There are also fellow graduate students whom I met after embarking on this adventure whom I have the honour to call friends and whose

humanity I cannot thank enough. Paula Barba, Jorge Diego, Mónica García, Lucía Sanz, Laura Roldán, Anna Marta Marini, and Laura Álvarez have filled the pandemic hours with virtual laughter and moral support. To the members of the early career association Iniciactiva I also convey my heartfelt thanks, I am a deep admirer of their commitment to research and honest practices. I especially thank Andrés, Alberto, and María, with whom I have shared more than a love for research.

I would also like to thank the department that has become my home during this adventure, the English department of the Universidad de Valladolid, which is the kindest workspace that I could wish for. In particular I would like to thank my fellow graduate students Tamara Gómez, Rebeca Martín, and Rosalía Martínez for being the most honest colleagues, and also Anunciación Carrera, Berta Cano, Santiago Rodríguez, and María Eugenia Perojo, with whom I have shared hours of teaching and who have taught me endlessly, and the head of the department, Carlos Herrero, who we are lucky to have. I would also like to thank those whom I met during my research stays in international centres. Ana, David, and Ana are the best people I can think of to spend a lockdown with and especially Jack with whom I have spent a few of them, and his family. He was witness to the writing of the last words of this thesis as we both suffered through Covid and I seriously doubt I would have been able to write those words without his encouragement, friendship, and affection. The University of Leeds also allowed me to meet my dear friends Verónica, Svenja, and Roisin, the last of whom was my first encounter with a PhD student and ignited my curiosity. Dr. John McLeod deserves a special thanks for being the most caring supervisor who is not only concerned with his PhD students' writing but above all with their emotional wellbeing and mental health. I also thank Dr. Martin O'Shaughnessy for his invaluable bureaucratic help at the University of

Nottingham Trent and his interest in my work. His emails, often dealing with nightmarish paperwork, were always filled with articles and book or film recommendations.

I am indebted to the generous support of the Universidad de Valladolid and the Spanish Ministerio de Universidades (Ref.: FPU19/01193) for funding my research, as well as the Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación which through research projects PID2019-108754GB-100 and FFI2015-64137 has funded my travel and bibliographic expenses, as well as the ERASMUS+ project (Ref.: 2017-1-ES01-KA203-038181) “Hospitality and European Film.” I am most grateful to the members of these projects who have taught me endlessly and who I deeply admire, especially Dr. Ana María Manzanás, whose constant support and interest in my work I would like to sincerely thank. Thank you very much to the University of Valladolid and its English department library commissions, as well as to all the librarians who in my numerous (very numerous) visits to the archives always received me with a smile. And finally, thanks to all those people who continue to write books, especially those who do it with an honest, decolonial, anti-racist, and feminist perspective, as well as those who continue to read them. We will be encountering each other in the future.

Abstract

This thesis seeks to reposition the literature of the Caribbean diaspora in the United States as a product of Americanness and as a reflection of the power relations of the American hemisphere. It also identifies in the examined works a series of characteristically Caribbean poetics that challenge their categorisation within broader fields such as Latinx literature or ethnic American literature. Thus, this study analyses works that are not normally examined together due to either periodisation or to the fact that they have been usually associated to different categories, since there is a lack of existence of a Caribbean-American canon in the scholarship.

The study utilises as a backbone the work of Jamaican-born writer Claude McKay, who is usually categorised as an African American author. He is the first author with an extensive literary oeuvre to explore with a characteristically Caribbean anti-essentialist approach the U.S.-dominated power dynamics that permeate the hemisphere. After an analysis that tackles the reasons why previous categorisations of McKay as a folklorist, modernist or internationalist writer fall short because of not taking into account the Caribbean epistemology of his works, three novels of his will be compared with three post-1960s Caribbean-American novels (by Piri Thomas, Paule Marshall, and Edwidge Danticat). These novels suffer the same kind of critical neglect in the lack of attention that their Caribbeanness has received in part due to the post-1960s rise of ethnic American studies that surrounded their publication. However, the thesis concludes, an analysis focused on Caribbean poetics reveals the way in which Americanness similarly informs all of the works despite their different periodisation. It thus concludes with the assertion of an alternative genealogy

informed not by the colonial/Modern paradigms that permeate most analyses but by a Caribbean understanding of time, history, nature, and resilience.

Resumen

Esta tesis busca reposicionar la literatura de la diáspora caribeña en los Estados Unidos como un producto de la Americanidad y un reflejo de las relaciones de poder del hemisferio americano. También identifica unas poéticas característicamente caribeñas en las obras estudiadas que desafían su categorización dentro de grupos más amplios como la literatura latinx o la literatura étnica americana. Así, se analizan obras que no se suelen estudiar de manera conjunta, bien por su periodización o bien porque han sido analizadas dentro de categorías distintas, ya que se observa que no existe un canon caribeño-americano en la crítica.

Este trabajo utiliza como eje la obra del escritor Claude McKay quien, nacido en Jamaica, suele ser categorizado como un autor afroamericano. Se trata del primer autor con una amplia obra literaria que explora bajo un enfoque antiesencialista característicamente caribeño las relaciones de poder que, dominadas por los Estados Unidos, afectan a todo el hemisferio americano. Tras un análisis que aborda las razones por las que las caracterizaciones previas de McKay como un escritor folclórico, modernista o internacionalista se quedan cortas debido a su falta de atención a la epistemología caribeña, se comparan tres de sus novelas con tres novelas de las décadas posteriores a 1960 escritas por autores caribeño-americanos (Piri Thomas, Paule Marshall y Edwidge Danticat). Estas novelas sufren la misma clase de carencia crítica en lo que respecta al análisis de su dimensión caribeña, en parte debido al auge del estudio de la literatura étnica americana que

rodea su publicación. Sin embargo, la tesis concluye que un análisis centrado en la poética caribeña revela cómo Americanidad informa todas las obras de manera similar a pesar de su diferente periodización. Así se concluye con la vindicación de una genealogía alternativa basada no en paradigmas coloniales/Modernos, como hacen la mayoría de los estudios, sino en un acercamiento caribeño al tiempo, la historia, la naturaleza y la resiliencia.

Table of contents

<u>INTRODUCTION.....</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>CHAPTER 1: THE MULTIPLE SITES OF ARCHIPELAGIC THINKING.....</u>	<u>38</u>
1.1. Postcolonial Motifs in the Early Poetry of Claude McKay	43
1.2. Claude McKay and Black Modernism: The Caribbean Critique of Modernity	57
1.3. From Modernism to Diasporic Consciousness: Claude McKay's Errant Writing.....	72
1.4. Urban Archipelagos: Contemporary Caribbean-American literature.....	84
<u>CHAPTER 2: SUBALTERN RHIZOMATIC LIFE NARRATIVES: CLAUDE MCKAY'S <i>BANJO</i> AND PIRI THOMAS' <i>DOWN THESE MEAN STREETS</i>.....</u>	<u>96</u>
2.1. Rhizomatic Vagabondage in Claude McKay's <i>Banjo</i>	103
2.2. Queer Spaces and Rhizomatic Kinship in Piri Thomas' <i>Down these Mean Streets</i>	115
2.3. "Proletarians from far waters:" the Coloniality of Labour in Claude McKay's and Piri Thomas' Narratives.....	135
2.4. Conclusion: An Extended Caribbean.....	155
2.5. A Note Concerning Gender	156
<u>CHAPTER 3: WRITERS GO NATIVE: PRIMITIVIST TENSIONS IN MCKAY'S <i>BANANA BOTTOM</i> AND MARSHALL'S <i>THE CHOSEN PLACE, THE TIMELESS PEOPLE</i>.....</u>	<u>160</u>
3.1. Claude McKay's Ambiguous Female Heroine: Nature and Gender in <i>Banana Bottom</i>	166
3.2. Strategic Environmental Essentialism: <i>Banana Bottom</i> as a Text against Dependency	179
3.3. Purposefully Backwards?: The Native Informants of Paule Marshall's <i>The Chosen Place, the Timeless People</i>	186
3.4. Man of Reason: Focalisation and the Western Gaze in <i>The Chosen Place, the Timeless People</i>	202
3.5. The Caribbean in the Modern World-System: The Peripheral Proletariat in <i>Banana Bottom</i> and <i>The Chosen Place, the Timeless People</i>	211
<u>CHAPTER 4: HOPE AND AGENCY IN CARIBBEAN WRITING: CLAUDE MCKAY'S <i>AMIABLE WITH BIG TEETH</i> AND EDWIDGE DANTICAT'S <i>CLAIRE OF THE SEA LIGHT</i>.....</u>	<u>222</u>
4.1 Reinscribing Agency to Contest Ideological Utopias in Claude McKay's <i>Amiable with Big Teeth</i>	232
4.2. Resilience and the "Coloniality of Climate" in Edwidge Danticat's <i>Claire of the Sea Light</i>	253
4.3 Can Literature Change the World? Utopistics, or Some Final Reflections on the Nature of Literary Hope within World-System Analysis	271
<u>CONCLUSION.....</u>	<u>282</u>
<u>Works Cited</u>	<u>294</u>

List of Abbreviations (in order of appearance)

- TOA Dash, Michael. *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context*. The UP of Virginia, 1998.
- NCL Rosenberg, Leah. *Nationalism and the Formation of Caribbean Literature*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- PR Glissant, Édouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Translated by Betsy Wing. The U of Michigan P, 1997.
- RI Benítez-Rojo, Antonio. *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*. Duke UP, 1992.
- HBE James, Winston. *Holding aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Twentieth Century America*. Verso, 1998.
- RS Cooper, Wayne F. *Claude McKay: Rebel Sojourner in the Harlem Renaissance: A Biography*. Schocken Books, 1987.
- GH McKay, Claude. *My Green Hills of Jamaica and Five Jamaican Short Stories*. Heinemann Educational Book, 1979.
- BB McKay, Claude. *Banana Bottom*. Harper & Row, 1933.
- CP McKay, Claude. *Complete Poems*. U of Illinois P, 2004.
- ABT McKay, Claude. *Amiable with Big Teeth*. Penguin Books, 2017.
- LW McKay, Claude. *A Long Way from Home*. Rutgers UP, 1937.
- AI Pugh, Jonathan and David Chandler. *Anthropocene Islands: Entangled Worlds*. U of Westminster P, 2021.
- HH McKay, Claude. *Home to Harlem*. Northeastern UP, 1987.
- CD Glissant, Édouard. *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*. Translated by Michael Dash. UP of Virginia, 1989.
- WSA Wallerstein, Immanuel. *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*. Duke UP, 2004
- CSL Danticat, Edwidge. *Claire of the Sea Light*. Penguin Random House, 2013.
- NM McKay, Claude. *Harlem: Negro Metropolis*. E. P. Dutton, 1940.

A Note on Terminology:

The word “Modernity” will be written in this thesis with a capital M, because it does not refer to the condition of being new or contemporary, but to a particular ideology. Some contend Modernity was born out of the Enlightenment but the critics of the Modernity/coloniality research group believe it is related and coincides with the inception of the capitalist world-system (therefore also referred to as the “Modern world-system,” where the word “Modern” will be equally capitalised). This ideology was crucial in the system’s subsequent expansion towards the American hemisphere, where Modernity was imposed as the unique model of thought, consequently facilitating the submission of the non-European peoples who inhabited the hemisphere, a power structure also known as coloniality. Coloniality and Modernity are two sides of the same coin.

Consequently, Modernism and Postmodernism will be capitalised as well, since these artistic movements are responses to the ideology of Modernity. As another school of thought, “Postcolonial Studies” will be equally capitalised because it does not only refer to what happens after colonialism but to a theoretical school with a very specific philosophical base. The hyphenated version “post-colonial” will be therefore avoided. When referring to “postcolonial literature,” the non-capitalised version will be used, because while not only designating a particular periodisation (for example, I do not consider the literature of settler colonies “postcolonial” unless it is indigenous, while I do whenever the authors come from communities historically dispossessed by colonialism), there is no assumption that these works carry the philosophies included in the Postcolonial Studies school.

Immanuel Wallerstein, who developed the theory of world-systems analysis, interchangeably uses throughout his books the forms “world-system,” “World-System,” and “world system.” For consistency’s sake, I will stick to the form “world-system,” since I believe capitalisation is not necessary in this case and using a single word already expresses the nature of the term as making reference to a particular concept with consistent characteristics, and not only to a system which exists or extends throughout the world. A world-system is a political and social structure where many cultures coexist but which contains a unique division of labour.

INTRODUCTION

The Caribbean is now an American Sea
C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint
L'Overture and the San Domingo Revolution*

I said I was born in the West Indies and lived in
the United States and that I was an American,
even though I was a British subject
Claude McKay, *A Long Way from Home*

In the first epigraph above, the celebrated Trinidadian historian Cyril Lionel Robert James describes the American particular administration of Puerto Rican lands, which the Spaniards ceded after their defeat in the Spanish-American war. He continues giving the details about how the U.S. became an inescapable presence in Caribbean economy and politics (or that she encroached upon its political management because of economic interests):

The United States returns to the Puerto Rican Government all duty collected on such staple imports as rum and cigars. American money for investment and American loans and gifts should create the Caribbean paradise. But if the United States had the Puerto Rican density of population, it would contain all the people in the world. Puerto Rico is just another West Indian Island.

In the Dominican Republic there is no need to go beyond saying that Trujillo had gained power by the help of the United States Marines and all through the more than quarter-century of his infamous dictatorship he was understood to enjoy the friendship of Washington. Before the recent election of his successor, Sr. Juan Bosch, the French newspapers stated as an item

of news that members of the left in the Dominican Republic (names were given) were deported to Paris by the local police, who were assisted in this operation by members of the FBI. Trujillo gone, Duvalier of Haiti is the uncrowned king of Latin American barbarism. It is widely believed that despite the corruption and impertinence of his regime, it is American support which keeps him in power: better Duvalier than another Castro (C.R.L. James 409)

“From Toussaint L’Overture to Fidel Castro,” James’ appendix to the Vintage Books edition (1963) of his masterpiece *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Overture and the San Domingo Revolution* (written in 1938), sketches, after an analysis of the causes and consequences of the Haitian revolution, the political state of affairs on the Caribbean islands by 1962 with regards to foreign intervention. James concludes that after the Haitian independence the United States became the major intruding power in the region and that all intrinsically Caribbean cultural developments are a response to this set of power relations (394; 409). The Caribbean cannot be written without reference to the prying presence of the United States impinging upon the islands, to the point that in the case of one of them, Puerto Rico, one cannot refer to its inhabitants omitting the modifier “American,” as the country’s imperial designs have turned them into citizens of the United States.

The multidirectional mobilities that have resulted from this state of affairs have proved a point about Caribbean literature already endemic to its Black Atlantic legacy: that the process of writing the Caribbean cannot be a matter of national literatures. This is not only because there exists a regional consciousness of the area, but also because the region and its identity have been written from its many diasporas. The Caribbean population is also the result of many historical mobilities—some of them centuries old. Such heterogeneity confirms Elizabeth DeLoughrey’s

interrogation of the exoticist notion that islands are isolated places (“Island Ecologies” 298). Rather, archipelagos resist the idea of nationhood as tied to territoriality because, as Jonathan Pugh argues, “the island chain movement [creates] cognitive spaces of metamorphosis in their own right” whereby culture and identity are inventive, syncretic, and in constant transformation (“Thinking” 10). This is the recent focus of scholars on Island Studies such as the two mentioned above, who have identified “how islands are part of complex cross-cutting relations, assemblages, networks, mobilities, spatial fluxes and flows” (Chandler and Pugh, “Relationality and Resilience” 65). And yet, celebrated Caribbean writers such as Edward Kamau Brathwaite lament that the region is being written from abroad, “stopped in time at the snapshot moment of departure” (“Rehabilitations” 125), without considering that migrants and their (hi)stories are crucial in order to achieve a better, more complex understanding of the Caribbean.

Whereas there are multiple studies of the writings of colony-to-metropolis Caribbean migrants (take the Windrush Generation as an example), the literature of the hemispheric dimension of the Caribbean diaspora has neither been seriously anthologised nor critically analysed as a body of writing on its own. It is my goal in this study to trace a twentieth century pattern of Caribbean literature written in the context of the United States that both presents characteristically Caribbean poetics and critically engages with the hemisphere’s geographies of power. With a bigger focus on Caribbean poetics, this study relies on the theories proposed by critics Monica Hanna, Jennifer Harford Vargas, and José David Saldívar in their introduction to a monograph on the works of Dominican-American Junot Díaz, an author whose Caribbean dimension has often been ignored. They apply the frame of the colonality of power to his writings dealing with immigration to the U.S. and

contend that they reflect “a set of reciprocating colonial complicities between the United States and the Greater Antilles in the world-system”¹ (Hanna, Harford Vargas, and Saldívar 1). Similarly, I believe that there are many other diasporic Caribbean authors writing from the United States who denounce the American coloniality of power drawing upon Caribbean poetics. It is this thesis’ goal to reposition these authors, often analysed according to paradigms informed—or deformed—by U.S. American pan-ethnic uniformization, according to Caribbean perspectives on their diasporic imagination.

The coloniality of power which informs this thesis’ analysis is a concept referring to the lasting effects of colonialism in the American hemisphere. A number of critics who have come to conform what is now known as the Modernity/coloniality research group have largely explored and delineated its characteristics through a vast collection of articles. Founding member Aníbal Quijano mentioned the idea for the first time in a 1992 article titled “Colonialidad y Modernidad/Racionalidad,” where he exposes the differences between coloniality and colonialism, whereby the former is a consequence of the latter, this one just being a political and economic system (Quijano, “Modernidad/Racionalidad” 14). Quijano defines coloniality as a “estructura de poder” (16) whose effects, despite the end of colonialism as a political organisation, prevail. Among these effects is the categorisation of the peoples inhabiting the hemisphere in ethnic terms. They can take the shape of either race, ethnicity or nationality, depending on the socio-

¹ With the use of this term, these three authors take into account Immanuel Wallerstein’s model of the world-systems analysis, which is also very relevant for this study and which I will mention extensively in the chapters below. Wallerstein analyses the economic dimension of American coloniality, locating its beginning in the expansion of the capitalist (or Modern) world-system into American lands, whereby the distribution of production into core and peripheral areas began. Trinidadian historian and former Prime Minister of Trinidad Eric Williams makes a similar point in his book *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944), where he contends that without slavery there would not be capitalism and that this started in the Caribbean around the sixteenth century.

political moment. These categories in turn determined the different roles within the international division of labour globally. But, above all, another long-lasting effect was the imposition of a unique cultural model of thought—rationalism—and the subsequent attempt to eliminate previously existing ones.

While Hanna, Harford Vargas, and Saldívar identify Junot Díaz as the one writer who unveils the coloniality of power in his works (1), even by pointing out his own familiarity with Quijano's theories (7; 14), my aim in this thesis is to identify other—most of them earlier—authors who reflect these complicities. The study starts with Jamaican poet, novelist, and essay writer Claude McKay, in my view the first Caribbean author to reflect, in an exhaustive manner, the hemispheric power dynamics affecting the Caribbean diaspora. He did so while maintaining an archipelagic perspective informed by his homeland that can be read against the grain of postmodern and postcolonial paradigms of contemporary immigrant fiction. I will hence compare three McKay novels with three later novels written by diasporic Caribbean authors based in the United States whose Caribbean dimensions I consider have not sufficiently been accounted for: Piri Thomas (1928-2011), Paule Marshall (1929-2019), and Edwidge Danticat (1969-present). I also contend that, whereas Caribbean diasporas to locations such as Canada or the United Kingdom have successfully taken into account the Caribbean origin of the migrants, the context of the United States proves a different case because of the racial power dynamics endemic to this country. Despite his extensive travels throughout the globe, the United States occupies the most central place within McKay's many adopted homes. Born in 1890 in the mountainous area of Clarendon Parish, McKay became, in the course of his many detours, one of the main voices of the Harlem Renaissance in the United States. However, this is not the only movement according

to which his prolific literary career can be read. I contend that McKay participates in a category that I analyse as “the literature of Americanity.”

This study’s understanding of the Caribbean diaspora and its literary creation takes into account the multidirectional mobilities that conform what Michael Dash calls the “New World perspective:”

New World perspective is not the product of a polarizing exclusivist politics or an attempt to create a new cultural enclave, but rather concerns itself with establishing new connections, not only among the islands of the archipelago but also exploring the region in terms of the Césairean image of that frail, delicate umbilical cord that holds the Americas together (*TOA* 3)

Caribbean-American mobilities throughout the American hemisphere² have taken place in terms of either peoples, capital, resources or ideas since the archipelago became populated, but these are most striking during the twentieth century, starting with the Spanish-American War and the incorporation of Puerto Rico via the construction of the Panama Canal and the Costa Rican Railroad to reach the current process of neoliberal offshoring.³ Sociologists Aníbal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein’s coining of the concept of Americanity is perfectly suited to define these hemispheric geographies of power. They claim that the coloniality of power was born in the Americas, precisely in the Caribbean. The colonisation of the Americas prompted the birth of a new social and economic structure (549), with the European colonisers basing the division of labour on an idea of “race:” “multiple

² While the American hemisphere has a central role in this thesis, which explores its power dynamics and historical specificities in comparison with those of the exmetropolises, I am not taking into account the Canadian context, even though there is a big Caribbean community in this country that has given rise to a large number of literary works. I consider that the racial history of the United States possesses historical specificities that have affected the literary categorisation of its migrant writers and these are not manifest in the same way in the context of Canada.

³ Many more examples can be found in Ramón Grosfoguel’s article “Puerto Rican Labor Migration to the United States: Modes of Incorporation, Coloniality, and Identities” (1999) under the process that he calls the “reperipheralization” of the islands through United States intervention which started at the end of the nineteenth century (507).

forms of labour control [were] invented as part of Americanness: slavery for the Black Africans [...] As we came into the post-independence period, the forms of labour control and the names of the ethnic categories were updated. But an ethnic hierarchy remained” (550-1). Quijano and Wallerstein add that since the end of the nineteenth century the United States forcedly became a hegemonic power towards the other nations of the hemisphere through the imposition of diverse measures:

(1) the violent territorial expansion that permitted to double its area in less than 80 years, absorbing the “Indian” territories in the West plus half of Mexico; (2) the imposition of a quasi-protectorate over the countries of the Caribbean and Central America, including the “rape” of Panama and the building and control of the Panama Canal, as well as of the Philippines and Guam; (3) the imposing of economic and political hegemony over the rest of Latin America following the First World War; (4) the imposition of world hegemony after the Second World War, which integrated the US in a world power structure (555-6)

In short, Quijano and Wallerstein’s article not only exposes the American origin of the coloniality of power, but also traces the eventual development of an interstatal hierarchy within the hemisphere. My point is that this hierarchy and its consequent power dynamics heavily influence the poetics of the Caribbean.

In developing this understanding of the hemisphere I do not wish to erase the particular Caribbean characteristics of the region’s literature. My understanding of Hemispheric American Studies differs from those studies which first defined the field such as Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine’s *Hemispheric American Studies* (2007) or Justin Read’s *Modern Poetics and Hemispheric American Cultural Studies* (2009). In my view, these simplify local particularities and preclude power relations within the hemisphere. My idea of hemispheric America was in fact

laid down much earlier by a Caribbean intellectual in the late nineteenth century. The great Cuban revolutionary José Martí developed the concept of “Our America” in 1891 in order to reject the European (particularly Spanish) intrusion in the hemisphere (Saldívar “Conjeturas” 86). With this concept, Martí defines the unequal relations of power that exist across the Americas,⁴ making the crucial point that they are not locatable in particular nations or territories but between the European elites (and their heir)—“con leyes heredadas de cuatro siglos de práctica libre en los Estados Unidos” (16)—and their subaltern ruled. Martí’s is a pioneering piece of writing in that, apart from rejecting European imperialism, it warns against the powerful neighbour of “our America,” a giant United States which lingers from the North (Vitier 9). Reminding of what decolonial scholars would later call “other knowledges” (Walsh 15), Martí alerts that “nuestras repúblicas dolorosas de América” (16) will have to resist the power of this intruder who deliberately ignores subaltern forms of knowledge and will thus disregard their legitimacy: “El desdén del vecino formidable que no la conoce es el peligro mayor de nuestra América; y urge, porque el día de la visita está próximo, que el vecino la conozca, la conozca pronto, para que no la desdeñe” (Martí 21). Therefore, to dispel the dangerous homogenisation of a hemispheric literature whereby global North and global South are indistinguishable, I concur with Leah Rosenberg in her overarching study *Nationalism and the Formation of Caribbean Literature* (2007) in stating that

⁴ This is also the aim of José David Saldívar in his book *The Dialectics of Our America* (1991), where he endorses Martí’s concept to define “a distinctive postcolonial, pan-American consciousness” (xi). Nevertheless, despite the importance given to the Casa de las Américas in Cuba throughout the book as “a possible model for both a broader, oppositional American literary history and a new comparative cultural studies project” (17), Saldívar does not stop to ponder the role of Caribbean epistemology in this tracing of the “alternative[s] to the dominant forms of ‘knowledge production’ in the Americas” (xiii) to focus instead on Latin American Marxism (17). Michael Dash’s *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context* (1998) focuses more on the Caribbean and, in fact, he situates its cultural production in the broader context of the Americas. However, it seems surprising that, considering his focus on exploring the connections among the hemisphere’s regions (3), he does not consider the extensive and power-determined Caribbean diaspora to the United States.

“Caribbeans came to produce a literature which was distinctively Caribbean” (Rosenberg, *NCL* ix). Rather than a hemispheric American literature this advocates for a “literature of Americanness” where the power relations within the hemisphere are made visible particularly in the writings from and of the Caribbean, their aesthetics being determined by what the Caribbean thinker par excellence, Édouard Glissant, calls “[l]a pensée archipélique” (*Philosophie* 45). Their poetics—“a Poetics of Relation” in Glissant’s words (*PR* 16)—are very much also present in the literature of the Caribbean diaspora, especially when it takes place in the neighbouring United States, with which it shares a similar history of slavery and the spacial and racial poetics inherited from the plantation.

Perhaps because of his role in the widely acclaimed movement that took place in Harlem, McKay’s poetics have often been categorised as African-American. However, a close reading of his works reveals a sense of Caribbean archipelagic relationality, a poetics that “unsettle[s] borders of land/sea, island/mainland,” in Jonathan Pugh’s words (“Relationality” 94). In McKay’s case, the unsettlement is visible in his deconstruction of the cultural nationalist paradigm that dominates the literature of his black contemporaries (both American and Caribbean). Claude McKay is an early figure in having skilfully portrayed the intricate geopolitical relationships of the American hemisphere with respect to colonialism, postcolonialism, and American neo-colonialism in a time when Négritude was the main cultural trend in both politics and poetics. Some of McKay’s works are located in Europe, but through his approach to racism and the exploitation of black workers it is easy to locate the origin of his epistemology in America. In fact, like he claims in the epigraph above, McKay is mostly considered and considers himself an American

writer despite being a British colonial subject. His works, furthermore, feature above all in anthologies of African American literature.

I believe that McKay's deliberate use of the word "American" in the epigraph's passage featuring in his literary autobiography *A Long Way from Home* (1937) does not exclusively refer to the United States but to Americanness. McKay identifies himself as a subject of the New World, which as Dash expresses is not a colonial category but a way to conceive of "multiple identities and cultural indeterminacy" (TOA 5). The essays of the poet laureate of the Caribbean, Nobel-Prize winning Derek Walcott from the island of Saint Lucia, more explicitly explore the Caribbean sense of being American. Like Dash, Walcott uses the term "New World" to refer to the exceptionalist culture that emerged in the Caribbean with the arrival of the soon-to-be slaves from Africa which then expanded to the whole hemisphere. The displaced slaves had to

forg[e] [...] a language that went beyond mimicry, a dialect which had the force of revelation as it invented names for things, one who finally settled on its own mode of inflection, and which began to create an oral culture of chants, jokes, folksongs, and fables; this, not merely the debt of history, was [the New World Negro's] claim to the New World (*Twilight* 15)

What Walcott describes is the creole culture that was born in the Americas. It is a term that originated in this hemisphere initially used to refer to the children of Europeans who were born in the New World (Mintz 301). It then evolved into describing the complex cultural syncretism that emerges when multiple cultures converge in the same place under circumstances of displacement and, in Glissant's words, "s'embrassent, se repoussent, disparaissent, subsistent pourtant,

s'endorment ou se transforment, lentement ou à vitesse foudroyante" (*Tout-Monde* 22).

In cultural studies, creolisation is a concept exclusively applied to the Caribbean, "a distinctly Caribbean form of hybridity" (Otto 98) that acknowledges how in this region colonisation was not a matter of negotiating indigenous and colonial cultures but of undermining previous knowledges. Dispossession gave way to a culture where the elements are "limitless" and the "consequences unforeseeable" (Glissant, *PR* 34), not easily identifiable in the traditions from which they emerged. However, creolised productions such as jazz or hip-hop are also a characteristic of the South of the United States. Glissant's explanation would be that the U.S. South, like the Caribbean, is a post-plantation space (*PR* 63), Wallerstein's concept of "the extended Caribbean" (*Volume II*, 20), a site which, in Antonio Benítez-Rojo's oft-quoted words,

is the product of the plantation (the big bang of the Caribbean universe), whose slow explosion throughout modern history threw out billions and billions of cultural fragments in all directions—fragments of diverse kinds that, in their endless voyage, come together in an instant to form a dance step, a linguistic trope, the line of a poem, and afterward repel each other to re-form and pull apart once more, and so on ("creolization" 55)

It could then be concluded that creolisation exists wherever there was a plantation economy and, therefore, society. However, we cannot stop there. Creolised music forms continued developing in sites such as Harlem, where cultural convergence and displacement also took place. Above all, most of its displaced inhabitants came from post-plantation areas. Benítez-Rojo claims that characteristically Caribbean cultural syncretism is manifest "where the density of Caribbean population is noticeable" (*RI* 25), places where "Antilleans [...] search [for] the centers of their

Caribbeanness, constituting one of our century's most notable migratory flows" (RI 25). Like Carol Boyce-Davies argues, the Caribbean "is not so much a geographical location but a cultural construction based on a series of mixtures, languages, communities of people" (*Migrations of the Subject* 9). Caribbeanness and its characteristic creolisation do not stop, quoting Brathwaite, at "the moment of departure" ("Rehabilitations" 125), but follow Caribbeans wherever they go.

Claude McKay is the personification of these convergences, having set many of his works in Harlem, this twentieth century centre of heterogeneity and creolisation. During the interwar years, through the north-bound migration of African Americans from Southern rural areas, the Harlem neighbourhood in New York boomed with a cultural activity that is normally attributed to U.S. African Americans. However, Harlem also harboured many Caribbeans who greatly influenced "American race relations [and] their literary development" (Pedersen 184). See as an example how a few years after the war, in 1919, African American writer Fenton Johnson wrote in a poem that

In every field of our American
life we find the West Indian
pushing ahead and doing all in
his power to uphold the dignity
of the Negro race. In every
industry, in every profession, in
every trade, we find this son of
the islands holding aloft the ban-
ner of Ethiopia

(qtd. in W. James, *HBE* iv)

Not all of these West Indians were English speaking or Afro-Caribbean, as portrayed by one of McKay's short stories anthologised in the collection *Gingertown* (1932). "The Prince of Porto Rico," a short story about the "Cuban and Porto Rican barbers

of the Belt⁵” (McKay, *Gingertown* 32), is one of the few literary manifestations that portrays the Hispanic Caribbean presence in Harlem, including words in Spanish and describing the particular culture of “Latin-Harlem” and their variety of skin colours and backgrounds:

And they say that Latin-Harlem has the best of masseurs. It is a sight to see... strolling through the Belt on a Saturday night while the dark dandies are getting massaged... Beautifying and sweetening themselves for the cabarets and casinos. Hombre! Pink cream smeared all over chocolate skin. Sugar-brown experts bending over chocolate lads, luxuriating under the process and dreaming sweet-scented rendezvous with the chippies (McKay, *Gingertown* 33)

Inspired by how the Caribbean islands were also at the time—and had been since the European arrival—recipient of heterogenous working-class migratory flows and centers of multi-cultural negotiation, Lara Putnam calls Harlem “a key node within the interconnected circum-Caribbean” (481). Despite the usual characterisation of this neighbourhood as exclusively African American in its demographics, it actually presented patterns of cultural syncretism and heterogeneity reminiscent of Caribbean creolisation. Similarly, the concept of creolisation in the Caribbean does not restrict itself to describing the cultural syncretism of the descendants of slaves, but all of the cultures that arrived in the archipelago—European, Asian (Indian, Chinese...), African—and the negotiations they had to go through (Otto 99).

While being a concept with locatable Caribbean origins, anthropologist Sydney W. Mintz contends that creolisation has become a useful concept in order to understand the current state of globalisation in the contemporary world:

⁵ It refers to the “black belt” of New York, as Harlem was also referred to because of its black population.

That Caribbean concepts such as creolization and marronnage seem to prove so timely for students of globalization is immediately referable to the fact that the Caribbean colonies were the first planetary colonies in world history (Konetzke 1946: 9). It is as if global social processes needed centuries to “catch up” in the world at large to what Caribbean colonialism had done to its peoples, long ago (303)

I have therefore considered that comparing Claude McKay’s fiction with works of more recent diasporas—usually explained through patterns of mobility endemic to globalisation—could provide a renewed understanding of the latter’s poetics as containing the seeds to plant archipelagic thinking in the United States. These works, in my view, are often as miscategorised as McKay’s when they are apprehended as African American. The literary offspring of these diasporas are often included in canons such as the African-American or the Latinx ones, or just analysed under the label “migrant fiction.” If the analysis is more comprehensive, migrant writers are usually solely associated to their nationality, as Antonio Benítez-Rojo criticises giving the example of Edwidge Danticat: “According to the silly labels that we use in the United States, Danticat is a Haitian-American; in fact her identity is in the hyphen” (“creolization” 60). Furthermore, the increasing mobility of the globalised world and its blurring of boundaries and categories have given way to the analysis of their literature as postmodern. This later categorisation might help us to understand the heterogeneity of McKay’s works much better, as well as the differences he presents with his contemporaries and the similarities with later works.

The categorisation “postmodern” might however come too late and it could be retrospectively implemented. While Mitnz associates creolisation with

globalisation, other scholars, like Carol Boyce-Davies, do so in terms of Caribbeanness and Postmodernism:

For the Caribbean, the separations based on language, colonial political and economic structures, land and the treacherous sea allow us to understand and question the formation of nations based only on island boundaries. Also, the multiple peoples and languages of this part of the world offer us interesting postmodernist ways of seeing identity (*Migrations of the Subject* 9)

This is the thesis of one of the most relevant theoretical works concerning the Caribbean, Antonio Benítez-Rojo's *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective* (1992). In this study, Benítez-Rojo contends that in natural phenomena such as the Milky Way or the cycles of the stock market one can find characteristically postmodernist features like the lack of boundaries and centre (3-4). The Caribbean archipelago is among these phenomena where signifiers are erratically displaced "toward other spatio-temporal points, be they in Europe, Africa, Asia, or America, or in all these continents at once. When these points of departure are nonetheless reached, a new chaotic flight of signifiers will occur, and so on ad infinitum" (*RI* 12). Certainly, there are postmodern characteristics in the works of McKay such as his reference to both low and high cultures, the use of humour, his rejection of categories, a lack of narrative linearity, the blurring of literary genres and styles, and his anti-essentialist impulse.

Seeking to escape the Euro-American influence in the analysis of Caribbean arts, the poetics and the politics of Postmodernism receive other names in the context of the archipelago. As mentioned above, it is more pertinent to consider how Caribbeanness has influenced what Jean François Lyotard calls "the postmodern condition." James Clifford's celebrated argument that "we are all

Caribbeans now in our urban archipelagos” (173) rather seems to propose a timeless Caribbean condition that transcends the limits of Euro-centric theory. In the decade of the 1990s a number of scholars from the Caribbean began to explore this condition more actively, seeking to transcend the cultural nationalism that had dominated the independence nationalist years and, in the process, crafting a philosophy that escaped “European models of experience and presumption of their universality” (Drabinski xiv) while engaging in conversation with fellow Caribbean and American artists and European thinkers (xvi). These critics, more specifically Glissant, Benítez-Rojo, and Brathwaite, adopted a regionalist perspective in their efforts to outline the principles of an essentially Caribbean epistemology. The current, often known as anti-essentialism⁶ though I prefer to use the term post-essentialism, following Izabella Penier (“Modernity” 24; “Globalization” 241), is distinctly postmodern according to Florencia Bonfiglio, because it articulates a kind of thought that defies systematisation and advocates for “the game of differences” (my translation; 22). However, she continues quoting Glissant, this thought remains locatable, as its imaginaries originate in the archipelago (22), “the specificity of the Caribbean experience of the Americas” (Drabinski xv) against which Western continental philosophy has turned its back (xiv). With their own Caribbean perspective, these critics refer to the maritime geography of their homeland to articulate their theories, thus establishing a detachment from Euro-American Postmodernism.

I propose to identify the poetics of archipelagic thought—comprising the paradoxical coming together of disunity and relationality—against the background of Americanness and the coloniality of power in Caribbean-American literary works

⁶ See David Scott’s *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality*, Princeton UP, 1999.

across different decades of the twentieth century and twenty-first century. As Michelle Ann Stephen notes, especially during this period “American racial and national doctrine [...] shaped the development of Caribbean identity” (255). In this way I advocate for a framework of analysis that defies the periodisation of Eurocentric critical schools, thus proposing a solution for what I consider the mis-categorisation of Caribbean-American authors in the scholarship under labels identifiable, like Benítez-Rojo denounces, to the American public. Claude McKay is a foundational figure in crafting an oeuvre of Americanness and has greatly suffered the mis-categorisation noted above. This neglect of Caribbean-ness in the works of U.S.-based authors is a problem that persists. Thus, McKay’s oeuvre works as a backbone for exploring the development of this tendency across time. This study, because of time and space constrictions, will compare three McKay novels with novels by just three Caribbean-American authors that are examples of the different languages and nations of the Caribbean (comprising Puerto Rico, Barbados, and Haiti) and that show similar hemispheric characteristics. Furthermore, they also are examples of different periods throughout the second half of the twentieth century (including the beginning of the twenty-first). According to Bill Ashcroft, the novel, “although progressing in time, takes us out of time” (*Utopianism* 15) and thus works particularly well for exploring this, quoting Benítez-Rojo, set of “regularities that repeat themselves” across time (*RI* 2).

Apart from McKay, the three selected authors belong to different linguistic traditions (Spanish, English, and French) though they write in English. Nonetheless, the mother tongue of their islands of origin is perceivable in their use of the English language. The choice to posit authors from diverse linguistic backgrounds as representative of Caribbean archipelagic poetics challenges how, in the context of

the United States, the literature of the Caribbean diaspora is compartmentalised according to the authors' languages of origin (sometimes integrated into other canons like the Latinx one) or nationalities. Therefore, the regional aspect that is so important for the articulation of archipelagic thought is dismissed. Whenever there has been a regionalist analysis of the Caribbean diaspora (for example, Alison Donnell's celebrated *Twentieth-Century Caribbean Literature* (2006), which however does not transcend the linguistic realm) what was predominantly studied was the context of the United Kingdom (Van Nyhuis 59). This area of study is often known as (or included within) Black British literature, a category that indeed acknowledges the postcolonial aspects of the literature in question. The category "Black British literature" considers the particular history of the Caribbean in the context of the world-system that has prompted "one of our century's most notable migratory flows" (Benítez-Rojo, *RI* 25). The regional aspect of the diaspora often becomes lost in the transition to the United States, where its Others are reduced to minoritized groups without a history and an identity of their own. These always have to be described in relation to the receiving land and its racial/ethnic categories and anxieties.

As already mentioned, the chosen works are set in different decades along the second half of the American twentieth century, including the beginning of the twenty first—the 1940s, the 1970s, and the 2010s—whereas all of McKay's works were written and set in the inter-war period. Thus, all of the works (except McKay's) can be considered contemporary if we take the definition of contemporary literature adopted by many scholars as taking place after the Second World War. In the scholarship and schools' curricula this historical event works as a breach for artistic analysis. However, as we will see below, Caribbean thought defies traditional

periodisation and it is in general problematic to follow a timeline determined by events most important for Euro-America.⁷ There is another periodisation that situates the emergence of modern American ethnic literature after 1965 (Šesnic 10; Mukherjee 683) associating it with the rise of immigration from the Global South and the development of postmodern paradigms of literary analysis. This is also pertinent here, as the selected work set in the 1940s was actually published in 1967 when ethnic American literature began to occupy a more popular position in the publishing market (T.V. Reed 100). By comparing McKay's texts to works considered contemporary and establishing a common epistemological and aesthetic tendency in all of them we can better explore the Caribbean literature of Americanness. Each work is thus marked by hemispheric events that are the result of the coloniality of power and there are notable similarities in their aesthetic responses, which in turn contest the periodisation and epistemology of such coloniality.

Despite the fact that this study aims to establish an alternative genealogy of diasporic Caribbean writing, I have considered pertinent to explore in Chapter 1 the

⁷ The Costa Rican writer Tatiana Lobo plays with this idea in her novel *Calypso* (2000). Throughout the text she compares important events of the Second World War such as Adolf Hitler's decision to invade Poland with the mundane working-class decisions that her protagonist is taking at the same moment (Lobo 11) to reveal how little the former affects the latter. Lobo's novel is a Caribbean text if we consider the concept of "the Caribbean basin" to define "the profile of a group of American nations whose colonial experiences and languages have been different, but which share certain undeniable features" (Benítez-Rojo 1). Furthermore, Costa Rica possesses great significance when examining the U.S.-determined coloniality affecting the Caribbean. The country's demography is shaped by the reception of many migrants from the Caribbean islands (Torres-Saillant 19; Donnell and Lawson-Welsh 25) who mostly arrived during the construction of the Costa Rican Northern Railway and for working in the United Fruit Company plantations, both owned by U.S. capital (Gordon-Chipembere 119). Interestingly, though Costa Rica did not have a very large plantation system in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, it is well known for what Harry G. Lefever calls "the second plantation system" (15). During this period in the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the large number of Caribbeans who moved "from their original settlements in the Greater and Lesser Antilles to the Western Caribbean islands and the East coast of Central America in response to the neocolonial economic and political interests of the United States" (Lefever 15) were also predominantly descendants from African slaves. They had migrated from the Caribbean islands when these were stricken by an economic depression known as "the Caribbean sugar crisis" (Bolland, clxxv; Macdonald and Demetrius 35). They are thus another example of the pattern of black exploitation characteristic of the coloniality of power.

predominant and hegemonic artistic movements and theoretical schools around which McKay and other Caribbean diasporic authors are often located. This will be done through an exploration of a selection of McKay's poetry, essay writing, and novels. It therefore examines the beginnings of a genuinely Caribbean literature at the turn of the century, emphasising the importance of both cultural nationalism in the Caribbean and Modernism in Europe and the United States, where McKay eventually travelled and where he socialised with celebrated modernist writers. The chapter also explores the alternative narratives and critiques to European Modernity and, consequently, Modernism offered by Third World Modernisms. Defying an Enlightened Eurocentric timeline, Mintz argues that the Caribbean was Modern much earlier than the rest of the world, having had to establish systems of socialisation suited to an industrial society (the sugar industry) and be open "to cultural variety" (295). Since McKay's writing differs from most of his analogues of the Négritude and Harlem Renaissance movements in that it rejects racial pride and cultural nationalism, the chapter also explores theories that come after McKay, namely the already mentioned postmodern school and the work of post-essentialist Caribbean critics, as well as Postcolonial Studies.

The emergence of Postcolonial Studies as a theoretical field in the 1970s showing notable similarities with Postmodernism helps to understand McKay's difference and provides a good analysis of his particular sensitivity towards injustice, international politics, and identity. The postcolonial reading will be complemented with Benítez-Rojo's postmodern "rereading" (*RI* 13) of the region. Furthermore, with the term "Caribbean Discourse," which titles his 1989 collection of essays, Glissant explores from a deconstructive perspective the possibility to find a language and a writing that can express the collective unconscious of the

Caribbean people, so contaminated by the colonising enterprise of intellectual and psychological dispossession (Dash, "Introduction" xii-xvii). I will explore if this struggle to find a Caribbean discourse is also present in the writings of the Caribbean diaspora to the United States, thus denoting the principles of archipelagic thinking. Archipelagic thinking employs as its basis the experience of geography and sense of place (Drabinski xiv; xviii). That is why it might seem problematic to ascribe this metaphysics to writers so detached from the area so as to not even have been born there. However, this metaphysics is also paradigmatic of the whole American experience which in the making of continental philosophy has become ignored. The hemisphere is a political enclave affected by how its different areas have acquired or lost hegemony. The awareness of being a product of such entanglements is perceivable in the works of many diasporic authors, because being in the American continent with a history of Caribbeanness behind determines one's experiences but also how the experiences are experienced. This is why writing Caribbeannes in the United States deserves exploration.

Chapter 2 inaugurates the comparison between the novels. It makes extensive use of the theory of French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari because they are very influential in the weaving of Glissant's notion of the rhizome, a characteristically Caribbean horizontal model of relation on which I rely to analyse Claude McKay's novel *Banjo* (1929) and Piri Thomas' *Down these Mean Streets* (1967). Both novels stand out because of their rejection of vertical linearity in terms of the characters' choice of identification, proving the ideas of nationality, race, and kinship problematic. *Banjo* revolves around the life of an African-American man who manages to get deported from his own country by breaking his passport so that his nationality cannot be proved. In this way he reaches Marseilles, where he becomes

part of a group of black vagabonds from different parts of the world who unite in an alternative community, thus defying imperative norms of identification and organisation. Furthermore, despite the French setting of the novel, its nationless characters discuss identity politics at the heart of the Harlem Renaissance in the United States and the Négritude movement in the Caribbean and Europe. Unlike these two movements, *Banjo*, as well as *Down these Mean Streets*, questions norms of identification according to race and nationality.

The protagonist of Thomas' novel—a book appropriated by both the Latinx and African American canons (Sosa-Velasco 288) but not often apprehended as Caribbean—is a black Puerto Rican boy whose siblings are white. He peregrinates in the course of his coming-of-age narrative to the American South at a time when segregation was still implemented and thus learns about the colonality of power which has affected his life since young in the form of racism and differential access to labour. When put face to face, these two works illustrate the intersections between liminal identities which characterise the Caribbean social history. The Puerto Ricans in Thomas' novel choose to identify themselves solely on the basis of their language, Spanish. However, the black protagonist, Piri, finds out that his national origins are enmeshed in a larger narrative of the Americas, which he particularly shares with African-Americans in their similar experiences of racism. *Banjo's* characters also conclude that the cultural practices of resistance shared among blacks should surpass essentialist notions of the African motherland as heritage.

Chapter 3 examines the ways in which nature and islanders are represented in Claude McKay's *Banana Bottom* (1933) and Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* (1969). They are interesting because at the time of each

novel's publication the authors had already lived the migrant experience for many years in the United States, so one wonders the reason why they chose to go back and depict their Caribbean homelands. Furthermore, it is easy to perceive the exoticist and essentialist ways in which these two novels often describe Caribbean characters and nature. However, through a close reading of each novel making use of ecocritical theory and narratological approaches (especially in terms of the novels' focalisation and the role of the narrator), I will conclude that these narratives have a particular way of alluding to the existing neo-colonial relations between the islands and the United States. The novels present characters who propose other Caribbean knowledges and confront them with Westernised elite protagonists who struggle to understand them and the way they relate to nature. These novels then locate the possibility for resisting neo-colonialism and capitalist globalisation—now two forces which heavily affect the Caribbean—in archipelagic thinking. Against the naïve mythification of nature, the novels' descriptions of nature favour rudimentary modes of agriculture and the retreat in the island's past in order to highlight what José Martí saw as the foreign misinterpretation of Caribbean geography and nature in ways that suited the colonisers' enterprise. These novels attempt to show the other side of the coin.

Chapter 4 explores the ways in which McKay's novel *Amiable with Big Teeth* (2012) and Edwidge Danticat's *Claire of the Sea Light* (2013) propose strategies of agency for the Caribbean people in the midst of coloniality. Attempts to resist and reverse power relations in fiction have often take the shape of literary and political utopias. In this chapter I explore the particularly Caribbean articulations of hope that these novels engage in, aligning with utopianism rather than utopia in their transcendence of the colonial utopias that were locatable in a bounded space.

Claude McKay's *Amiable with Big Teeth* explores the shortcomings of ideology as utopia in particular for the Black community in the United States, engaging in productive critiques of Stalinism and Rastafarianism. While the novel acknowledges the partial power that these two projects in some ways held for dispossessed communities, it also highlights the community's lack of implication in the weaving of their logics. As such, the novel contests the idea of the nation-state as utopia which many anti-colonial fights for liberation endorsed to rather celebrate the power of grassroots movements based in the daily life of these communities.

Similarly, Danticat's *Claire of the Sea Light* claims the space of the Caribbean as a possible site of hope and regeneration especially when its inhabitants engage in practices of solidarity and community. Through a narrative strategy that contests the linearity of the canonical novel, *Claire of the Sea Light* delineates a picture of pre-earthquake Haiti where its inhabitants managed to thrive without external intervention whenever the members of the community shared their wealth and resources. This novel also engages in descriptions of environmental degradation that make it an example of the literature of the Anthropocene or, rather, the Capitalocene, two words for our geological epoch that highlight the human and Modern/colonial effects on climate and the state of the planet. Coloniality is not only the hidden hand behind phenomena such as climate change, it also determines which areas of the globe are more affected by its effects, whereby the inequity created by coloniality sees itself increased in the face of natural disasters. Because of this, the hope promoted in *Claire of the Sea Light* is one based on the community's memory and informed by its past traditions of resilience symbolised in the novel by figures such as the maroons and the water spirits.

Finally, each of the comparative chapters concludes with a final section informed by the dissident Marxist approach of critics of the Modernity/coloniality research school, in particular the works of Immanuel Wallerstein in what relates to world-systems analysis. The approach that is endorsed, while employing the dichotomic Marxist model of labour and capital as its base (Sorinel 229), refuses to employ the nation-state as a unit of analysis. Rather, it believes that capitalism is organised around an international division of labour that Quijano and Wallerstein's article anticipates is based on the colonial fiction of race. The Modern or capitalist world-system is a world-economy currently extending to all areas of the globe where there is a single division of labour. The world-proletariat is situated in the Global South, what Wallerstein calls the peripheral areas, which provide the Global North with cheap raw materials as well as cheap labour force, both as part of the periphery and when they become migrants in the Global North deprived of their citizenship rights. The Caribbean is among those peripheral areas. This understanding of the world-system justifies the regional analysis of Caribbean literature as composed by works that explore and respond to this state of affairs. Because the different powers of the Global North compete against one another through the establishment of areas of influence—and the Caribbean has since the end of the nineteenth century been under U.S. influence (Wallerstein, "The Caribbean" 155-156)—the theory of the world-system provides further justification for the study of a diasporic body of Caribbean literature in direct relation with the United States. This diaspora possesses a set of specific characteristics deriving from the areas of influence endemic to the coloniality of the hemisphere which urges us to analyse its literature as a separate field of study, different from the writings of other diasporas or minorities. In short, this is the literature of Americanness, where Caribbean authors participate with an archipelagic poetics that

both calls attention to and destabilises the violent aspects of Americanness across the hemisphere.

CHAPTER 1: THE MULTIPLE SITES OF ARCHIPELAGIC THINKING

[my] outlaw soul [...] cannot reconcile itself to the fact of limitation to any one country, or allegiance to any one nation

C. McKay, Letter to Harold Jackman

When the Guadeloupean novelist Suzanne Lacascade wrote in the 1924 novel *Claire-Solange, âme Africaine* that “Pour renier l’origine africaine, il me faudrait vivre sous un voile, ne laissant passer ni mes yeux, ni mon nez. Allons, tante, un sourire. Acceptez telle quelle une femme de couleur qui donnera de la variété à la famille” (qtd. in Orlando 6) she was anticipating the racial poetics of the Négritude movement in the Caribbean. Critics coincide (Otto 98; Rosenberg, *NCL* 1; Sharpley-Whiting 11) that those were the beginnings of a literature that can be considered “fully Antillean,” taking Betsy Wing’s—Édouard Glissant’s translator—phrase (xi). This means a literature that sought to escape colonial institutions and traditions when, at the turn of the twentieth century, the turbulent political panorama opened the door to considering independence from the colonial empires (Rosenberg, *NCL* 1-3). The main characteristic of Négritude texts is the rejection of assimilation into the Western cultural identity. Authors, therefore, tried to connect with what they believed was an essentially black soul. While they indeed criticised the tenets of the European Enlightenment, Négritude authors did so following a Manichean cultural regime, advocating for “the illogical, uncivilized, cannibalistic tendencies ascribed to blacks by Europeans and accepted wholesale by Antillean évolués” (Sharpley-Whiting 8). That is, these authors were reproducing the colonial stereotypes used for their subjection, which Jean-Paul Sartre described in his “Orphée Noir” as “anti-

racist Racism” (18). But, as Melanie Otto explains, this model was soon perceived to be too simplistic in order to reflect the diversity of Caribbean cultural identity (98). This chapter aims to demonstrate that Claude McKay’s writing, in contrast, reflects this reality all too well.

Novelist, poet, and essay writer Claude McKay, who published his first volumes of poetry in 1912, does not seem to adjust to the culturally nationalist paradigm. In the introduction to *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature* (1996) critics Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson-Welsh contrast McKay’s writings with those that emerged in the decades of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s associated with the Independence and Black Power movements. Donnell and Lawson-Welsh point out notable differences like the fact that McKay’s position towards black identity is much more relative. They contend that this is due to the colonial influence which, at the beginning of his career in the 1910s, was still too present (4). In fact, McKay started writing using creole spelling encouraged by Walter Jekyll, an upper-class English intellectual and folklorist settled in Jamaica (Cooper, *RS* 22-24; 27; Holcomb 1; 88). Nevertheless, the periodisation argument is not very convincing, as before the 1950-1970s racial pride made an appearance in writings such as Lacascade’s. Furthermore, in the context of the United States, which McKay soon got to know, Black Power did not originate the culturally nationalist trend in writing; the earlier Harlem Renaissance movement did. McKay is in fact nowadays considered one of the most important voices of the Harlem Renaissance, an artistic movement that was the consequence of a sudden rise in the black population of New York that gave rise to a new black consciousness (Huggins 6). The movement resulted in a massive number of publications, both in fiction and non-fiction, prose

and poetry, as well as the flourishing of non-literary arts, in particular music and painting.

Donnell and Lawson-Welsh fall into the tendency highlighted in the introduction of only assessing the Anglophone sector of Caribbean writing. As such, their position is not surprising because Négritude was not very influential on the Anglophone islands (Otto 98), where, in an equally essentialist way, the prospect was to unify all ethnicities and social classes into one mass of national awareness (Rosenberg, *NCL* 2). These were authors like Thomas MacDermot, Herbert George de Lisser, W. Adolphe Roberts or Una Marson, who despite not advocating for the fierce racial essentialism of their French counterparts, participated in models of Jamaican patriotism to assert a newly emerging anti-British identity (Rosenberg, *NCL* 3-7). But, taking into account a broader regional perspective, during the 1930s, when McKay was most prolific, the culturally nationalist discourses of Négritude were present in the writings of Francophone authors in the region such as Aimé Césaire. Racial pride also made its appearance in the Caribbean Hispanic world with the Negrismo movement and authors like the Cubans Nicolás Guillén and Juan Marinello. Though Césaire's famous *Cahier du Retour au Pays Natal* was published in 1939, Tracy Denean Sharpley-Whiting points out that less iconic writers, like Lacascade, had been experimenting with these ideas for a long time. Sharpley-Whiting associates the iconicity of Césaire and others like Senegalese Léopold Sédar Senghor to the fact that they created the neologism Négritude (5) and to their privileged position as exiled students in Paris, but, as Lacascade's text shows, this kind of poetics had already been circulating for a long time. McKay did as well manage to spend some time in Paris where he got to know some of these writers (Edwards 4; 187) and portrayed their debates of ideas in his novel *Banjo* (1929).

Apart from McKay's acquaintance with some of the exponents of Négritude in Paris, there was a fellow countryman of his who was the personification of cultural nationalism. Journalist and entrepreneur Marcus Garvey from Jamaica, the founder of the influential association UNIA⁸ on his island and later in the United States, became notorious for his eccentric nativist project "Back-to-Africa." The project advocated for the move of American blacks *back* to the mother continent (Bernard 34) and it even materialised in a fraudulent steamboats line (the Black Star Line Steamship Corporation) which costed Garvey his imprisonment and eventual deportation back to Jamaica (Chaney 53). This nativism was well known within the circles of the Harlem Renaissance, where Garvey promoted his initiatives through performances and the establishment of different sorts of businesses (Hutchinson 4; Chaney 52). Apart from that, some Harlem Renaissance authors⁹ like Countee Cullen or Langston Hughes also denoted nativist views in their writings, where they portrayed Africa as a mother land, "appropriated [...] as a primitive land and transformed [...] into a symbol of pride [when] their perception of it was naively romanticized and inevitably filtered through the mostly white portrayals of African primitivism" (Benito, "Resistance" 322-323). Even if authors did not take such a primitivist or nationalist approach, the idea of racial pride was prevalent. Obviously, McKay knew Garvey and Hughes well. His insistence on departing from their views is well informed and intentional, as shown in his novel *Banjo* with the well-constructed discourses uttered by the character Ray. As McKay expressed to

⁸ The Universal Negro Improvement Association was founded in 1914 by Marcus Garvey. It is not often said that it emerged in Jamaica, although it was later relocated to Harlem (Wintz and Finkelman 1194). The association was initially aimed at promoting training in industry for black people but soon, once it reached the United States, grew to develop other cultural and entrepreneurial initiatives (Wintz and Finkelman 1194; Bernard 34; Chaney 52).

⁹ The Harlem Renaissance and Négritude or Negrismo were not independent movements, but rather influenced one another. One example is the friendship of Harlem Renaissance main poet Langston Hughes with Negrismo's poet par excellence Nicolás Guillén, whose work Hughes deeply admired (Otto 98). Furthermore, according to Sharpley-Whiting, Césaire, Senghor, and Damas cite the authors of the movement in Harlem as their main influence in the development of their racial politics (12-13).

Josephine Baker in 1924, with *Banjo* he did not want to write another “race problem” novel (qtd. in Tillery 84).

This chapter contends that McKay’s reasons for departing from culturally nationalist positions are intentional and political rather than a colonial by-product. As his biographer Wayne Cooper notes, there is in McKay “an ever-present ironic awareness that his humanity could never be defined entirely by the simple boundaries of color and race” (RS 5). McKay’s position is rooted in a deeper understanding of the intersections between race and class, among others. In fact, McKay offers a more accurate portrayal of black urban life than the Negro Intelligentsia of Harlem did, and criticises initiatives such as Marcus Garvey’s for perpetuating the idea of America as legitimately white: “That theah Garvey had a White man’s chance and he done nigger it away. The White man gived him plenty a rope to live, and all he done do with it was to make a noose to hang himse’f” (*Banjo* 76). Being aware of the existence and circulation of nativist essentialist discourses around his time, McKay proposes a different view which resonates with critical currents that would come after him. This view finds an explanation in his Caribbean origins.

Though scholars such as Donnell and Lawson-Welsh make reference to the colonial condition of McKay’s homeland to articulate their critique, an examination of his works through the epistemic possibilities of archipelagic thought in the Caribbean has not been carried out. The scholarship has extensively explored his figure in other terms such as ascribing him the categorisation of either a folklorist writer, a Modernist writer, or an internationalist one. This chapter attempts to demonstrate how all these views fall short because of their failure to properly assess the Caribbean poetics of McKay’s work and how taking into account later

post-essentialist positions might help to solve this puzzle. Furthermore, this chapter explores similar mis-categorisations for contemporary American migrant (first or second generation) writers of Caribbean origins who are often studied under the field of “ethnic American literature.” The purpose of the comparative analysis of works by all of these authors—from different historical, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds, though all Caribbean—is the exploration of the Caribbean literary identity as diaspora. Whereas the later works have been published around the transnational turn that grants more attention to diasporic cultural productions and therefore are no strangers to diasporic discourse, the presence of similar characteristics in the work of McKay might make us depart from the Euro-American periodisation that established this turn. Before departing from them, however, it is necessary to explore the critical currents traditionally ascribed to each of these authors and their work.

1.1. Postcolonial Motifs in the Early Poetry of Claude McKay

Wayne Cooper sharply notes in Claude McKay’s biography that Walter Jekyll’s admiration for the Jamaican peasantry finds its reason in his aristocratic origin:

As the independent scion of an old aristocratic family, Jekyll looked askance at the rise of the middle class and bemoaned the deleterious effects of industrialism and urbanization in the modern world. He looked nostalgically upon the traditional peasantry as the source of every nation’s real strength, and he mourned the destructive disregard for traditional ways in modern England. For the same reasons, he was highly critical of American life, which seemed to him to be based entirely on the material values of the middle classes (RS 24)

It is easy to understand why McKay, who ended up being an advocate for workers’ rights and passionate about American industrial life, was not very convinced by

Jekyll's insistence that he should write dialect verse just because it would sell given that no one else had done it before" (*GH* 66). Jekyll believed that, "as a native boy," McKay could be the one "to put the Jamaican dialect into literary language" (*GH* 66). The fact that he nevertheless did so in his first two collections of poems—*Songs of Jamaica* (1912) and *Constab Ballads* (1912)—does not mean that his poems portrayed the Jamaican peasantry with the exoticised vision that Jekyll promoted. McKay managed to directly contest this form of exoticism either through the deconstruction of traditional associations between form and content or through the inclusion of radical political statements.¹⁰

My Green Hills of Jamaica (published posthumously in 1979) is McKay's last work, an autobiography where he explores his relationship with Jekyll. According to A.L. McLeod, the work was written when McKay "sensed the imminence of his death" (245) and also probably assumed the impossibility to ever return to the island. It is in this autobiography tainted with nostalgia where McKay explains that he initially rejected dialect poetry because of what seems internalised elitism, probably the product of the colonial educational system: "I was not very enthusiastic about this statement, because to us who were getting an education in the English schools, the Jamaican dialect was considered a vulgar tongue. It was the language of the peasants" (*GH* 66). Statements like this one confirm the view of those who accuse McKay of being psychologically colonised. However, the fact that he never again wrote in dialect verse despite his acknowledgement that it could capture a more Caribbean view (*GH* 69) makes one doubt the veracity of the statement expressed in a work with clear nostalgic undertones. One can obtain a more

¹⁰ I join Winston James in endorsing a definition of radicalism that describes "the challenging of the status quo either on the basis of social class, race (or ethnicity), or a combination of the two" (*HBE* 902).

accurate vision of Jekyll's exoticism in the novel *Banana Bottom*, where the Englishman is represented in the character Squire Gensir, who equally is an English folklorist settled on the island. In an argument with the protagonist, a Jamaican young girl educated in England, the Squire defends that the Jamaican hardworking peasants are freer than himself because they had not been educated like the Westerners (*BB* 121). At the protagonist's suggestion that they just have no choice but to work hard, the folklorist responds that, because of "their natural instincts," that kind of hard work makes them happy (*BB* 121). The squire's discourse, a colonial mechanism of power, promotes ideas only beneficial for the colonialists as absolute truths. Squire Gensir being the voice that dictates the defining essence of the islanders is painfully reminiscent of Jekyll's idealisation of the peasantry as the only remnant of the old order. McKay's ironic portrayal denotes his awareness of the dangers of folklorism, primitivism, and exoticism.

McKay's writing unveils the mechanisms of power exercised through colonial discourse. Like later scholars and writers of the Postcolonial school, he seemed to be aware that power is not only exercised through violent acts; it is most effectively perpetuated through discourse (Said, *Orientalism* 4). McKay's early poems do not appropriate colonial stereotypes and taint them with pride or naïve innocence. Neither do they offer an anthropologic view on the rural ways of the colonials. As the poem "Peasants' Ways of Thinking" shows, they state that Jamaicans were being represented and conceptualised by others continuously. "We hea' a callin' from Colon,/ We hea' a callin' from Limon," ¹¹ (*CP* 11) he claims, but despite that, they are the ones who "Mus surely know wha good fe us" (*CP* 9).

¹¹ While the reference to Colon might be clear, it is probably pertinent to clarify that McKay's use of the word Limon refers to the extensive working-class migration of Jamaicans to this province in Costa

French poststructuralist philosophy, with its ideas about the instability and eternal transformation of meaning, paved the way for the deconstruction of culturally dominant ideas. The field of Postcolonial Studies undertook this task with an eye on colonialist discourse. To this end, celebrated postcolonial critic Homi K. Bhabha endorses the Derridean concept of *différance* in order to articulate his theory of mimicry. Bhabha contends that the colonial subject represents the poststructuralist crucial possibility of indeterminacy because of how they are supposed to be recognisable in their imitation of the colonial *ethos* which was imposed on them. However, never considered an equal by the colonialists, the colonial subject maintains “its slippage, its excess, its difference” (86). He or she “*is almost the same but not quite*” (emphasis in the original; 86) and thus mocks the colonial “power to be a model” (88). Postcolonial Theory is considered to have been inaugurated with the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* in 1978. This book makes use of Michel Foucault’s definition of “discourse” to explore how the West produced a concept of the Orient in turn internalised by non-Westerners. Foucault defines “discourse” as a set of linguistic recurrences consistently used to talk about a certain topic which is not even necessarily a unified one, but made unified by these practices (Foucault, *Archaeology* 32). Discursive practice is then inextricably linked to power, since it produces knowledge understood to be the truth (Hall, “The West” 293). Orientalist discourse—and any form of exoticism for that matter—always carries the weight of an “apparatus of power” which produces “knowledges of [the] colonized,” constructed as “degenerate [...] on the basis of racial origin” (Bhabha 70). They are “stereotypical but antithetically evaluated” so as to find

Rica. In this way, McKay alludes both to European colonisation and the neocolonialism of the United States in the Caribbean at the end of the 19th century when projects such as the construction of the Panama Canal or the Costa Rican railroad were undertaken (Torres-Saillant 19; Pedersen 186–187; Hutchinson Miller 5).

authorisation for colonial practices of conquest and eventual administration (Bhabha 70).

According to P.S. Chauhan, McKay's poems attempt to capture the double consciousness that affects the colonised as a result of colonial discourse:

a basic fact about the colonial sensibility [is] that it straddles two worlds—the one of its origin, the other of its adoption. Politically, its values and attitudes derive from, and swing between, the two sets. It sides, at one, with each of the two antagonists: the victim and the victimizer (69-70)

Like later authors who are considered integral parts of the postcolonial Caribbean canon such as Derek Walcott, McKay effectively acknowledges the fact that postcolonial cultural identity is made up of a combination of cultures that blend into a new, legitimate one; that the postcolonial subject is entitled to possess cultural features characteristic of the coloniser's culture and to modify them in their adaptation to the new context. Some critics have termed this condition "cultural schizophrenia" (Moore-Gilbert 182), resonating with Walcott's eloquent verses in the poem "Codicil": "Schizophrenic, wrenched by two styles, / one a hack's hired prose, I earn / my exile" (*Poetry* 83). Cultural schizophrenia, for Bart Moore-Gilbert, is not a negative or ambivalent (a word that Cooper uses to describe McKay's personality (*RS* 11)) condition, but an active rejection of essentialist articulations of identity such as ethnocentrism (182). According to Chauhan, McKay expresses this condition in the poem "Whe fe' do?", which describes the hardships of agricultural work in Jamaica. The speaker wonders which attitude should Jamaicans take, whether to resist and fight for justice, or to just resign themselves and try to be happy with what they have:

We've got to wuk wid might an' main,

To use we han' an' use we brain,
To toil an' worry, 'cheme an' 'train
Fe t'ings that bring more loss dan gain;
To stan' de sun an' bear de rain,
An' suck we bellyful o' pain
Widouten cry nor yet complain—
For dat caan' do.

And though de wul' is full o' wrong,
Dat caan' prevent we sing we song
All de day as we wuk along—
Whe' else fe do?

We happy in de hospital;
We happy when de rain deh fall;
We happy though de baby bawl
Fe food dat we no hab at all;
We happy when Deat' angel call
Fe full we cup of joy wid gall:
Our fait' in this life is not small—
De best to do.

(McKay, *CP* 26-27)

According to Chauhan, in the poem a “purely native expression as ‘to suck a bellyful of pain’” is “relieved by a perfectly English phrase, ‘to work with might and main’” (73). This reminds of Bhabha’s idea that mimicry “disrupt[s] [colonial] authority” (126). McKay as well plays with the stereotypes which Squire Gensir ascribes to the Jamaicans, for example the perception that they are better at being happy despite hardships, or that they are naturally drawn to agricultural work. Internalising these stereotypes would prevent the rebellion that is expressed in the poem as “conquer[ing] prejudice” (*CP* 26).

Squire Gensir’s idea of folklore originates from his preconceived ideas about Jamaicans which are based on European colonialist discourse. He thus approaches the Jamaicans in the novel as stereotyped characters. The stereotype, according to Bhabha, is based on a fixity (66) which becomes challenged with the poststructuralist instability of signifiers that Postcolonial Theory accepts. As a

response based on meaning transformation, we encounter in the literature of former colonies what has come to be known as “postcolonial rewritings” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 96). In *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures* (1989), a seminal monograph about postcolonial literatures, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin contend that a postcolonial rewriting is practice by which the once-colonised reappropriate “the means of interpretation and communication” by rewriting canonical texts (96). In this way, fiction writers shed light on how the “[c]ontrol of interpretative modes facilitates continuing domination and powers of exclusion in ontological as well as material terms” (98). They, furthermore, reverse the process and provide the once-colonised with agency. In the context of Glissant’s elaboration of a theory of archipelagic thinking, there is an urgency to “think like an archipelago” and thus indulge in “engagement and appropriation” (Drabinski xvii). The archipelagic thinker establishes a different metaphysics but, in what constitutes “a second wave of decolonization [...] re-addresses what had, in the first wave, been jettisoned in the name of self-authorization and self-authoring (xvii). The archipelagic perspective of Caribbean postcolonial writing does not reject the European influence in the creation of a postcolonial cultural identity. Writers rather cherish and taint European products with their own specificity, thus making claim to their forms of art to oppose the colonisers’ double-sided attempt to both educate colonials in their culture while making clear that it will never be theirs, attempting to create fully dispossessed subjects. Such is the Caribbean radical engagement with European tradition.

A couple of examples concerning the Caribbean are Jean Rhys’ *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) or Derek Walcott’s *Omeros* (1990). The first one tells the story of Bertha Mason, a character in Charlotte Brönte’s *Jane Eyre* (1847) who only

appears at the end of the novel depicted as a crazy wife who threatens the protagonist's happiness with his loved one. Bertha comes from the West Indies and is apparently insane, but readers do not manage to know the reason because she dies in a fire that she had herself originated in a fit of madness and thus the protagonists can live happily ever after. In her novel, Rhys tells Bertha's story emphasising the social and sexual violence that led to her condition. Walcott's work, in the form of an epic poem, reimagines the Greek classical heroes in the shape of fishermen from the Caribbean. He thus reverses the linear nature of the foundational epic journey to substitute it with infinite journeys that occur in parallel time planes, where past and present coexist in a space where none is given preference over the other. As I wrote elsewhere, "[b]y writing this epic, Walcott does not tell the story of how certain travellers settled in a place and founded a new civilisation there. Travel itself is the founding" (Fernández Jiménez 30). With this work Walcott rejects the existence of an absolute origin that legitimates a people's claim to a land or a culture and which has relegated Caribbean people to, in V.S. Naipaul's infamous words, "mimic men" (Walcott, "Mimicry" 6).

Postcolonial rewritings reflect Poststructuralism's awareness of the fact that literary products are not based on an objective truth locatable "outside the text" (Derrida 158). Rather, they are products of *différance*, whereby referents are absent and meaning is created by the text itself, which is in continuous revision and negotiation. Much earlier than Rhys or Walcott, Walt Hunter suggests, McKay's poem "Agnes o' de Village Lane" already constitutes a postcolonial rewriting of both

John Keats' "La Belle Dame sans Merci" (1819) and "The Eve of St. Agnes" (1820) but set in the brothels of Jamaica:¹²

the name "Agnes" refers to a childhood love of McKay's who moved from the inland towns of Clarendon Parish to Kingston and died in a brothel. McKay nods to Keats's revision of the legend of St. Agnes's Eve, the night when a virgin supposedly finds her future husband, as well as his "study in bereft love," the ballad "La Belle Dame sans Merci" (1819). "Agnes o' de Village Lane" relocates Keats from the gothic chambers and "triumphs gay / Of old romance" to the lush hillsides of Clarendon and the brothels of Kingston (571)

In this poem McKay defies the association between virginity and innocence that the mythical figure of St. Agnes promotes to stand for those young girls of poor backgrounds who have to abandon "de school-room worn an' old" (McKay, *CP* 1) and become prostitutes by still referring to them as "sweet an' pure" (2). McKay's sympathy is always with the lowest members of the social scale, those whose bodies are exploited as part of the racial hierarchy of labour. McKay also entitled two poems after Charles Dickens' and Elizabeth Gaskell's novels: "Hard Times" and "North and South" (Hunter 580), thus deterritorialising the social protest of these Victorians. In McKay's choice for his poem's title, he draws attention to the fact that there actually is a North and a South, but not in the sense in which Gaskell saw them but by way of international systemic exploitation. This is the international (and racial) division of labour which characterises the capitalist world-system (Wallerstein "Rise" 390; Quijano, "Latin America" 536) and whose origins, as mentioned in the introduction, Quijano and Wallerstein locate in the American hemisphere. In

¹² This reference is not so clear in the poem except from the last line when the speaker refers to the addressee as "Fallen Agnes" (McKay, *CP* 2), but in *My Green Hills of Jamaica* it is explained that this poem references a real episode in McKay's life, when his brother used to beat him for continuing to write to a girl of a lower class than theirs (*GH* 17-18).

choosing a title that resonates with the social protest of two well-known Victorian novelists, McKay taints his idealised poems about Caribbean life with a sense of injustice and exploitation without having to make explicit mention of it.

McKay's preference for non-explicitness at this point of his career reminds of Glissant's annotation that the literature that developed out of "the silent universe of the Plantation" is "disguise[d] beneath the symbol" (*PR* 68). Within the study of Postcolonial Literatures, the writing of the Caribbean archipelago occupies a special position because it is a literature produced by subjects who were "cut off from their communities of origin" (Dash, "Postcolonial" 785) and unable to maintain ties with their ancestral cultures due to the violent colonial processes of dispossession. Caribbean literature, thus, does not negotiate between native and imposed culture. As Jamaica Kincaid has pessimistically put it, "the only language I have in which to speak of this crime is the language of the criminal" (*A Small Place* 32). However, this is not entirely accurate. Hidden remnants of the pre-colonial past, in Glissant's words, burst "forth in snatches and fragments," as oral expression was the only possible mode (*PR* 68-69). These "tales, proverbs, sayings, songs" (68) aimed to express the forbidden and thus were deeply symbolic. Therefore, Caribbean literature of protest is characterised by suggestions, since it is a literature which evolved out of a situation where a great deal of censorship was enforced (69). According to Glissant

Almost never does one find in them any concrete relating of daily facts and deeds; what one does find, on the other hand, is a symbolic evocation of situations [...] The symbolism of situations prevailed over the refinement of realisms, by encompassing, transcending, and shedding light upon it (*PR* 68; 71).

Very similarly, McKay's descriptions of quotidian situations hide a radical political message against the neocolonial system that perpetuates black exploitation despite the abolition of slavery.¹³

The poem "Ribber Come-Do'n" focuses on care relationships between Jamaicans, relating how a mother is prevented from coming back home because the river has flooded and the consequent feeding of her children by her neighbour:

But de dark ribber kept her back,
Dat night she couldn' get home,
While a six-week-old baby wailed,

An' wailed for a mudder to come.

[...]

The kind district mother thought
Of her own boy far away,
An' wondered much how he fared
In a foreign land that day.

She opened de cupboard door
An' took from it warra be'n sabe,
A few bits o' yam an' lee meal,
An' a pint o' milk fe de babe.

De parents dat night couldn' come,
De howlin' wind didn' lull,
But de picknaries went to bed
Wid a nuff nuff bellyful.

(McKay, *CP* 76)

Nevertheless, there is also a social sub-text in the preparation of the main action, where there is proof that families could only store food at their homes for one day (James, *Fierce Hatred* 101): "She look 'pon de Manchinic tree, / Not a piece of mancha fe eat; / De Jack-fruit dem bear well anuff, / But dere wasn't one o' dem

¹³ As Rupert Lewis and Maureen Lewis explain, the abolition of slavery was achieved in Jamaica in ambiguous ways. It was not done through a revolution like in Haiti, but due to its lack of profitability at the time (Wallerstein, "Rise" 409), whereby the economy of slaves was transformed into a capitalist system sustained by the same racial hierarchies (Lewis and Lewis 39) which furthermore operated with the complacency of the better off Jamaicans such as McKay's own father (41).

fit" (McKay, *CP* 67). Perhaps, the mistake when reading McKay has been the focus on the realism of what he relates, his lists of native flora and agricultural products and the accurate imitation of the speech of Jamaicans. That is, seeing what Jekyll wanted to see: the "concrete relating of daily facts and deed" (Glissant, *PR* 69), while the real value of these scenes is symbolic, standing for the violence from which they result. This is the move "from unity to fragments" (Drabinski xv) that the metaphysics of the Caribbean urges us to take.

Interestingly, these tensions continued after 1912, when McKay travelled to the United States to study agronomy in Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute (Cooper, *RS* 129-131), an institution for the education and integration of young black people in the American society. Once there, McKay regularly began to publish poems in leftist journals such as *Seven Arts* or *The Liberator*. He stopped using dialect verse and decided to employ the sonnet as his preferred form. This inaugurates a new stage in McKay's writing, when the combination of testimony and suggestion nonetheless remain. McKay's sonnets, written in Standard American English and maintaining a strict form, continue dealing with topics of social injustice, as illustrated by the most quoted "If we Must Die:"

If we must die, let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
Making their mock at our accursèd lot.

If we must die, O let us nobly die,
So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!

O kinsmen! we must meet the common foe!
Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one death-blow!

What though before us lies the open grave?

Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack.
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

(McKay, *CP* 177-178)

Such a violent image of racial brutality being expressed through a pattern traditionally reserved for love produces the same effect as the postcolonial rewritings mentioned above. By using a sonnet, McKay revises the European grand narratives in an act of what John Kraniauskas calls “post-colonial agency” (240). This act interrupts the traditional historiography of literature (Kraniauskas 237) to look at the violent deeds made in the name of progress through the West’s own lenses, that is, its preferred literary genres. Furthermore, the poem echoes Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* (1604), where the following verses appear: “If I must die, / I will encounter darkness as a bride” (43). The first person in the play is here substituted by what William J. Maxwell calls “a determinedly masculine ‘we’ promoting the comradeship of jointly embraced peril” (“Claude McKay” 465). As seen, McKay presents a special relation with tradition, making use of it to suit his particularly Caribbean concerns. If “the postcolonial moment” is, according to Lorna Burns, a site of understanding the “specific relation to the colonial past which both preserves historical memory and moves beyond it” (3), McKay is undoubtedly a postcolonial writer.

The other most popular sonnet by McKay is titled “America.” This one engages with the tradition of European literature even more explicitly. Using the Shakespearean sonnet form, the poem’s speaker addresses the country as if it were a woman, using the pronoun “she.” Through the use of personification, the speaker describes all the mistreatment that “she” has caused him. The use of the Shakespearean sonnet is again no coincidence considering how it differed from

Petrarch's ideal of love, which did not portray any complexity or incongruence (Cousins 136). Shakespeare, instead, reflected in his two most famous series—the sonnets addressed to the fair youth and to the dark lady—what A. D. Cousins characterises as a divided self (135), marked by the contradictions and incongruences by then associated to loving an evil person or someone of one's own gender. The poem introduces again the idea of the conflicted self that was suggested with McKay's earlier amalgamation of English phrases and Jamaican dialect. But the conflicted self is a trope that was appearing elsewhere at the same moment when McKay started to become a literary star in the Northern part of the hemisphere. The celebrated English writer Virginia Woolf announced that "on or about December 1910 human character changed" (7), inaugurating a new period in the arts. Modernism, as the movement eventually began to be known, portrayed the struggles of the contemporary artist in a period of profound social, economic, and cultural changes in Europe. The sensation of crisis soon spread to other locations, becoming a widely accepted international movement. McKay's writing has often been associated to the modernist arts, but we need to assess this assumption in the context of the aspects mentioned above, specifically in what regards the postcolonial consciousness of a writer of Caribbean origin and rejecting a Western-determined periodisation of art.

In this context, the exploration of the Caribbean aspect of McKay's art is often ignored with his almost exclusive categorisation as a foundational figure of the Harlem Renaissance. This is part of Michael North's famous study on the development of Modernism in Europe and the United States, where he differentiates between a transatlantic Modernism exemplified by the figures of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound and the literature of the Harlem Renaissance, both

constituting complementary sides of this emergent movement (8). North's exclusive focus on these two locations at the outset of the movement, while granting great importance to McKay, constitutes a critical neglect of the Global South and its artistic tendencies. It brings to mind John E. Drabinski's book *Glissant and the Middle Passage* (2019), where he warns that even the work of anti-colonial, postcolonial, and decolonial critics tends to be situated within exclusively Eurocentric traditions or philosophical frames (xv). If in the history of philosophical thought the transition from the continent to "think[ing] with the archipelago" (Pugh, "Thinking" 9) constitutes, in Drabinski's words, a "decisive decolonization of thought" (xv), we must ask ourselves which kind of favour we are doing to the figure of McKay in thrusting him into another continent again.

1.2. Claude McKay and Black Modernism: The Caribbean Critique of Modernity

The wash and rush of this human tide on the beach line of the northern city centers is to be explained primarily in terms of a new vision of opportunity, of social and economic freedom of a spirit to seize, even in the face of an extortionate and heavy toll, a chance for the improvement of conditions. With each successive wave of it, the movement of the Negro migrant becomes more and more like that of the European waves at their crests, a mass movement toward the larger and the more democratic chance—in the Negro's case a deliberate flight not only from countryside to city, but from medieval America to modern.

A. Locke, "Harlem, Mecca of the New Negro"

In *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language and Twentieth-Century Literature* (1994) Michael North famously argues that black Modernism was born in 1922 with the publication of Claude McKay's *Harlem Shadows* (8). This periodisation is as

intriguing as Woolf's choice of date for locating the origins of Modernism in Europe. If the reason is that the poems explore the possibilities of language in an increasingly diverse and conflicted world in the effort to find the poet's own voice, as North suggests throughout his book, this seems to be present in McKay from earlier on. To give one example, before switching his preference to the sonnet, McKay often employed the ballad, as in "Agnes o' de Village Lane." Hunter contends that the ballad—often associated to a folk pre-Modern literary past despite its many revivals (Stewart 134)—has not often been addressed as a particularly modernist poetic form even though it has been extensively employed by the best-known poets of Modernism. According to Hunter, the reason is the ballad's "potential to contest and subvert the single voice or single consciousness of the lyric" (570), which is accepted to be one of the main concerns of the modernist writer, to record "multiple narrative perspectives" (Raussert, Lantz, and Michael 158). "The ballad singer," in Susan Stewart's words, "in turn takes the form of each of the 'characters' in a ventriloquistic fashion" (150). Similarly, North identifies that "ventriloquism" was one of the main poetic strategies that the first modernists adopted in their struggle to find a new voice "against the restrictions of the past" (8).

The numerous definitions of Modernism lead to ambiguities and shortcomings in the attempt to craft a totalising set of characteristics or landmarks of the movement. It is generally accepted that at the beginning of the twentieth century a distinctive kind of literature emerged in European circles, one which was both characterised by the portrayal of novelty and individual self-expression (Levenson, *Modernism* 1-2; Platt 3) and by a sense of crisis (Levenson "Introduction" 4). Rebecca Beasley explains that the literary products that emerged out of this collective feeling were a reaction against "the non-modern" (19).

Paradoxically, when Beasley mentions the “non-modern” she is referring to Modernity itself (North n.p.; Singal 8) if understood as the social construct born out of the Enlightenment and its faith in a progress precipitated through reason and mathematical and mechanical science (Elias 433). In the context of the Eurocentric cultural tradition, the challenges posed by the thought of authors such as Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud or Frederick Nietzsche exposed the limits of rationality and shattered the foundations of the European Enlightenment (Bell 9-10). In the midst of this situation, authors experimented with form and genre, giving way to different avant-garde currents that are believed to have broken with tradition and shattered the foundations of Modern cultural institutions.

This brief definition of a complex artistic phenomenon, of course, is weaved within the frame of European Enlightened temporality, as it presumes that concepts like “tradition” bear the same presence for everyone. However, it is not too daring to argue that authors from postcolonial contexts had long, before the outset of European Modernism, produced knowledge constituting effective “counterculture[s] of modernity” (Gilroy, *Black Atlantic* 5). Such is the central thesis of Paul Gilroy’s work *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), where he argues that cultural identification in terms of nationality and the Manichean idea of race is a matter of conspicuous Modernity: it “crystallised with the revolutionary transformations of the West at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries and involved novel typologies and modes of identification” (*Black Atlantic* 2). Black Atlantic peoples, who had been forced to adopt the Western understanding of nationalism and patriotism, then became excluded by the workings of these very concepts and their associated racial politics, and thus began inhabiting a sort of double consciousness (1-4). In this context, according to Gilroy,

the cultures of the Black Atlantic have continuously managed to contest the tenets of Modernity and look for other “global coalitional politics” (4). Similarly, Drabinski contends that effective critiques of Modernity were carried out from the context of the Caribbean in the long tradition of its thought (ix-xv), as it had to think straight in the aftermath of the Middle Passage, by which tradition became “suddenly disrupted by alternative, even absolutely contradictory experiences of the lifeworld” (xii).

So where does McKay fit in the middle of this situation? As mentioned above, it depends on whether he is assessed as a Caribbean writer or as an African American one. African Americans are usually accepted as foundational figures in the makings of Modernism. In a book titled *The African American Roots of Modernism: From Reconstruction to the Harlem Renaissance* (2011) James Stethurst even goes on to assert that “African American literature first raised many of the concerns, stances, and tropes associated with U.S. Modernism” (3). Differently, there is only one extensive serious study on Caribbean Modernism: Simon Gikandi’s *Writing in Limbo: Modernism and Caribbean Writing* (1992). This work sets the case that Caribbean Modernism has not been identified as such because it occurs within its own frames of signification, “closely related to the process of creolization” (Gikandi, *Limbo* 5). However, with the exception of Césaire’s, the works that Gikandi identifies as modernist are later than McKay’s, and emerge at the same time as the movements for independence.¹⁴ Thus, Gikandi seems to agree with critics of Caribbean literature who situate McKay as not

¹⁴ Prominent examples are the novels of George Lamming (1927-present) and Samuel Selvon (1923-1994). Then Gikandi also identifies contemporary novels such as Michelle Cliff’s as examples of modernist works. Gikandi quotes Marshall Berman’s description of Modernism as “living in two worlds simultaneously” (*Limbo* 15) to extend it to many Caribbean texts across time expressing the anxiety of how to portray an accurate Caribbean experience when their language was that of the coloniser, “loaded with Eurocentric figures” (*Limbo* 15).

Modern yet, remarkably Brathwaite who resented McKay's use of what he considered to be European poetic forms not fit for Caribbean literature (*Roots* 275), or G. R. Coulthard, who claims that McKay's "poetry suffers from an outmoded poetic idiom" (*Race and Colour* 118). According to North, in fact, it is when he abandoned dialect poetry and the influence of Jekyll once in the United States that McKay starts embodying the politics of a modernist writer of the African American tradition (104). McKay, many contend, became American.

There is, however, something worth exploring in what Gikandi says about Césaire. It is sometimes hard to recognise or identify the politics of Modernism in Caribbean writing because of the prevalence of the political nationalism of figures like Thomas MacDermot in Jamaica and Michel Maxwell Philip and Stephen Cobham in Trinidad during the emergence of the area's literary tradition in the late nineteenth century (Rosenberg, *NCL* 1) or the later early twentieth century cultural nationalism of Négritude/Negrismo authors like Aimé Césaire in Martinique or Nicolás Guillén in Cuba. However, the politics of Modernism, characterised by a sense of fragmentation and anxiety, do not necessarily stand in opposition to cultural nationalism. According to Gikandi, Aimé Césaire's exacerbated Négritude emerges from the anxiety about his historical position in the world, one of the features of Modernism according to Gikandi: "irrespective of where they sought their identity, Caribbean writers could not escape the anxieties generated by their historical conditions—they were colonial subjects and they had to write for or against colonial modernism" (*Limbo* 11). Claude McKay's early poems, written around the 1910s when the avant-gardes were already denoting the first signs of Modernism in Europe, also reflect the feeling of living between two worlds. We could further discuss whether this refers to aesthetics or politics, which constitutes a non-

ending debate around the definition of Modernism. For example, Delia Caparoso Konzett claims that works traditionally ignored in the modernist tradition because of their embrace of “ethnic realism” for the sake of “social concerns” can be considered part of the modernist canon too, even when they do not conform to the aesthetic dictates of what is known as High Modernism¹⁵ (8-9).

In fact, one of the reasons why critics situate McKay as engaging in something new and revolutionary in the United States was the fact that he rebelled against racial prejudice with a renovated anger and insistence that conquered the pages of leftist American journals (North 114; Cooper, *RS* 93; Tillery 30). Furthermore, North contends that McKay needed to abandon dialect poetry to inhabit the Modern world because this form of verse embodied Jekyll’s attempt to escape industrial modernisation through romantic folklore (101). In the United States, McKay’s distanced position from the African American minstrel tradition allowed him to update its longing for the homeland—not Africa any longer—in a poem titled “The Tropics in New York.” Included in the collection *Spring in New Hampshire* (1920), which preceded *Harlem Shadows* (1922), the poem reflects on the workings of the capitalist world-system. At the same time as it narrates how the sight of tropical fruit makes a homesick speaker in New York weep, the poem also underscores that these fruits are unavailable to the speaker because they have become luxury products (North 112): “And tangerines and mangoes and grape fruit, / Fit for the highest prize at parish fairs” (*CP*, 154). This poem thus abandons unrealistic longings for Africa to reflect Modern patterns of mobility determined by Americanness. It is in this sense that McKay inaugurates North’s category of African

¹⁵ High Modernism is the name given to a specific kind of narrative style and poetics characterised by the autonomy from reality (Ziarek 9). This set of characteristics is understood to be the development of the first avant-gardes in 1910s Europe into what is often believed to be the beginnings of Modernism (Ziarek 9-11; 37; Huyssen 8). Its main representatives are T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Gertrude Stein.

American Modernism, one that rejects the primitivist tendency of white Modernism and struggles between “European culture and blackface rebellions against it” (123). McKay’s migration placed him into “a linguistic no-man’s land” according to North (113), paralleling the Modernist anxiety that comes with the loss of cultural values. Through experimentation modernists sought for the appropriate language with which to express their struggles. If we considered that McKay’s dialect poetry was just Jekyll’s stereotypical design, we could then agree with the view that these kinds of poems are his first attempt of experimenting with poetic language to find a voice with which to express his postcolonial singularity. However, we have rejected this view in the previous section.

The in-between position, furthermore, is not enough to justify the point that North wants to make. This particular position has been identified in all of the stages of McKay’s oeuvre. Brathwaite complains about the fact that McKay “forsook his nation language, forshook [sic] his early mode of poetry and went to the sonnet” (*Roots* 275) while Chauhan contends that the bafflement of critics regarding McKay’s ambivalence can be explained by their tendency to only associate him with the Harlem Renaissance (68) when he was “[a] creature of colonial experience” (80): “McKay was condemned to dwell in the limbo of the imagination of the colonized, unable forever to state a clear-cut preference” (Chauhan 80). And yet, McKay’s writings do not exclusively express an anxiety regarding the inability to identify with one cultural model; they also transcend it. In his works McKay develops a critique of both European Modernism and of the National Anglophone literature that was emerging in Jamaica and other islands at the time¹⁶ (Rosenberg,

¹⁶ We could here mention the figure of Una Marson, who apart from writing poems, short stories, and plays, contributed to the formation of a national conscience in Jamaica through the production of the BBC radio programme “Caribbean Voices” in the United Kingdom and the founding of the journal *The*

“Modernism” 219). Paul Gilroy mentions the relevance of ships in his narratives (13) and associates them with the rupture with Modernity because the vessel becomes a “micro-system of linguistic and political hybridity” (12). Hybridity, however, was not contemplated by Modernism. It portrayed liminality and anxiety, but not an escape from them. McKay clearly identifies the failures of Modernity such as the association between nationality or ethnicity and culture that Gilroy mentions. However, he also offers alternative ways of identification in his novels, where he depicts an international array of workers in liminal spaces of Europe and the United States forming alternative family ties and affiliations.¹⁷ As William J. Maxwell claims, these constructions even transcend the limits of transnational modernism (“Claude McKay” 466).

McKay’s writing underscores a critique of European Modernity but also of Modernism (Rosenberg, *NCL* 91). Inspired by the colonial exhibitions that were taking place in Europe during the early twentieth century, early Modernism was openly primitivist and exoticist (Karrer 37), still reproducing “colonial constructions of gender, sexuality, and race” (Rosenberg “Modernism” 220). One prominent example are Picasso’s paintings, about which the Guyanese artist Aubrey Williams says the following:

There was nothing special about meeting Picasso. It was a meeting like many others, except that meeting Picasso was a big disappointment. It was a disappointment for stupid little things: I didn’t like how he looked; I didn’t like how he behaved. I never thought I would not like people like that. But the total of the whole thing is that I did not like Picasso. He was just an ordinary

Cosmopolitan, where she welcomed and encouraged writings that could contribute to the development of a Jamaican national literature (Rosenberg, “Modern Romances” 171).

¹⁷ See *Home to Harlem* (1928), *Banjo* (1929), *Amiable with Big Teeth* (published posthumously in 2008, written in 1941) and *Romance in Marseille* (published posthumously in 2020, allegedly written around the 1930s), as well as some stories in *Gingertown* (1932).

past-middle-aged man. I remember the first comment he made when we met. He said that I had a very fine African head and he would like me to pose for him (qtd. in Gikandi, "Picasso" 455)

The primitivist branch of Modernism expected black artists of any background to conform to their conception of Africa. This proved ambivalent for the inhabitants of the archipelago. For Caribbeans, "black folk culture [was] the basis of a modern national culture and identity" while for Europeans it was a pre-modern possible retreat against the failures of Modernity (Rosenberg, "Modernism" 220). Considering the struggles they had to face in the process of being published, a certain degree of primitivism was incorporated in African American texts (Karrer 38-40). In this context, Wolfgang Karrer argues that McKay's use of the sonnet and his "elaborate syntax [are] a clear rejection of primitivism" in a time when forms such as "the sound poems" nonsensically distorted African poetry (Karrer 37-8). Other African American poets like Jean Toomer, for example, did indeed imitate these white dictums (Karrer 37-8).

This is referenced in the novel *Amiable with Big Teeth* with the appearance of an artist named Dèdé Lee, whose drawings represent "colored persons snarling like hounds, posed like baboons in the chain gang, working like zombies in the cotton field, crazed with unreasonable anger" (ABT 239). According to a character of the novel who qualifies the drawings as a "distorted exhibition of their race as human" (ABT 230), they contribute to the effort already made by colonialists of distributing a dehumanised image of African Americans that would facilitate their exploitation. McKay's response to the primitivism that was expected of him also in the United States and the reason why his insistence on using sonnets was a bafflement is their inclusion of working-class radical statements. In the epoch when the white vogue for Harlem reached the ridiculous point when "[w]riters as far from

Harlem as T. S. Eliot and Gertrude Stein reimagined themselves as black, spoke in a black voice, and used that voice to transform the literature of their time” (North 1), McKay presents a neighbourhood that is “working class and beset by discrimination and exploitation” (Karrer 40). Karrer explains that the collection *Harlem Shadows* is not the portrayal of local colour that it seems to promise. The poem “Harlem Shadows” is protagonised by exhausted hungry prostitutes with “weary feet / In Harlem wandering from street to street” (CP 162) and “The Harlem Dancer” is not the primitivist figure that Picasso envisioned but another exploited female who does not share the visitors’ perception of the delightfully intoxicating atmosphere: “looking at her falsely-smiling face, / I knew her self was not in that strange place” (CP 172).

Though North contends that the Modernism of the Harlem Renaissance is characterised by the rejection of primitivism, the proletarian poetics of McKay seem rather unique. As Rosenberg explains, “[f]or McKay, the modernist primitive is located not in statues or Paris studios but in Banjo’s black proletarian orchestra” (224). The Caribbean dimension of McKay’s radicalism in the context of Harlem has not been sufficiently accounted for. However, it was Caribbean immigrants, who in their homelands were more discriminated against in terms of social belonging, who brought class awareness to the continent (Pedersen 188-191). Caribbeans have been pioneers in understanding that racial discrimination is tightly linked to the development of world capitalism (James, *HBE* 44), a relation many times put forth by Aníbal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein throughout a long variety of texts. Even a Prime Minister of one of the islands (Trinidad and Tobago) put it out in print for the world: Eric Williams openly argues in *Capitalism and Slavery* that it was thanks

to slavery that industrial capitalism came into existence (Benítez-Rojo, *RI* 9; Torres-Saillant 21; 164; Williams xii).

In *Holding aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth Century America* (1998), McKay scholar Winston James notes the disproportionate presence of Caribbeans in the radical movements of the United States and attempts to find its reasons. One of them derives from their “cultural and historical tradition of frontal resistance to oppression” (*HBE* 258). What James describes stems from the Caribbean need of having had to negotiate continuous external intrusions in the archipelago, not only in political-military terms but also environmental ones due to their geographical features and location. Caribbean responses to colonial and neo-colonial oppression, Pugh argues, have gone beyond mere resilience: “[t]he resilient subject ‘merely rides the waves of catastrophe and change,’ while the subject of postcolonial independence ‘sought to seize history, and transform it.’” (Pugh, “Resilience” 236). Caribbean tradition of thought has long sought to escape the influence of the Western historiographical articulation of reality and its categories. In Pugh’s words:

the people of the Caribbean have quite obviously already lived their lives in the ruins of modernity and colonialism and through a postapocalyptic experience; from Frantz Fanon to Marcus Garvey and Bob Marley, they have sought to develop more affirmative alternative political imaginaries from these experiences (Pugh, “Resilience” 236-7)

Among these alternatives is the resistance to see themselves as inhabitants of isolated spaces. Islands are not such: islands are in continuous “fluctuating relationship to their surrounding seas, islands and continents” (DeLoughrey “Litany” 23). Furthermore, insisting on their relationality constitutes a practice of decolonial poetics because islands have been continuously mapped by European narratives as

devoid of history, thus justifying settlement and colonisation, as well as their continuous exploitation “by continental global capitalism” (DeLoughrey “Litany” 23). Relationality as a philosophy may also help to understand what “[t]he waning of Modernity” brings to the fore: the fact that most aspects of life—such as class and “race” and their resulting exploitations—are interrelated and that “modernity’s neat compartmentalisations are increasingly untenable” (Pugh, “Relationality” 93). Caribbeans have understood this for long.

An archipelagic reading of McKay’s work during this period would align with William J. Maxwell’s interpretation of his contradictions as a defiance of national borders (“Introduction” xi; “Claude McKay” 466). Apart from the primitivism present in Modernism, Rosenberg also notes that McKay rejects the respectable nationalism of his Caribbean counterparts such as Thomas MacDermot—who were building a nationalist discourse that aimed at obtaining complete independence (both economic and intellectual) from the metropolis (Rosenberg, *NCL* 34)—with what she sees as “black internationalism” (92). Caribbean nationalism at this point was paradoxically built on the mould of the English nineteenth century (Edmondson 39; Rosenberg, *NCL* 1) and the Victorian novel, which promoted an impeccable national “culture above and beyond politics” (Edmondson 45). Nationalism is not the way to escape Enlightened Modernity: internationalism might be. This was early understood by McKay, who advocated for, in Joel Nickels’ words, the union of “specifically African-descended subjects establish[ing] self-organized, racial structures of proletarian democracy within a larger multiethnic international” (5). But even internationalism does not account for McKay’s position.

Internationalism, in many ways, requires the presence of the national. Most citizens that see themselves as transnational rely on the privilege of belonging to a

respected nationality, and on carrying a passport that identifies them as members of a particular nation-state. In one of McKay's novels, the main character Banjo breaks his passport in order to get deported from his own country, thus reversing the dynamics of privileged (trans)citizenship. As McKay claims in his autobiography *A Long Way from Home* regarding the triviality of bohemian modernist exiles such as Gertrude Stein: "I understood more about the expatriates than they understood of me, as I went along in the rhythm of their caravan; yet, [...] our goal was not the same" (LW 189). The presence of international workers in the metropolitan centres of Europe in the period of McKay's travels represents a reminder of the ills of Modernity that these bohemian modernist artists were not addressing. To define what he calls "innocent modernity," Gilroy contends that the "traces of the people without history [and their] degraded lives might raise awkward questions about the limits of bourgeois humanism" (*Black Atlantic* 44). McKay understood that the discourses of internationalism at the moment depended on "Eurocentric structures of privilege and mobility" (Edwards 7) and rather advocates for internationalism in the DuBoisian sense of seeking an international solidarity of "the colored races of the world and particularly those of African descent" (Du Bois, "Pan Africa" 247). These subjects' particular relation with Modernity is that, since its inception with the arrival of the Europeans in the Caribbean,¹⁸ they have come to occupy the role of an international dispossessed proletariat.

This position could be described as "postnational," a "liberatory poetics that releases culture from the assumed confines of the nation state and have seemingly

¹⁸ In *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (2000) Walter D. Mignolo famously states that "there is no modernity without coloniality and that coloniality is constitutive, and not derivative, of modernity" (ix), thus locating the birth of Modernity "toward the end of the fifteenth century with the European 'discovery' of a 'New World'" (*Renaissance* xi). With this alternative genealogy, light is shed on the fact that the development of science, commerce, and industry in the Western world is tied to the racial division of labour that emerged with Americanity.

had huge success in turning the heads of readers and researchers away from the settler in favour of the migrant” (Donnell, *Twentieth Century* 80). Arjun Appadurai and Partha Chatterjee, among others, contend that postnationalism is a requirement in order to escape the restrictions of colonialist logic (Appadurai, *Modernity* 159; Chatterjee 2). The postnational imagination highlights the shortcomings of anticolonial discourse, which promoted a nationalist position in the fight for independence, thus perpetuating the very violent structures that served the imperialist logic of Europe (Nunn 12; Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin 139; Appadurai, *Modernity* 159). According to Appadurai, the interests of many oppressed groups lie beyond territoriality and sovereignty and they do not yet have an epistemological place outside “the linguistic imaginary of the territorial state” (*Modernity* 166). Therefore, many critics specifically from the Caribbean have expressed the need to think and to imagine outside of the nation (Donnell, “The Questioning Generation” 126). To do so, they effect a critique of the balkanisation of the region by external powers and rather advocate for the interconnection of these nations via natural elements such as the sea, the tides, and the winds. The Caribbean, for them, is a “cultural sea without frontiers” (Benítez-Rojo, *RI* 295)

In his novels, McKay displays a postnational position in the portrayal of the lives of drifters, vagabonds, seamen, and errant prostitutes. There is a clear transcendence of modernist values in these works, as McKay does not express anguish regarding the contradictions of national ways of identification. *Banjo*'s characters “are often described as drifters, and their drifting suits a world in flux in the modern age. Clearly, McKay feels that the only way to survive the twists and turns of the modern age is to possess a fluid adaptive capability, while retaining a strong sense of identity” (Pedersen 191). When in general terms in the predominant

cultural feeling the anxiety about the loss of Modernity's cultural values became replaced by this sort of distrust, play, and transcendence, the cultural critique talks of the transition from Modernism to Postmodernism, whose emergence is usually located in the 1960s. These were a series of creative reactions to Late Capitalism which, according to Tom Byers, only emerged in regions with a high degree of economic and technologic development (11). The appeal of Postmodernism for minority communities in the American hemisphere did not come until later in the 1980s and 1990s, as in the 1960s the Black Power movement in the United States tainted the fight against discrimination with culturally nationalist approaches (Dubey 2). This is the official narrative. The politics of Postmodernism, including aspects like an awareness of "the constructed nature of identity" and knowledge (Boehmer 237) and the distrust of metanarratives (such as the nation) as "apparatus[es] of legitimation" (Lyotard xxiv), are present in the works of McKay, especially in his novels. The postnational and hybrid discourses that are present in his work have recently gained popularity in the scholarship because of the rise in mobility that accompanies the globalisation of Late Capitalism, to which I prefer to refer as the Modern or capitalist world-system, following Wallerstein's approach.¹⁹ Therefore, McKay's particular critique of Modernity might be worth comparing with the discourse of later works originating in the realms of Postmodernism. Another aspect worth exploring might be the presence of postmodernist aspects—usually conflating

¹⁹ Wallerstein explains that capitalism came into existence in the sixteenth century with the development of trade networks in Europe (*Volume I* 67-68) and reached its total world expansion in the nineteenth as more areas were introduced in the process of peripheralization ("Rise" 390; *Volume III*: xiii-xiv). This shows how, in order to keep the process of accumulation, capitalism needs to extract surplus value from the products of the weaker areas (the periphery) through their liberalisation in the free market while core-like products are organised around monopolies located in the more powerful areas (Wallerstein, *WSA* 12-29). The start of the expansion coincides with the moment when Quijano identifies the construction of the idea of "race" in the American hemisphere, which becomes associated to class ("Modernidad/Racionalidad" 11). Therefore, while the division between the bourgeois and the proletariat is only one more system of exploitation within the capitalist world-system (Wallerstein, *WSA* 20), there is a bigger international division of the modes of production by which peripheral areas are located in colonised places where the inhabitants were given a certain racial category.

with postcolonial ones through their shared influence of Poststructuralism—in non-Western arts. Certainly, McKay’s novels demonstrate that mobility towards heterogenous industrial urban centres and its double-sidedness—a privileged mobility tied to first-class citizenship against the errantry of the international class of “proletarians from far waters” (*Banjo* 67)—did exist before the 1960s in the American hemisphere, especially from the Caribbean to the United States in the first half of the twentieth century.²⁰

1.3. From Modernism to Diasporic Consciousness: Claude McKay’s Errant Writing

We are all Caribbeans now in our urban archipelagos.

J. Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature and Art*

It seems almost as though after not knowing what to do with the Caribbean, everyone now wants to be Caribbean

J. M. Dash, *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context*

The two epigraphs above exemplify the appeal of the Caribbean for the postmodern imagination. Clifford’s quote suggests that there exists a Caribbean archipelagic condition applicable to the contemporary world, anticipating that if more attention had been paid to the epistemologies of the Caribbean, they would have revealed ideas about syncretism and fluidity that have come to be understood much later

²⁰ William James notes that behind the 150,000 black workers who migrated from the Caribbean to the United States between 1899 and 1937 were the United States imperial commercial initiatives such as the United Fruit Company (*HBE* 62: 92). These had created economic and geographical changes explaining the economic crises that made the islands’ demographics change (*HBE* 92). As an example, James explains that “Baker’s Boston Fruit Company and later United Fruit Company, through their various acquisition of land, significantly contributed to the raising of the price of land beyond the reach of the peasantry” (*HBE* 92).

elsewhere. Similarly, Mintz argues in an oft-quoted essay titled “Enduring Substances, Trying Theories: The Caribbean Region as Oikoumene” that contemporary scholars on globalisation find Caribbean concepts such as marronnage and creolisation enlightening because “they seem so well to fit modern conditions of migration and adaptation” (303). Likewise, the work of Benítez-Rojo links the Caribbean to the postmodern condition because of the archipelago’s cultural heterogeneity—“a meta-archipelago [...] having neither a boundary nor a center” (4)—and its linguistic plurality (2), which both remind of how Postmodernism refuses binaries and hierarchies and delves into the chaotic plurality of the world (Benítez-Rojo, *RI* 175), or what Jacques Derrida calls “the play of signifying references” (7). This is why Benítez-Rojo believes that the Caribbean “carr[ies] models of knowledge proper to [...] Postmodernity” (*RI* 17). Furthermore, Dash contends that a postmodern approach has helped to transcend “the tendency to balkanize the Caribbean in terms of ideology, race, or language” (*TOA* 6). Though the endorsement of these categories has often been determined by strategies “of political resistance, ethnic difference, or popular tradition” (Dash, *TOA* 6), they have not managed to contest the binary oppositions imposed by Eurocentric regimes as much as postmodern indeterminacy has. It is then easy to understand why many theoreticians of the Caribbean have shown unmasked sympathy for Postmodernism as the best lens through which to understand Caribbean cultures, regardless of periodisation.

In 1922 Claude McKay left the United States to visit Russia (two months after his arrival it would become the Soviet Union) and attend the Fourth Congress of the Third Communist International (Cooper, *RS* 171). After that, he spent twelve years wandering through Europe and, briefly, Morocco (Cooper, *RS* 237-238; 249),

during which he wrote a series of novels (some of them with mysterious origins, as they have only been published posthumously) characterised by this sense of indeterminacy and fluid identification. They furthermore contest generic conventions on the structure of the novel. These novels generally gesture to the American sociocultural reality and maintain an archipelagic articulation of the narrative and the content despite the author's errant condition. Or perhaps, because of this condition. For Glissant, errantry is not only about mobility, but part of Caribbean epistemology. With it he describes a form of mobility that does not have any colonising or settling purpose; nor is it "idle roaming," but a way to be in relation with the Other (Wing xvi). This notion describes a mode of Caribbean existence by which there are not any hierarchies between peoples; there is only a relation with the Other while the right to opacity is retained.

Glissant's theory of opacity is a good means for contesting the primitivism of the white modernist authors. With opacity Glissant advocates for a form of Relation that does not attempt at appropriating and describing the experience of Others, keeping their voices reserved for them. In one of his works written at the time, the autobiography *A Long Way from Home*, McKay portrays his encounter with modernist authors of European circles, especially in Paris, and makes comments upon the mobility which they displayed as one of the movement's identity traits:

I believe that I understood more about the expatriates than they understood of me, as I went along in the rhythm of their caravan; yet, although our goal was not the same, I was always overwhelmingly in sympathy with its purpose. [...] I liked the spectacle of white American youngsters of both sexes enjoying the freedom of foreigners with money on the café terraces of Continental Europe. I liked to watch their feats of unprohibited drinking and listen to their elastic conversations and see them casually taking in their stride the

cosmopolitan world of people of different races and colors. Even if they were not all intent upon or able to create works of art, I did not see them as idlers and wasters, but as students of life (LW 189)

McKay's insistence on the idea of a purpose is quite interesting, as it makes a difference between the different kinds of mobilities that existed at that moment. While there is a mobility that is voluntary (including McKay's own at this moment), certainly there is another that is involuntary, surveilled, and determined by economic hardship or violence. Its subjects are "displaced persons, stateless people, asylum seekers, economic migrants and others hidden in their fugitive illegality" (Nuttal 578). McKay's purpose was to record these experiences and in doing that he reverses modernist narratives of bohemian wandering and substance abuse like Hemingway's *The Sun also Rises* (1926). In these works McKay both parodies the romanticised errantry of white modernists like Hemingway, Fitzgerald or Stein and raises awareness of labour mobility. He does all without portraying his protagonists as mere victims. In his novels, through grassroots initiatives, the errant workers manage to create their own communities where the meanings of family, labour and affiliation acquire a new taint.

Despite being, in McKay's words, "students of life" (LW 189), cosmopolitan modernists failed to portray an experience that went beyond their own primitivist conceptions. *A Long Way from Home* features a pertinent critique of one of the most celebrated proto-modernist pieces of short fiction, Gertrude Stein's "Melanctha" (1909):

when I came to examine "Melanctha," Gertrude Stein's Negro story, I could not see wherein intrinsically it was what it was cracked up to be. In "Melanctha" Gertrude Stein reproduced a number of the common phrases relating to Negroes, such as: "boundless joy of Negroes," "unmorality of

black people,” “black childish,” “big black virile,” “joyous Negro,” “black and evil,” “black heat,” “abandoned laughter,” “Negro sunshine,” all prettily framed in a tricked-out style. But in the telling of the story I found nothing striking and informative about Negro life (LW 191)

In view of the modernists’ appropriation of McKay’s own community as a mere object of observation for writing their texts, he ventures into rewriting the primitivist experiences that he had while he was in Europe, especially experiences of posing nude for white people:

"With all a that and my kind of temperament, I knew that Paris was no business for me unless I could find a job. One of the Latin-American artists was my friend and he got me a job to pose. It wasn't so easy to find black bodies for that in Paris. [...] The woman who owned the studio was a Nordic of Scandinavia. The artist by whom I was recommended said that she was worried about engaging me, because there were many *Américaines* in the class. They were the best-paying students, and, as I belonged to a savage race, she didn't know if I could behave.

"My artist vouched for me. And so I went to work, putting myself rigidly on good behaviour. Everything went along as nice as pie. Personally I felt no temptation to prevent me from being the best-behaving person in the studio. All the students, strong and fair, came and measured me all over to get the right perspective, not hesitating to touch me when they wanted to place me in a better light or position (*Banjo* 129-130)

Though some (see Edwards 222) have perceived primitivism in *Banjo* because of phrases like “primitive child [...] kinky-headed, big-laughing black boy of the world” (*Banjo* 314) or “civilization had gone out among these native, earthy people, had despoiled them of their primitive soil” (*Banjo* 313), these are always tainted with irony. In the fragment about posing, for example, the fact that *Banjo* seriously evaluates the existence of a “temptation” to behave badly and finds that there

exists no such thing highlights the absurdity of biological race and its associated behavioural tendencies.

In the fragment, too, there is indication that the idea of savagery is particularly promoted by the white Americans in France. In this way McKay references American racism and Americanness despite setting his novel in Europe. The novel, in fact, was designed to be read in the United States at a time when intellectuals from Harlem evaluated (in journals such as *Crisis*) and designed how to undo the negative perception of black people through art. Because of this, there was great controversy regarding *Banjo*, and Du Bois himself commented on it. He criticised, using the following words, that the novel's structure was not correct: "[h]ere are a lot of people whose chief business in life seems to be sexual intercourse, getting drunk, and fighting" ("Review of *Banjo*" 234). Du Bois always seemed concerned about the portrayal of blacks engaging in substance abuse or sexual intercourse, as he claimed regarding *Home to Harlem* (McKay's bestselling novel) that it "nauseates me, and after the dirtiest parts of its filth I feel distinctly like taking a bath" ("Review of *Home to Harlem*" 202). The concern demonstrates that despite having himself articulated the idea of double consciousness, Du Bois replicates the white prejudice against blacks that McKay captures with his portrayal of the Americans in the painting studio. This, too, evidences that bohemian mobility is not paired with a desire to escape prejudice. However, the novel insists on portraying the black working-class experience devoid of the white gaze. The critic's focus should be rather put on how the mobility trait that the modernists endorsed as part of their artistic stand has been experienced quite differently across history by dispossessed groups throughout the globe.

Rather than being products created to attain a certain response from white critics in the American continent, all of McKay's novels work in their own terms. In this respect, the Caribbean perspective is visible in McKay who, despite enjoying a privileged position as a published author and political personality, denotes a great awareness of the global dynamics of mobility, which occupy an important place in the Caribbean imagination. Caribbean people are described as "people on the move" by Alma Norman (6); their history and identity are particularly tied to mobility. In fact, Otto states that "[t]he Caribbean experience [...] implies a double diaspora" because all of its current inhabitants have arrived from elsewhere, but also because there has been an extended migration from the Caribbean to other parts of the world as the capitalist world-system developed (96). Mobility and the consequent Caribbean experience of syncretism and cultural contact has resulted in post-essentialist apprehensions of identity. As a matter of fact, Michael A. Chaney explains that the Caribbean migrants from the first wave brought to the Harlem Renaissance the experience of heterogeneity to signal the contradictions of their essentialist notion of race. He states that

Presenting vast differences in national affiliation, religious customs, dialect, education, and ideologies of class from one another and African Americans, Caribbeans exposed the absurdity of US systems of racialization which blindly homogenized blacks in static opposition to whites and forced a sometimes ominous recognition of the obstacles facing black coalitions of culture and politics for even the most utopian leaders of the Renaissance (46)

In McKay's *Banjo* and *Romance in Marseille*, both set in the ditch of Marseille, the sea which everyday carries workers from different national and linguistic origins to

the port represents an aquapelagic²¹ response to essentialist views of identity. As such, despite the fact that the concept of diaspora as identity has only been later taken into account to inform literary analyses, McKay conveys that certain existences are intrinsically diasporic. However, that does not mean that they are conflicted or lacking in some kind of essence. It just shows, like Glissant later did, that the concepts of roots and rootlessness are articulated according to Western epistemologies of linearity and absolute origins.

The diasporic condition or “diaspora consciousness,” on the contrary, is a concept articulated in order to reject the discourse of absolute origins (Brah 193; Hall, “CI” 226), an idea which resounds with Postmodernism’s substitution of past event with discursive tradition (Hutcheon 119). It emerges in the context of globalised migration²² under the capitalist world-system to contest othering practices based on national belonging, as it deconstructs the politics of the border. The concept of diaspora refers to extensive group migrations (Brah 175; 178) in the way that all the members of the group establish a home in a new place (179). Brah identifies “[g]lobal flows of labour” as diasporas as well (Brah 179). Therefore, the amount of Caribbeans that settled in the United States during the first half of the

²¹ Aquapelago is a term proposed by Philip Hayward to define how the Caribbean is not only composed of isolated islands but of other geographical elements like “their adjacent waters” (Hayward, “Aquapelagos” 5) and the air surrounding them. Therefore in the Caribbean epistemology there is great awareness of the creation of identity (what Hayward calls “geo-social identit[y]” (“Aquaolagos” 1)) through the elements that arrive and cause transformations (Hayward, “Assemblages” 1).

²² A sharp increase of migration was identified around the 1980s (Brah 178) tied to “[t]he socioeconomic [continuing] polarization of the world-system” (Wallerstein, “The Caribbean” 24). This means that, as the North keeps monopolising the most advanced processes of production (21) and penetrating into non-capitalist societies (Massey et al. 444), it also prompts flows of migration. The North needs immigrants that fulfil the demands of its lifestyle (Massey et al. 446-7) while mechanization, peripheralization and the annihilation of non-capitalist forms of peasant farming keep expelling Global South peoples from their lands (445). The increased rate of migration that Brah identifies owes to the postcolonial, ever more aggressive, “outsourcing operations in the south” (Delgado-Wise 35) by the capitalist elite which has resulted into “[t]he number of migrants (most of whom come from peripheral regions) [increasing] over the last three and a half decades, from 84 million in 1975 to 215 million in 2010” (36).

previous century can be considered a diasporic community. Furthermore, the scholarship reflecting on the diasporic condition has also deconstructed the meanings of home and national identity. The “New World” conception of diaspora, according to Hall, leaves behind the idea that “identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland” (“CI” 235) to embrace “a necessary heterogeneity and diversity” (235) in the recognition that identity is not only anchored to the past but also to the future in a constant process of becoming (225).

Literary scholar Dalia Kandiyoti has similarly explored the shortcomings of the nation-state as an identificatory frame in relation to the Puerto Rican diaspora. Because Puerto Rico’s colonial territorial organisation is unique in the contemporary world, Puerto Rican arts and criticism have contributed to the discourse of diaspora to a great extent. Puerto Rico, an island in the Caribbean, is a territory (though not a state in its own right) of the United States since 1898 in the aftermath of the Spanish-American war and there has been free movement between the island and the continent since then (Pierce Flores 83). Puerto Ricans, however, have never ceased to be treated like outsiders and, at the same time, have proudly defended a distinct cultural identity. They have also tended to settle in segregated communities in the United States, especially New York, where the Boricua population currently reaches a million.²³ Puerto Ricans in the United States—or Nuyoricans, as they are also referred to—have created their identity as detached from territoriality and borders. They are the epitome of Caribbean archipelagic thought inasmuch as, in their creation of group identity and identification, they have effected a

²³ Information provided by the Hunter Center for Puerto Rican Studies at CUNY (The City University of New York).

“transgression of the boundaries of territory, language, and ethnicity established by standard views of the nation” (Duany 18). As such, Kandoyoti concludes that

The homeland informs diaspora consciousness without necessarily “anchoring” it. It is important to acknowledge the role of place-based identity in which the homeland is an important spatial referent that is not stable or fixed; indeed, it is far from being an uncontested, anchoring space and source of identification (37)

Her definition of diaspora consciousness carries a postmodern approach in the articulation of the unfixity of the referent of the homeland. By decentring its location in time and space, diasporic discourse contests nationalist dynamics of exclusion and belonging. According to Hall, in contrast to the essentialised notion that Africa is the source of identification of every Caribbean person, what is commonly Caribbean is diaspora (“CI” 333).

Kandiyoti further argues, contesting Arif Dirlik’s problematisation that the diaspora consciousness distances “diasporic populations from their immediate environments, to render them into foreigners in the context of everyday life” (“Bringing” 122), that diasporic groups in fact manage to reinforce the local against racist site-making practices (Kandiyoti 160) and the placeless characteristic of international capitalism (Benito, “Spaces and Flows” 15). This is all very enlightening for understanding McKay’s period of errant writing, as it is when he most accurately describes community and identity-making in Harlem despite not being there. This happens in two novels, *Home to Harlem* and *Amiable with Big Teeth*, and in some of the short stories included in *Gingertown*,²⁴ while *Banjo* and *Romance in Marseille* are set in Marseille. These last two also wink at Harlem in

²⁴ *Gingertown* (1932) was written in the last stage of McKay’s diasporic stage, in Morocco (Tagirova-Daley 10), and it includes stories both set in Harlem and in Jamaica.

positive ways by highlighting that, despite the particular violence of American racism, there exist in the United States stronger mechanisms of race and class awareness that contest these practices of discrimination.²⁵ The neighbourhood of Harlem is portrayed in these novels in the same way as Benito analyses the portrayal of Spanish Harlem by Ernesto Quiñonez in *Bodega Dreams* (2000). He highlights that ethnic neighbourhoods maintain the “local ways of life” that are endangered by capitalism’s accelerated cycles of capital and their consequent creation of depersonalised flows of workers around the urban centres of the most industrialised parts of the world (“Spaces and Flows” 15). It is not a coincidence that McKay portrayed these mechanisms in the context of his errant experience with a special emphasis on non-nationalist ways of community-making.

As he got in contact with more dimensions of the Caribbean diaspora, McKay wrote works that explore the identity of another diaspora to which he is heir—the Black Atlantic one. Diaspora is not only one group’s journey; when we say a certain community is “diasporic” it does not mean that all of the migrants settle in the same place:

For example, South Asians in Britain have a different albeit related history to South Asians in Africa, the Caribbean, Fiji, South East Asia or the USA. Given these differences, can we speak of a South Asian diaspora other than as a mode of description of a particular cluster of migrations? (Brah 180)

With an interestingly Glissantian vocabulary, Brah concludes that her definition of diaspora is based on “the historically variable forms of *relationality* within and

²⁵ According to A. B. Christa Schwartz, scenes in both *Banjo* and *Romance in Marseille* convey that there is more tolerance for homosexuality in Harlem than in “white Marseille” (147). *Banjo* also concludes with a reflection by Ray that he enjoyed less individual liberty in France than in the United States (*Banjo* 263) and that, despite the illusion that France enacted fewer racist practices, at the time racial brutalities were being committed in its colonies (*Banjo* 76).

between diasporic formations” (emphasis mine; 180). McKay’s own travels led to the portrayal of the Black Atlantic identity as a multidirectional diasporic formation which has been tied to Americanness’s colonial forms of labour control. His protagonists are the dispossessed black masses—sometimes lacking nationality papers or nationality itself—that crossed the Middle Passage to forcedly work in the American plantations. His wandering is the epitome of this widespread diaspora rather than a concrete one and it crystallises in mastering the thought of errantry, conveyed in different forms in his novels, as is the subject of the next chapter.

This thesis therefore explores, in the chapters to come, the novels written by McKay during this period (except *Amiable with Big Teeth* which he wrote on coming back), because this is when he is the least settled in some place but also the most Caribbean and archipelagic despite being the furthest away. When an interest in Caribbean Studies started to emerge, authors like Sam Selvon and George Lamming, who migrated to England as part of the Windrush generation though not as workers but as recognised writers (Dillon and Rosenberg 4), were encouraged to write about their islands in order to get published (Weiss 164). With the rise of Postmodernism and its destabilisation of margins and centre (Hutcheon 16), Caribbeanness began to be found in loci other than the Caribbean Sea. As Benítez-Rojo states regarding the diaspora, Caribbeans “tend to roam the entire world in search of the centers of their Caribbeanness, constituting one of our century’s most notable migratory flows” (*RI* 25). It became accepted that deterritorialization does not deduct, it rather adds. Again, if according to Donnell, “[t]he re-profiling of Caribbean criticism and the Caribbean literary canon towards diasporic voices and concerns [...] took shape in the 1990s” in the scholarship associated to

Postmodernism (“The Questioning Generation” 126), this does not mean that the Caribbean diaspora did not exist before. In fact, it has never not existed.

1.4. Urban Archipelagos: Contemporary Caribbean-American literature

We are islands, permeable countries.

J. Alvarez. “Doña Aída with your Permission”

At one Caribbean Studies Association Annual Meeting held in Santo Domingo, the U.S. based Dominican-American author Julia Alvarez was criticised while on stage by the Dominican poet Aída Cartagena Portalatín for writing her novels in English: “Doña Aída embraced me, but then in front of the mikes, she reamed me out. ‘Eso parece mentira que una dominicana se ponga a escribir en inglés. Vuelve a tu país, vuelve a tu idioma. Tú eres dominicana’” (Alvarez 171). Alvarez answered with an essay which was titled “Doña Aída with your Permission” stating in the very first paragraphs that she is not Dominican (172). However, she asserts being Caribbean: “it really is in my Caribbean roots, in my island genes to be a pan-American, a gringa-dominicana, a synthesizing consciousness” (175). She continues:

Think of it, the Caribbean . . . a string of islands, a sieve of the continents, north and south, a sponge, as most islands are, absorbing those who come and go, whether indios in canoas from the Amazon, or conquistadores from Spain, or African princes brought in chains in the holds of ships to be slaves, or refugees from China or central Europe or other islands. We are not a big continental chunk, a forbidding expanse that takes forever to penetrate, which keeps groups solidly intact, for a while anyhow. Our beaches welcome the stranger with their carpets of white sand. In an hour you reach the interior; in another hour you arrive at the other coast. We are islands,

permeable countries. It's in our genes to be a world made of many worlds.
¿No es así? (175)

According to this text, Caribbeanness is more easily locatable out of the Caribbean. Another Dominican-American put it similarly. In an interview, Pulitzer-Prize winner Junot Díaz states that “[d]iaspora allowed us multiple understandings. You could no longer have that illusion of a consolidated país. I mean, there is no real place called Santo Domingo” (Lantigua-Williams 202). As a postnational experience, diaspora helps to recover the sense of Caribbean regionalism and, as Alvarez would put it, the permeability of borders that was lost in the European Modern tradition of conceptualising islands as isolated and insular spaces (Pugh and Chandler, *AI* 3), as well as by their later balkanization into colonies and postcolonial nation-states.

In view of the importance that Alvarez ascribes to the Caribbean in the formation of its diasporic subjects' identities, it is then striking that many authors with Caribbean origins seem to lose their Caribbeanness once they reach the United States, while this does not really happen if they go to the United Kingdom. When Donnell states that Postmodernism has brought attention to the Caribbean diaspora as a way to explore the archipelago's identity, she does not evaluate the destination of this diaspora. Her seminal volume *Twentieth Century Caribbean Literature* (2006) includes McKay in the first chapter, which deals with early Caribbean writing (before 1950) in the islands as tied to the emergence of national identity. The second chapter is more devoted to the diaspora and starts with an analysis of the 1950s Boom of Caribbean writing in the United Kingdom resulting from the arrival of the Windrush Generation. The aim of her chapter is to point out how in the Boom of successful literature in London, the writings from the island began to lose relevance (78). If we center on the success rather than the number of

writers—the Windrush Boom was mainly associated to three authors, Samuel Selvon, George Lamming, and V.S. Naipaul—why not talk about McKay’s bestselling novel *Home to Harlem*?²⁶ Clearly, because it is considered an American novel.

Though *Home to Harlem* is located in Harlem and the plot centres on the description of life in this neighbourhood, there is also a Haitian protagonist talking about the Haitian Revolution and the American intervention in the archipelago:

“Well, I learned English home in Portau-Prince [*sic*]. And I was at Howard. You know the Negro university at Washington. Haven’t even finished there yet.”

“Then what in the name of mah holy rabbit foot youse doing on this heah white man’s chuhchuh? It ain’t no place foh no student. It seems to me you’ place down there sounds a whole lot better.”

“Uncle Sam put me here.”

“Whadye mean Uncle Sam?” cried Jake. “Don’t hand me that bull.”

“Let me tell you about it,” the waiter said. “Maybe you don’t know that during the World War Uncle Sam grabbed Hayti. My father was an official down there. He didn’t want Uncle Sam in Hayti and he said so and said it loud. They told him to shut up and he wouldn’t, so they shut him up in jail. My brother also made a noise and American marines killed him in the street. I had nobody to pay for me at the university, so I had to get out and work. *Voilà!*” (*HH* 136)

The inclusion of Caribbean characters in *Home to Harlem* is no coincidence according to Pedersen, who claims that the figure of Ray specifically has the aim of “provid[ing] a counterimage to the traditional view of Haiti as the repository of chaos

²⁶ Cooper explains that *Home to Harlem* was the most popular novel in the Harlem Renaissance and that it was only overcome by a novel of a similar nature in 1940 with the publication of Richard Wright’s *Native Son* (“Introduction” ix-x). However, Cooper is situating this novel within the category of African American publications: “[n]ot until the publication of Richard Wright’s *Native Son* in 1940 did another Afro-American novel enjoy such popular success” (“Introduction” ix-x).

and savagery” that justified the American military occupation from 1915 to 1934 (191). Despite the fact that other critics like Isabel Hoving’s *In Praise of New Travelers: Reading Caribbean Migrant Women’s Writing* (2001) or María Lourdes López Roperó in *The Anglo-Caribbean Migration Novel: Writing from the Diaspora* (2004) include Caribbean-American authors (including Canadian-American writers) as part of their analysis, most extensive anthologies like *The Routledge Companion of Anglophone Caribbean Literature* (2011), edited by Michael E. Bucknor and Alison Donnell, give precedence to authors located either on the islands or in the United Kingdom. Only when having a continuous relationship with the islands in terms of constant returning and academic migration, as are the cases of Michelle Cliff, Jamaica Kincaid, and Derek Walcott, do authors settled in the United States receive more attention in these anthologies. If not, they are usually included in the ethnic American canon.

The second half of the twentieth century has seen a rise in the publication of, and interest for, immigrant literature as a result of the increased rates of mobility from the Global South that global capitalism has brought forth. Bharati Mukherjee calls it “literature of the immigrant experience” or “Literature of New Arrival” to highlight the “transnational aesthetics” that distinguish, in the context of the United States, these works from those others written during the first half of the twentieth century by white European immigrants who became easily assimilated (683). As the example of McKay evidences, this kind of aesthetics is not new. However, it was in the aftermath of the 1960s that the canon of “ethnic American literature” emerged in the United States comprising both literatures of American internal ethnic traditions such as Native American, African American, and Chicanx and by ethnic immigrants such as Caribbeans, Latin Americans, and Asians. The

institutionalisation of the field of Ethnic Literature could be located in the 1970s with the founding of MELUS, the Society for the Study of the Multi-ethnic Literature of the United States (Šesnic 10). Similarly, tied to the Third World Movement in American campuses, precisely influenced by the movements of anti-colonial liberation, American universities established programmes of African American, Native American, Chicano, and Asian American Studies around the same decades (Sharpe, "Multiculturalism" 114). With the publication of *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*, edited by Paul Lauter, which embarked on the task of revising the American literary canon, and the pressure it exerted on other collections such as the Norton ones, the status of ethnic literature in the United States was fully consolidated (T.V. Reed 99-100). These opening of the canon to the incorporation of ethnic writers also resulted in greater publication numbers:

The same social movements that inspired critics and cultural historians inspired a generation of creative writers to understand and represent their experiences in historical terms. Indeed, a brilliant novel like Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, among the premier works to emerge from this historical process, is at once a revisionist history of American slavery, a work of cultural theory, and a stunningly effective work of fiction. Much the same could be said for works like Simon Ortiz's lyric cycle *The Sand Creek Massacre*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *Woman Warrior* and *China Men*, or Rolando Hinojosa's series of *Klail City* novels. The historical challenge forged by social change movements that leads critics to (re)place literature into history is paralleled by the work of creative artists who feel the pull of history on their own writings, further blurring the lines between history and literature (T.V. Reed 100)

The eventual granting of the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for fiction to Dominican-American Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, a novel including the use of Spanish and a harsh criticism of the coloniality of the Americas, places diasporic literature into the spotlight.

Meanwhile in the United Kingdom, with a significantly similar timeline, the field of “Commonwealth literature” originated at the Leeds conference of 1964 and based on the 1950s field of “Commonwealth Studies” with the purpose of institutionalising the writings of Britain’s former colonies in the university curricula (Sharpe, “Multiculturalism” 116). It gradually evolved into “postcolonial literature” in the timespan of thirty years (McLeod, *Beginning* 10-17), especially influenced by the publication of *The Empire Writes Back* by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (1989). This change category is of utmost importance, as it ponders the influence of the power relations resulting from Empire in the development of this literature. Furthermore, the designation “postcolonial literature” is sometimes also used to describe the writings of immigrant authors in the United Kingdom, as it merges with the field of “Black British Literature,” a term with a more clearly diasporic undertone. According to Mark Stein, Black British Literature “deals with the situation of those coming from former colonies,” hence including Caribbean diasporic literature (xii). Therefore, the field acknowledges the coloniality involved in contemporary migratory tendencies.

The theorisation of Caribbean diasporic literature in the United Kingdom assumes that migrants come from the country’s former colonies. Though this is mostly the case, it does not mark a significant difference with the context of Caribbean migration into the United States, whose literature, because of historical deeds and categories, is less often understood as postcolonial. By the time the postcolonial theoretical turn takes place, however, the United States had long acquired the role of colonising, intruding, or imperial power—depending on how we want to call it—in the Caribbean (W. James, *HBE* 394; 409; Wallerstein, “The Caribbean” 16). The crucial point is that the rise of immigration in both contexts is

tioned to the same development of global capitalism and the impingement of foreign powers on peripheral areas of the world-system, affecting its migratory flows.

The disparity between the ways of documenting these publications evidences the fact that the United States possesses a politics of race of its own informed by the country's history of African American and Mexican racism. Although the rise of immigrant literature in the United States has been well documented since the 1970s, there are problems in the way it is categorised. Many Caribbean authors are listed in anthologies of American literature as African American or Latinx writers—accounting for a racialisation that draws on these histories of racism. This is the case of Barbadian-American Paule Marshall, whose novel *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* is analysed in Chapter 3. Marshall is widely represented in anthologies of African American Literature like *The Cambridge History of African American Literature* (2011), edited by Maryemma Graham and Jerry W. Ward Jr. Even Brathwaite, who is part of the 1990s post-essentialist critics, defined Marshall as “an Afro-American of West-Indian parentage” rather than a Caribbean author (“Rehabilitations” 126). Though Marshall was born in the United States, her work is deeply informed by Caribbean epistemologies and the specificity of the Barbadian diasporic community in Brooklyn. Many of her works mention the islands and *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* is completely set in one of them: the imaginary country of Bourne Island, which adopts characteristics of the diverse nations of the Caribbean and thus constitutes an effort of regionalist poetics. McKay, whose novel *Banana Bottom* is also set in the Caribbean, shares this situation with Marshall. His relevance in the Harlem Renaissance prompted his categorisation as an African American writer in anthologies which most often do not acknowledge the slightest role of his homeland, Jamaica, in the shaping of his poetics. Two examples are the

Norton Anthology of African American Literature (1997), edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay, and *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature* (1997), edited by William L. Anders, Frances Smith Foster, and Trudier Harris.

Furthermore, authors belonging to the Black British category who, like Marshall, were born in the diaspora, are forthrightly categorised as Caribbean in the scholarship. In the *Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English* (2007), edited by Catherine Lynette Innes, the chapter devoted to “Black British writing” includes first- and second-generation migrant authors such as Grace Nichols, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Caryl Phillips, Zadie Smith, and Bernardine Evaristo. Though the category “Black British” may sound equally oversimplifying, it takes into account a particular history of colonialism. The analysis of these kinds of works in the context of the United States is rather based on the ideas of minority languages, national diasporas, or the racial history of the United States, disregarding Postcolonialism. Nevertheless, there are also problematic aspects in this categorisation: the concept of “Black British literature” equates blackness with Postcoloniality and Caribbeanness. Not all of the Caribbean is English speaking, has been a British colony or identifies as black. The anthologies of Caribbean literature mentioned above do not only ignore the American diaspora, but also do not mention works in languages that are not English. For example, the *Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature* (1996), edited by Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh, while not including the modifier “Anglophone” in its title or mentioning it in the introduction, only includes Anglophone writings. In fact, the editors relate the genesis of a Caribbean aesthetic to the desire to transcend the British Empire’s influence (4), and the earliest attempts of pan-Caribbeanism to the emergence of

the West Indian Federation (5), which was actually a union of British colonies. The problem is not how these critics take into account the fact that most migrants come from the country's former colonies, but how they appropriate and reduce the concept of Caribbeanness in their definitions.

Another problem comes from the category of "Latinx literature," which can result in some cases (though not always) in an unfair practice of uniformization. Though this category accounts for the particular discrimination that is exercised in the United States on the grounds of language, it can also preclude the specificity of each Spanish speaking group:

[a]lthough useful for building broad coalitions among groups of diverse Latin American and Latino Caribbean origins, the term obscures the complex, heterogeneous, and contradictory relationships between and within the so-called "Latino" groups. The "Latino" category collapses the differences between and among populations who have diverse historical experiences of oppression (Grosfoguel and Georas 86)

In the case of Puerto Rico this specificity is quite striking because of the territory's colonial history. Furthermore, as *Down these Mean Streets* shows, discrimination is not static and rather depends on historical constrictions. In fact, applying the theory of the American coloniality of power to the case of Puerto Ricans settled in the United States as Grosfoguel and Georas do allows to differentiate their situation from that of other Latinx migrants. In the early 1950s, Harry Truman's Cold War project attempted to "make [...] Puerto Rico a symbolic showcase of the American capitalist model of development for the Third World" through the eradication of the main cities' shanty towns, for which flight fares became increasingly reduced (Grosfoguel and Georas 106). The Puerto Rican mass migration which resulted from Truman's plans added to the incorporation of the island to the country as a colonial

territory made Puerto Ricans in New York become not only migrants but colonial subjects, racialised under the same category of other groups historically dominated by the U.S. white elite like African Americans (89-90). Thomas' novel applies Caribbean frameworks of relationality to highlight that this form of coloniality might be shared with other groups while exploring the specificity of his Puerto Rican (hi)story.

In other cases, nation rather than region has been used as a category for defining the writing of the Caribbean diaspora, especially in the cases of Cuba and Haiti (Šesnic 21). Cuban-American and Haitian-American works, according to Jelena Šesnic, articulate their particular ethnicity by taking the narrative back to the homeland:

It is telling that in these "diasporic novels," whether by Danticat or Cuban American authors, unlike those of their "ethnic" counterparts, we see in fact a literal splitting of the spatial axis of plot, in that the narrated space encompasses both the US and a country left behind, Haiti or Cuba. This would indicate that the spatial politics of these novels reflects the irreducible importance of the experience of dislocation, flight, exile, departure, migration, and movement, and so further destabilizes national and sub-national affiliations (195)

The fact that the imagination, memory or discourse of the Caribbean inform Caribbean diasporic works is a crucial point made in this thesis. However, this is not only true for Haiti (in fact not all of Danticat's novels have this bi-national structure) or Cuba: we can find it in a multiplicity of works. Half of the novels (*Banana Bottom*, *The Chosen Place*, *the Timeless People*, and *Claire of the Sea Light*) analysed in this study are set in the Caribbean, and the rest portray multiethnic neighbourhoods and liminal spaces such as ships or prisons. We can find other examples of a narrative

split into the two locations of homeland and receiving land in Paule Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959), *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983) and *Triangular Road* (2009), Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987), Jamaica Kincaid's *My Brother* (1997), Margaret Cezair-Thompson's *The True History of Paradise* (1999), Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2008), as well as his short stories, Angie Cruz's *Dominicana* (2019), and most of Julia Alvarez's works, among others. To my mind, the reason why the Cuban and Haitian diasporas have been studied separately is the United States' special relation to both of them and the way this has affected the country's migration policies. While Cuban migrants have been treated as political refugees in the attempt to prove the failures of Communism (Lennox 712), diasporic Haitians have been compelled to precarious and dangerous forms of migration and residency as the Papa Doc and Baby Doc dictatorial regimes obtained the support of the United States (Lennox 696-7; Torres-Saillant 146; Scanlan and Loescher 314). Accepting Haitians' petitions for political asylum would mean acknowledging the regime's "elimination of [its] rivals and the violation of human rights in Haiti" (Scanlan and Loescher 321). Again, apprehending these migrations as national diasporas (not only in the political sense, which clearly bears a national pattern, but also in an ontological one) is a categorisation prompted by U.S. imperial political views. This thesis rather explores subjectivities expressed by Caribbeans themselves.

In conclusion, there is a series of Caribbean diasporic works from different periods in the context of the United States listed under categories that ignore Caribbeanness. These works, furthermore, share similar archipelagic responses to the coloniality of the hemisphere. They need an analysis of their own based, quoting Hanna, Harford Vargas and Saldívar again, on "the colonial complicities between

the United States and the Caribbean in the Modern World System” (1), thus bringing to the fore the American dynamics of power that have prompted the works’ mis-categorisations. Analysing them through this framework and comparing works from different periods transcends the historical categories that they have traditionally been assigned depending on hegemonic genealogies. For purposes of space, it is not possible to analyse all of the works that present these characteristics, although I will try to offer a few more examples embedded in the more detailed analysis when pertinent. It was important, at least at this stage, to select works from different linguistic traditions and historical periods. I do not mean that all diasporic Caribbean works adjust to this paradigm, or that this is the only valid reading of the ones selected. It is rather a matter of adopting both a different framework (hemispheric Americanness) and a different epistemology (archipelagic thinking) when analysing, apprehending, and understanding them. I will use Benítez-Rojo’s words to summarise the intention of these comparative chapters: “this text [is] a rereading of a ‘certain kind of’ reading” (*RI* 4-5).

CHAPTER 2: SUBALTERN RHIZOMATIC LIFE NARRATIVES: CLAUDE MCKAY'S *BANJO* AND PIRI THOMAS' *DOWN THESE MEAN STREETS*²⁷

The previous chapter has advocated for the acknowledgement of Claude McKay's Caribbean dimension despite being mostly remembered as a founder of the Harlem Renaissance. In view of this purpose, how can we then account for his self-definition as an American in his autobiographical work *A Long Way from Home*?

A *chaoush* (native doorman and messenger) from the British Consulate had accosted me in a *souk* one day and asked whether I was American. I said I was born in the West Indies and lived in the United States and that I was an American, even though I was a British subject, but I preferred to think of myself as an internationalist. The *chaoush* said he didn't understand what was an internationalist. I laughed and said that an internationalist was a bad nationalist (emphasis in the original; 231)

This statement, rather than representing a sense of uprootedness from his land, is an assertion of Americanness which aligns with the political views and theories of Quijano and Wallerstein, mentioned in the previous chapter. Similarly, rather than being one more member of the Harlem Renaissance, Claude McKay can be said to have been the one who pointed out its weaknesses (Jarret xxxi-ii), adopting a rhetoric which anticipated the later post-essentialist positions. This is not to say that McKay advocated for a Caribbean or Jamaican identity in opposition to an American one; rather the opposite. As the excerpt quoted above shows, McKay often emphasised the importance of the United States for his identity, as is suggested by his famous poem "America:"

²⁷ An earlier version of the introduction to this chapter and of section 2.1 appeared in the journal *ANGLICA: An International Journal of English Studies* as Fernández Jiménez, Mónica. "The Anti-Essentialist Poetics of Claude McKay's *Banjo*." *ANGLICA: An International Journal of English Studies*, vol. 21, no.1, 2020, pp. 41-56.

Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,
And sinks into my throat her tiger's tooth,
Stealing my breath of life, I will confess
I love this cultured hell that tests my youth.
Her vigor flows like tides into my blood,
Giving me strength erect against her hate,
Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood.
Yet, as a rebel fronts a king in state,
I stand within her walls with not a shred
Of terror, malice, not a word of jeer.
Darkly I gaze into the days ahead,
And see her might and granite wonders there,
Beneath the touch of Time's unerring hand,
Like priceless treasures sinking in the sand

(CP 153)

This poem, together with Langston Hughes' "I, too, sing America," has become paradigmatic of the "New Negro's" claim, using the terminology of the Harlem Renaissance, of belonging to this country, despite Marcus Garvey's invitation to go Back-to-Africa.

George Hutchinson claims in the Introduction to the *Cambridge Companion to the Harlem Renaissance* (2007) that, even though this movement had an international pan-African dimension, its cultural politics are heir to American racial power dynamics (4-5):

The mulatto elite of Claude McKay's Jamaica did not consider themselves "black," but he came to embrace the meaning of Negro as the United States institutionalized it. Even when we speak of "transnational" aspects of the Negro renaissance, we are speaking of something profoundly shaped by American racial culture and American power (5)

Yet, as already mentioned, American black epistemology does not exclusively account for Claude McKay's politics as represented in his works, nor for those of any of the members of the movement. As demonstrated by W. James' *Holding Aloft*

the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America (1998) or Putnam's article "Provincializing Harlem: The 'Negro Metropolis' as Northern Frontier of a Connected Caribbean" (2013) published in *Modernism/modernity*, the emergence of the Harlem Renaissance was widely influenced by the arrival of Caribbean migrants in the area during the first decades of the twentieth century.

In this line, when considering hemispheric literary analyses, one must be careful not to adapt to the neo-colonialist cultural²⁸ or intellectual agenda that Ralph Bauer warns might come with "the hemispheric turn" in American Studies:

the "new" hemispheric American studies was largely based in English or American studies departments: was methodologically rooted in (multi)cultural studies and postcolonial theory, with their emphasis on questions of race and ethnicity; and was focused primarily on the United States in a hemispheric context, especially the relation of its borders to ethnic minorities in the United States (mainly Latinas and Latinos) (Bauer 235)

The intersection between the Caribbean and the United States in the emergence of cultural movements analysed in this thesis draws from José Martí's desire to provide subaltern Americans with renewed agency rather than from the perpetuation of unequal power described by Bauer. It takes into consideration that, though in the hemisphere as a whole "a new model of power of global vocation" (Quijano, "Latin America" 533) was instituted, each area, country or region possesses its own "cultural practices of resistance" (Laó-Montes 34).

²⁸ This consideration is not only based on culture. It could also be related to the emergence of economic treaties and institutions such as "the North American Free Trade Agreement, the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas, and economic domination of Latin America by the United States in the name of globalization" (Bauer 236).

There is an awareness, however, of the fact that since the European arrival to the Americas the whole hemisphere has been influenced by a unique model of power dynamics. As such, the Caribbean nations have become the United States' strongholds for securing its imperial designs, as novelist George Lamming comments in the journal *The Guardian* in a text where he yearns for a pan-Caribbean union against the imperialism of the United States:

the tactical withdrawal the British now so proudly call decolonisation simply made way for a new colonial orchestration. The Caribbean returns to its old role of an imperial frontier, now perceived as essential to the security interests of the US (n.p.)

Within the confines of the United States, in contrast, racism became institutionalised because of the country's desire to maintain the coloniality of power and its consequent ethnic division of labour after abolition and the growth of Afro-Caribbean migration (Quijano and Wallerstein 551). The convergence of the two experiences—neocolonialism and internal colonisation—define the Caribbean migrant apprehension of the experience in the United States. Caribbean post-essentialist discourse and its epistemic power, capable of contesting the racial power dynamics and the essentialist nationalism which pervades most articulations of racism, are worth looking for in the literary texts that emerge in the context of the Harlem Renaissance.

Furthermore, the Caribbean seems to be forgotten in the Hemispheric Studies debates, which often compare the economic imperialism of the United States with the “sovereignty of Latin American nation-states” (Bauer 236). Bauer criticises the fact that the hemispheric study of America finds its academic base in the United States (236). However, another—less institutionalised—branch of

hemispheric studies can be found in the Caribbean essays written around the 1990s. Some of the most eloquent texts written in this context come from the Nobel laureate Derek Walcott, who has contributed to the hemispheric debate with the following words:

we [Caribbeans] were American even while we were British, if only in the geographical sense, and now that the shadow of the British Empire has passed through and over us in the Caribbean, we ask ourselves if, in the spiritual or cultural sense, we must become American (WTS 3)

Walcott underscores the absurdity of the colonial territorial organisation because the islands are the result of the same processes of dispossession that pervaded the whole hemisphere. In terms of identification the Caribbean had more in common with any other part of the hemisphere than with Europe. To prove his point, Walcott vindicates the existence a shared culture throughout the hemisphere created by its subaltern: “we know that America is black, that so much of its labor, its speech, its music, its very style of living is generated by what is now cunningly and carefully isolated as ‘black’ culture, that what is most original in it has come out of its ghettos, its river-cultures, its plantations” (4). The spatial dimension that is claimed as representative of the New World experience is not that of the British Empire, but the plantation. The plantation, which occupies a central role in the post-essentialist essays written around the 1990s in the Caribbean by authors such as Édouard Glissant or Antonio Benítez-Rojo. This institution is characteristic of the simultaneously centripetal and centrifugal forces of the Caribbean Sea: there were plantations in the United States, Latin America, and Brazil too (Glissant, *PR* 63), all of them in geographical proximity with the Caribbean.

Although McKay never really intended to return to Jamaica (LW 9), he seems to embody the image of the Caribbean Sea as “a sea that explodes the scattered lands into an arc” (Glissant, *PR* 33). The Caribbean contains knowledges defined by relational and horizontal means of identification, rejecting—to use the terms that Said proposes—the linear filiation of the family and the homeland to indulge in horizontal affiliation,

a kind of compensatory order that, whether it is a party, an institution, a culture, a set of beliefs, or even a world-vision, provides men and women with a new form of relationship, which I have been calling affiliation but which is also a new system (Said, *The World* 19)

McKay's *Banjo* extensively explores this idea, as does another work which is not usually analysed as post-plantation literature: Piri Thomas' *Down these Mean Streets*—the precursor, according to Jorge Duany, of the Nuyorican Poets Movement (n.p.). A certain kind of affiliation stemming from the Caribbean and related to the social institution of the plantation is explored in the pages to follow as “rhizomatic Relation,” an idea developed by Glissant basing on Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept of the “rhizome.”

Banjo is paradoxically set in Marseilles. Despite this setting, the novel offers theoretical discussions that engage in articulating the role of American blacks in the world and the division of labour. *Banjo* delineates a picture of rootless black proletarian life by describing in its pages a great array of black men—and sadly only one woman, the pitfall of this novel—from different national and cultural backgrounds who meet at the ditch of Marseilles and carry out a series of precarious jobs. The protagonists are Ray and Banjo, namely Haitian and African-American men, who engage in debates about the ideological concept of blackness

in the world, resounding with contemporary discussions mostly based in the United States in the context of the Harlem Renaissance. If, according to Quijano, there is a hierarchical world system whose common nexus is the colonality of power, uniting ethnicity and labour, born in the Americas and later expanded world-wide (533-545), the setting of the novel contributes to this view: transnational black workers in Europe discussing American politics of “race.” Furthermore, it seems important to provide a black proletarian vision of France, this period’s “motherland of rootless cosmopolitanism” (Maxwell, “Introduction” xi). Ultimately, the protagonists reject Eurocentrism in terms of labour and capital and embrace the nomad’s life rather than a bourgeois settled lifestyle. They all continue to be vagabonds and therefore defy modern Western ideas of lifestyle to embrace Glissantian errantry, thus contrasting with the attitudes and wishes of some Harlem Intelligentsia members who allegedly imitated the white *ethos*. The novel thus combines U.S.-American concerns with Caribbean responses.

Piri Thomas’ *Down these Mean Streets* (1967), though written in the 1960s, describes the United States’ 1940s to explore the American system of discrimination that is heir to slavery and segregation. Throughout different stages of his life, Piri experiences the inescapable racial power dynamics of the United States which end up determining his work and social life, as well as his relationship with family members, who do not share the same phenotype. An early novel in presenting the intersection between class and race, *Down these Mean Streets* anticipates the notion that the Latinx theoretical framework for the identification of Spanish-speaking populations in the United States might not always be productive because of the binary implications it entails. In Marta Caminero-Santangelo’s words, “‘Latino’ as an ethnic label thus suggests a contrast with some ‘other’ people

understood to be ‘non-Latino’” (“Latinidad” 13). This category may not address some other issues faced by Afro-Latinxs.

Differently, Caribbean discourse aims to counteract the limitations of such models of identification. While the predecessors of Glissant and Benítez-Rojo emphasised African heritage, their Caribbean discourse by contrast rejects static identification paradigms (Bonfiglio 21). In order to do that, these critics employ the imaginary resource of a “maritime geography” (my translation; Bonfiglio 20) which emphasises the “permeable” nature, using Alvarez’s term, of island identities (175). Though Latinx is an aggrupation term and still considers that each particular group (Boricua, Chicano...) has its own culturally specific characteristics, there are also characteristics and struggles which are shared with other non-Spanish speaking Caribbean or American population groups. This is where Piri Thomas is innovative in his novel, showing that the intersection of oppressions in the United States is a result of the coloniality of power and its always present influence. The novel’s protagonist gradually develops an understanding of the power/knowledge famous pair as he either grows up in Harlem, settles in a white majority neighbourhood, enters the prison, or voyages south of the Mason-Dixie line.

2.1. Rhizomatic Vagabondage in Claude McKay’s *Banjo*

One who is errant (who is no longer a traveler, discoverer, or conqueror) strives to know the totality of the world, yet already knows he will never accomplish this

E. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*

Break a vase, and the love that reassembles the fragments in stronger than the love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole [...] It is such love that reassembles our

African and Asiatic fragments, the cracked heirlooms whose restoration shows its white scars

D. Walcott, *What the Twilight Says*

Édouard Glissant describes Relation as a poetics based on the principle of rhizomatic thought (PR 11) taken from Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987). Relation, according to Drabinski, is "a name for the poietic work of reassemblage evoked in Walcott's Nobel lecture" (72), which is quoted in the second epigraph. The experience of having gone through the Abyss—having been captured in Africa and taken to the Caribbean crowded in boats among death and illnesses— informs the Caribbean imaginary. This experience "in the end became knowledge. Not just a specific knowledge, [...] but knowledge of the Whole, greater from having been at the abyss and freeing knowledge of Relation within the Whole" (Glissant, PR 8). The rhizome illustrates how this form of knowledge works; it defines how Caribbeans have imaginatively carried out this work of reassemblage through multiplicity. Illustrated by the stem system, multiplicity is the opposite of the root-book or root models, which "assume a strong principal unity" (5). A rhizomatic book, in opposition, explores interconnections in dispersal.

What better, then, to represent the rhizome than Caribbean literature? Its writers were deprived of the language of their ancestors but explored whatever was left of their African culture with Western languages, which were nonetheless different from those spoken in Europe, languages "whose genius consists in always being open, that is, perhaps, never becoming fixed" (Glissant, PR 34). What could be more rhizomorphous, having modified European languages thanks to the connections of the stems? There are many writers who take images of expansion,

mobility, renewal, horizontal ancestry, and multidirectional memory to apply it to the Caribbean character and history, their genesis a tragic combination of people from different backgrounds, customs, languages, and religions meeting the coloniser's ones and transforming them, turning the image of multiplicity into their identity. In poems like Derek Walcott's "The Sea is History" biblical images are combined with submarine ones in a tracing of the slaves' journey, thus creating an emancipated narrative of the past which defies and parodies colonialist discourse. But, most interestingly, there are those who establish such Relation in their literature as a way to articulate not the past but the present and the future. Betsy Wing, Glissant's translator into English, claims that his whole opus aims at "exploring the possibilities of a language that would be fully Antillean. Such a language would be capable of writing the Antilles into history, generating a conception of time, finding a past and founding a future" (Wing xi). Non-coincidentally, the novels I explore in this chapter do not convey relational modes of existence as a way to approach the past; they rather describe the way in which these characters relate to the world.

Rhizomatic thought is what lies behind McKay's 1929 novel's vagabond philosophy and what Ray, the author's autobiographical persona, comes to realise throughout the novel. As he expresses it: "the vagabond lover of life finds individuals and things to love in many places and not only in one nation" (137). Ray, a Haitian writer, develops and explains throughout the novel the life philosophy of Banjo, who does not normally theorise but just acts: "I ain't edjucated, buddy, Ask mah pardner, Ray" (102). Banjo's philosophy criticises the weaknesses of the culturalist branch of the Harlem Renaissance, which McKay allegedly found problematic, as illustrated in his autobiographical work *A Long Way from Home* with the description of his encounter with Alain Locke in Paris: "I couldn't imagine such a

man as the leader of a renaissance, when his artistic outlook was so reactionary” (241). According to Benito, some of the dominant ideas of the Harlem Renaissance reflected a nationalist attitude which replicated hegemonic ideas traditionally used to justify colonialism (321-2). This novel, on the contrary, describes such nationalism as “a monstrous system for plundering weaker peoples” (137). Ultimately, the novel criticises the adaptation to pre-established Western forms of life, thought, work, and governance. By rejecting the job that they are offered at the end of the novel and sticking to the vagabond lifestyle, Banjo and Ray conclude that their international resistance is not based on acquiring the commodities and means of the white people but on articulating new ways of relation and living. As Ray clearly lets us know, “If you think it’s fine for the society Negroes to fool themselves on the cheapest of imitations, I don’t” (*Banjo* 117).

Glissant’s critique of the nativist views which impregnated independence nationalist movements is expressed in terms of the root and the rhizome too. According to him, these movements imitated the Western model for establishing roots: “the totalitarian drive of a single, unique root – rather than around a fundamental relationship with the Other” (*PR* 14). The internationalist perspective of McKay’s novel defies linearity, something belonging to the Western historical articulation of the world, as Glissant believes. According to the Martiniquan thinker, Christian religion, like natural history evolution, the two tenets of the Western idea of progress, “universaliz[e] linear time,” establishing a before and an after, thus retaining “the power of the principle of linearity that ‘grasped’ and justified History” (48-49). In contrast, one can only describe McKay’s novel in horizontal terms, like a rhizome.

The lack of a unified linear plot in the novel, which has often been associated with Modernism's narrative techniques, here represents a defiance to the nation as a way of identification, because national identity in many ways is complicit with linear narratives (Chalk 93). For example, in both *Banjo* and *A Long Way from Home* suspects of breaking the immigration laws are asked to provide the authorities with accounts of their life *stories*, in an ordered way (Chalk 98). Banjo's way of arriving to Marseilles—by getting deported from his own country—turns him into a nationless international errant who, by avoiding the rules of national identification, manages to achieve his purposes (Cannon 147). The novel's description of the "Nationality Doubtful" papers, which were the excuse for deporting black workers from Europe in times of economic hardship (*Banjo* 311-3), opens up a third space which these black men inhabit, devoid of the tightness of identification, even though they continue to be the victims of mobility laws just because "the police were strong-armed against the happy irresponsibility of the Negro in the face of *civilization*" (emphasis mine; *Banjo* 313). Banjo's deportation, while acknowledging the vulnerability of those rightless individuals roaming the earth without papers²⁹ who live, as per Giorgio Agamben, a "bare life", a form of living on the fringes of the nation (Agamben 22; Manzanos Calvo and Benito Sánchez 66), also shows how these characters can appropriate the means of exclusion to acquire agency against the system.

As already hinted, Banjo is an African-American vagabond who is based in Marseilles at the time the novel takes place, in the 1920s. There he comes into contact with many black workers, either coming from the colonies in Africa, from the

²⁹ Hannah Arendt explains that this nationless existence has been the result of the territorial reorganisation and the practices of denationalisation that followed the two world-wars (260-275), therefore again, a process dictated by the the powerful actors of the world-system.

United States, or from the Black Atlantic diaspora. Their bonding as a group is not based on acknowledging Africa as their common mother land, but on exploring their differences and common experiences. Relation with the Other is essential in this novel, not a colonial relation by which the self is described in opposition to the Other, but rather in heterogeneous difference. That is, next to the Other, this “fundamental relationship with the Other” (PR 14) defined by Glissant, “not exclusion but, rather where difference is realized in going beyond” (PR 82). Describing colonial epistemology, Elleke Boehmer claims that:

The concept of the Other, which is built on the thought of, *inter alia*, Hegel and Sartre, signifies that which is unfamiliar and extraneous to a dominant subjectivity, the opposite or negative against which an authority is defined. The West thus conceived of its superiority relative to the perceived lack of power, self-consciousness, or ability to think and rule, of colonized peoples. Psychoanalysis, too, in particular as refracted by Lacan, has postulated that Self-identity is constituted within the gaze of another (21)

This way of articulating difference as opposition would result in a dangerous imitation of the colonial ethos, perpetuating its oppression mechanisms, as Ray explains: “The Northern Negroes are stand-offish toward the Southern Negroes and toward the West Indians, who are not as advanced as they in civilized superficialities” (200). In fact, Ana M^a Manzanás explains that the very existence of ethnicity and “race” as identity markers points to a certain artificiality in the construction of communities derived from the desire to perpetuate power and marginalisation through the creation of categories (29). Therefore, the conditions and characteristics of ethnicity change depending on the time and location (29). In narratives like *Banjo* and *Down these Mean Streets* the rhizomorphic community that the characters create throughout the narrative has nothing to do with the kind

described by Manzanas and, thus, such mechanisms do not exist and are consistently criticised.

When Banjo meets Ray in Marseilles, the latter is coming to terms with popular ideas about “the Race,” such as his doubts regarding the adequacy of the Back-to-Africa movement led by Marcus Garvey. It is through contact with one another in the form of musical improvisation that the black people in the novel arrive to self-knowledge (A. Reed 758) and not only survival in a hostile place. A heated encounter between Goosey, one of the beach boys, and Ray (Chapter XIV) reflects in the most explicit way popular racial debates taking place at the time McKay wrote his works. Although he seems to agree with *Banjo*’s detractors, Tyrone Tillery explains how the criticism of McKay’s first two novels went “along with the general debate over the black artist’s obligation to his race” (107). Goosey’s idea of fighting “for the race” amounts to not having a behaviour that differs from the one of the whites, as he criticises Banjo’s jokes as “niggerism” claiming that “white people don’t make jokes like that about themselves” (182). Goosey—aligning with culturally nationalist discourses—dismisses the parodic mimicry that Homi Bhabha defines as subversive, constructing instead a homogenised version of the race (suffice it to say that this is a highly inadequate term nowadays). “There is a crucial difference between this colonial articulation of man and his doubles,” Bhabha contends, “and that which Foucault describes as ‘thinking the unthought,’” (130) that is, there is not any desire for a “true essence” anymore; by mimicking, the colonised redefines the very terms of reality (Bhabha 130). Ray accuses Goosey of merely repeating what could at that time be found in sensationalist newspapers about black people, “full of false ideas about Negroes” (183), which were attempting to speak for them as a unified mass. According to Benito, this anti-

essentialist position observable in Ray is the trend in theory that will come after the cultural nationalist period (323), which confirms my view that McKay anticipated to his time. As Glissant explains, “Gradually, premonitions of the interdependence at work in the world today have replaced the ideologies of national independence that drove the struggles for decolonization” (*PR* 143). Banjo’s and Ray’s minds seem to have already been decolonised.

Glissant explains that before the establishment of Western nations, civilisations were not rooted in a single place, “conquerors [were] the transient root of their people. The West, therefore, is where this movement becomes fixed” (*PR* 14). The opposite of this sort of mobility is errantry, since “one who is errant (who is no longer traveler, discoverer, or conqueror) strives to know the totality of the world yet already knows he will never accomplish this-and knows that is precisely where the threatened beauty of the world resides” (*PR* 20). A rhizomatic Caribbean text cannot be considered without the image of the errant; in McKay, this is the vagabond. Banjo has dominated “errant thought” (Glissant, *PR* 18) and, therefore, according to Glissant, has achieved a level of decolonisation by which the Western episteme of the root is destroyed (17). Therefore, it is not surprising that errantry defies economic powers at work, which dispossessed and exploited populations in the colonies for the sake of Capitalism (Lenin 5) to later force them to adapt to these powers (Piper 15-18). This is the colonial ambivalence that permeates much post 1950 Caribbean literature, the sense that the only way to find an identity is through becoming part of the system that oppresses you (Gikandi, *Limbo* 15). The characters in the novel, however, rather than engaging in capitalist practices of accumulation, to share any amount of money they receive among each other for drinking and diversion. Therefore, what brings them together is pleasure and not

only economic survival (A. Reed 759). In this way they create a universe of alternative options of community formation and identification.

Banjo and Ray's final decision of not accepting a job as part of an American vessel's crew in order to continue being vagabonds defies Western capitalist modes of existence. Furthermore, one of the reasons they list as determining in their decision is the refusal to be targeted by any "documentary apparatus" (Chalk 109), and this also defies nationalist modes of identification. They do not only reject rootedness but also unrootedness, since "[e]rrantry, therefore, does not proceed from renunciation nor from frustration regarding a supposedly deteriorated (deterritorialized) situation of origin; it is not a resolute act of rejection or an uncontrolled impulse of abandonment" (Glissant, *PR* 18). Like the Caribbean, Harlem in these times reflected a challenge to roots: "[t]here one found a complex and culturally productive concentration of peoples of African descent" (Hutchinson 5) which McKay many times claimed to love and find inspiring (Maxwell, "Introduction" xv; xviii). Ray, whose time in the United States is narrated in *Home to Harlem*, an earlier novel by McKay, vindicates the importance of the United States in the development of black identity because, according to him, communities of their own are formed in there. In Hutchinson's words,

at the heart of that novel is an argument (by the Haitian stand-in for McKay himself) that working-class Negroes in the United States (but not exclusively American Negroes) are the most powerful and avant-garde of all black groups because they inhabit the most vital, rough-and-tumble, powerful capitalist and quasi-democratic nation in the world, while American-style racism helps bind them into a cohesive, racially conscious group. The transnational romance of race, for McKay, centers in the United States, and its most important material as well as intellectual and even cultural

resources emanate from there, ineluctably shaped by the race-producing disciplines of America's one-drop rule (5)

The vibrant community formed in Harlem, where one quarter of the workers came from "the plantation arenas of the Caribbean and the American South" (Maxwell, "Introduction" xiv), involved a reconsideration of its members' affiliative symbols and motifs as they engaged in resisting the hegemony: "You see race prejudice over there drives the Negroes together to develop their own group life" (*Banjo* 205). It is precisely the country's institutionalised racism that unveils the racial dynamics affecting the whole modern world-system as defined by Immanuel Wallerstein, even if they are not so visible in metropolitan Europe.

Despite what many of the characters in the novel believe, Europe is not such a paradise for black people. As Ray discusses with a student,

from what I have seen of the attitude of this town toward Negroes and Arabs, I don't know how it would be if you Europeans had a large colored population to handle in Europe [...] Here like anywhere (as the police inspector had so clearly intimated by his declaration) one black villain made all black villains as one black tout made all black touts, one black nigger made all black niggers, and one black failure made all black failures (274-5)

In Bhabha's reading of Frantz Fanon's theories, culture emerges as political struggle (52), following a poststructuralist approach to identification by which cultures derive from hybrid moments or third spaces of enunciation which break with the Western linear progression of history. In the false illusion of Europe as tolerant with difference, the break of continuity created by cultural translation phenomena such as Harlem cannot happen. Such fallacious and naïve approach to European societies favours the alienation and neurosis described by Fanon in *Black*

Skin, White Masks (1952). In this illusory space, Ray observes how the black men he meets are stuck with stereotypical colonial ideas about “the race.”

In *Home to Harlem* there is reference to the Caribbean experience in the United States. Ray teaches the African-American protagonist—Jake—the history of the Haitian revolution, to which the latter reacts with admiration and surprise: “a romance of his race, just down there by Panama. How strange!” (*HH* 60). McKay’s decision to place a Haitian character as protagonist—instead of a Jamaican like himself—not only pays homage to the Haitian revolution, which proved that an alternative order was possible, but also denounces the American occupation of this country (Pedersen 191). As Ray explains to Jake, twentieth-century Americanness has prompted the replacement of the old European powers in their military and imperial role in the Caribbean by an aggressive United States. This situation has also resulted in the bigger influence that Caribbean migrants hold over the construction of U.S. American society. Ray’s romanticised perception of the Caribbean country soon disappears from the narrative and is replaced by the accurate detailed description of Harlem’s nightlife which gains relevance as an affiliative space of resistance for the black community. McKay’s way of looking at Harlem’s power for subversion emphasises the cabarets, the jazz clubs, and the shared lodgings as the black mechanisms established in Harlem in order to survive “heedless American capitalism” (Cooper, *RS* 13). A homesick Ray admits this in *Banjo*:

With the identity card regulation and the frequent rafles the French police had unlimited power of interference with the individual and Ray had arrived at the conclusion that he had really had more individual liberty under the law in the Puritan-ridden Anglo-Saxon countries than in the land of “Liberté, Egalité, et Fraternité” (*Banjo* 263)

Harlem, as shown in *Home to Harlem*, is the crystallisation of these third spaces that are created so that blacks can “take control of [their] own destiny” (Cooper, RS 13).

The presence of Caribbean migration in working class neighbourhoods in New York is also portrayed in Piri Thomas’ autobiography, set in Spanish Harlem around the 1940s. In this work, a Puerto Rican working class family shapes their self-perception through their inhabiting of two distinct racially marked neighbourhoods in the United States. While his family finds solace in the settlement in a white-majority neighbourhood where some members can pass, the protagonist embarks on a voyage South of the Mason-Dixie line that will make him discover the relationality of the American Hemisphere. He eventually discovers with the cultural heterogeneity which defines his Caribbean background and thus overcomes the culturally nationalist perception of the Puerto Rican identity. Therefore, Piri Thomas’ novel is not exclusively a Latino novel. The next section contends that a postcolonial understanding of the same would be more fruitful in attempting to explain why it has been so difficult to categorise.

2.2. Queer Spaces and Rhizomatic Kinship in Piri Thomas' *Down these Mean Streets*³⁰

the ruins of the Plantation have affected American
cultures all around

E. Glissant. *Poetics of Relation*

Puerto Rican literature written in the United States is difficult to categorise. Can we really assess it as immigrant fiction? Puerto Rico, a former Spanish colony, was ceded to the United States after the Spanish-American War at the beginning of the 20th century and, although American politicians have claimed that the island was never an American colony, that the United States never possessed any colonies, it was not immediately annexed as a new state (Pierce Flores 81-98). In fact, it has never been. Puerto Ricans are citizens of the United States since 1916 thanks to the Jones Act (Pierce Flores 82), but the island's statehood has been postponed or evaded for decades through what Sam Erman calls "creative ambiguity" —legal and constitutional detours taken by the institutions and administrations to counteract "perceived conflicts between Constitution and empire" (1240). Furthermore, the statehood claim is not that majoritarian in Puerto Rico (Pierce Flores 98). Independence movements also exist on the island, but they are clearly minoritarian (Acosta Cruz 4); the more widespread feeling without doubt is contentment with the island's commonwealth status (Acosta Cruz 3; Pierce Flores 102).

Taking this colonial history into consideration, is Puerto Rican fiction postcolonial literature? There are not so many differences, in fact, between the

³⁰ An earlier version of this section appeared in the journal *Revista de Estudios Norteamericanos* as Fernández Jiménez, Mónica. "Queering American Space in Piri Thomas' *Down these Mean Streets*: A Glissantian Approach to Kinship." *Revista de Estudios Norteamericanos*, vol. 24, 2020, pp. 47-66.

discourses of immigration and postcolonial ones. Migration from former colonies is the most extensive one, having even been termed diaspora, especially after decolonisation, as Jenny Sharpe explains:

The designation of 'postcolonial' as an umbrella term for diasporic and minority communities is derived, in part, from an understanding of decolonization as the beginning of an unprecedented migration of peoples from the ex-colonies to advanced industrial centers. ("US Postcolonial" 182)

Furthermore, some critics defend the idea that the oppression of ethnic minorities in the United States responds to a regime of internal colonialism. Robert Blauner suggests that, despite differences, the process of power dispossession with regards to ethnic minorities in the United States—particularly blacks—follows the same mechanisms as traditional colonialism. One of these mechanisms is the institutionalised ghetto, whose inhabitants, according to Blauner, do not participate in the decision-making of the neighbourhood or own businesses or property (396-8).

The mayor of New York in 1966, John Lindsay, expressed it with these words:

Harlem has many of the features of underdeveloped countries. The basic similarity between Harlem and an underdeveloped nation is that the local population does not control the area's economy, and therefore most of the internally generated income is rapidly drained out. That money is not returned or applied to any local community improvement (n.p.)

Ghettoes, then, have the characteristics of internal colonies within the United States.

Therefore, it is productive to analyse a text such as Piri Thomas' *Down these Mean Streets*, which is a canonical *bildungsroman* of the American ethnic barriocentric tradition, through the lenses of postcolonial theory. However, there are

those who argue against the postcolonial categorisation, like Sharpe who problematises this model as being too simplistic because it homogenises the histories of all migrants and ethnic minorities into one single coherent narrative (“US Postcolonial” 182). In fact, Jorge J. Klor de Alva claims that not even all former colonies can be considered postcolonial territories. This consideration was already well assumed for now hegemonic territories like the United States (Boehmer 8), but Klor de Alva argues that Latin American countries too resembled this model since “the elites who triumphed in the wars of independence [...] were never colonial subjects” (245); they were largely Westernised and did not undergo a process of cultural and political decolonisation (247). However, the imperialist relations established by the United States with the (also Hispanic) Caribbean islands and even within its own territory clearly bear a pattern of domination which, as Aníbal Quijano has repeatedly contended, follows a logic of coloniality (“Latin America” 533; 561).

More interestingly, bearing in mind that Puerto Ricans are citizens of the United States, can we really assess their literatura in the continent as immigrant fiction? One of the reasons why Puerto Rico was denied its immediate statehood at the time of annexation was cultural difference based on language (Pierce Flores 78). As such, it is understandable that Puerto Ricans live in the United States as migrants—“citizens yet foreigners,” in Juan González’s words (253)—or are considered as so in their social relations with mainstream Americans. Additionally, some Puerto Ricans are black, like the protagonist of *Down these Mean Streets*. In fact, both these matters were early addressed during the first debates in the United States Congress regarding the potential statehood of Puerto Rico, when political leaders claimed that Puerto Ricans “were of a different *race* [...] and would not fit

into the Anglo-Saxon cultural and moral traditions of the United States” (emphasis mine; Pierce Flores 78). This discourse is painfully reminiscent of colonial supremacist arguments that justified domination and administration.

Piri Thomas’ 1967 autobiographical novel *Down These Mean Streets* is a text where all these confluences and irreconciliations are reflected. It narrates, in the *bildungsroman* mode, the growing up process of Piri, a young black boy born to Puerto Rican parents in Harlem who confronts the realities of racism in the 1940s United States.³¹ The novel has been claimed by the Latino and African American traditions (Sosa-Velasco 288) because in it the problematics related to nationality, linguistic difference, class, and racial difference are intersected, but the work clearly does not fit any clear-cut categorisation. The protagonist’s mobility—not only from Puerto Rico to the United States but across racial and social boundaries in the United States—allows him to discover a shared (hi)story of slavery and racism experienced across the American hemisphere by different groups of African descent. The novel’s emphasis on mobility thus references the double diaspora of the Caribbean, by which the slaves carried from Africa to the islands eventually became migrants in other parts of the world, most notably the United States. This novel is not only hard to categorise, it actually destabilises the very notion of category, for, as Glissant believes, when has the Caribbean subject ceased to be a migrant, a traveller, an errant?

The framework of the plantation is useful to analyse fictions such as this one because it contests the limitations in literary analysis provoked by frameworks tied to the nation-state, which tie Caribbean writers to the epistemologies of domination that they seek to overturn. The post-essentialist and postnational approach to

³¹ From now on I will refer to the protagonist as Piri to differentiate character from author.

American cultures manages to accurately account for the internal differences of the territory's historiographies while at the same time analyses the hemispheric pattern of domination which pervades the Americas. Piri Thomas's *Down These Mean Streets* illustrates the view that an analysis of racism and power in the American context cannot follow a nationalist framework and should rather take into account the spatial institution by which the American subalterns throughout the hemisphere are bound together: the plantation. The spatial dimension of Thomas's novel also extends to incorporate and exploration of contemporary spaces of U.S. American culture that reproduce the plantation's logic. These are the Harlem barrio, the segregated South, and the prison, which bear a pattern of coloniality but where its inhabitants also create strategies of resistance and affiliation contrary to Western epistemologies and where archipelagic thinking can be found.

Plantations were common in all the Caribbean islands, the South of the United States, part of Brazil, and the north of Latin America (Glissant, *PR* 63), and they determined the societal history of the American subalterns (Benítez-Rojo, *RI* 38; 73). Benítez-Rojo contends that, though the presence of plantations in the Spanish Caribbean entered into decline around the beginning of the seventeenth century (33-44), thus accounting for these islands' "demographic, economic, and social [differences compared to] the rest of the Caribbean" (*RI* 62), it was its presence, no matter how shortly-lived, that determined that the whole of the Caribbean is the same "*societal area*" (emphasis in the original; 38). This is a structure characterised by a series of socio-economic human relations that repeat themselves through time (*RI* 45; 72), arguably also in the spaces mentioned above. Similarly, as we know, plantations were not present everywhere in the United States, but they are pretty much alive in the social imaginary of African Americans.

The question here, once again, is not bounded by national categories. Illustratively, the history of African Americans may have more to do with Haitians than with the Pilgrim fathers but, unlike in Haiti, their revolution was not led by their equals but by their oppressors. Is then Haitian literature—following Klor de Alva’s logic—postcolonial but African American literature is not? Because of this, it is imperative not to analyse the experience of the subalterns on the sole basis of the national cluster, as it fails to distinguish between the separation of local histories and global designs which decolonial thinker Walter Mignolo so intently traces.

Benítez-Rojo explains that even with abolition, independence or socialism, the structures of the plantation—determining economic, racial, and spatial hierarchies (Glissant, *RI* 63-5)—have managed to repeat themselves through chaotic transformations³² (73-4). According to Glissant, the cultures that emerged out of the plantation began their own literary tradition, one which is defined by the discontinuities that ensued from the slaves’ attempts to express themselves in a language that, because of repression, was deeply symbolic (*RI* 71). Piri Thomas’s work reflects these transformations in the protagonist’s pilgrimage across different locations in his aim to reach the American South: he explores spaces where these dynamics reproduce themselves within the American coloniality of power but also places of resilience and contestation. Thus, he learns about the shared past of the subalterns with whom he identifies more than with his own family.

Piri’s lack of mutual understanding with his family—and the ensuing lack of affection—reflects the alternative forms of kinship that Gigi Adair, relying on the

³² Benítez-Rojo relies on the Theory of Chaos to define the social structure that he ascribes to post-plantation societies. He argues that the socio-economic dynamics that started with plantations irregularly proliferate again from time to time in the Caribbean (he makes reference to planting companies appropriating the best lands once slavery was abolished). On a different note, the cultural reactions against this violence also proliferate in these places (17; 73).

work of Glissant, contends developed in the plantation (134). Adair demands for a necessary change in the conceptualisation of kinship within cultural analyses, which she believes would be achieved through a process of “queering.” She employs this term because she believes that the traditional approaches to kinship that inform both colonialism and nationalism are based on the heterosexual structure of biological linearity (9). In the context of the plantation, this structure was only reserved for the colonisers, but the dislocated slaves conformed an alternative affiliation defined by Adair as a “queer diaspora” uniting those who shared the same conditions of oppression (134). It is also due to colonialism that biological kinship has such a great value in the Americas nowadays. The biological and linear understanding of kinship became consolidated in the American hemisphere with the arrival the Europeans. According to Glissant, the evolution of the Western understanding of the history of humanity is based on linear and chronological³³ narratives (Glissant, *PR* 48;51). Filial legitimacy became fixed in the West when nations became rooted in a territory while nomadism entailed conquering those who did not belong to the community (*PR* 14-18). In these conquests—and ensuing colonisation—the underlying notion was that the root of the conquerors be transplanted into the new territory, taking with them their language and religions (Glissant, *PR* 14; 50). This belief is therefore also behind “the violent destruction of kinship”—the kinship of the Others—in the practice of slave trade (Adair 2).

“Queer diaspora studies” are not only devoted to an exploration of LGBTQ+ sexuality, but also engage in reconceptualising the heteronormative biological notion of kinship that pervades the Eurocentric tradition (Adair 8; 11-12). For Adair,

³³ Glissant makes reference to Christianity and natural history evolution to exemplify how within Western epistemology time is linear (think of the conceptualisation of time as before and after Christ or the linear evolution of the species) and destined towards a specific destiny. This permeated all the aspects of life and “the power of the principle of linearity” would be retained to justify a history of conquest (49).

“queering” means an epistemological contestation of the principles lying behind the logics of nationalism. These principles are, non-coincidentally, those of heteronormativity, since heterosexual lineage stands is complicit with the historical projection of descent explained above (Adair 10). Adair’s concept is therefore named “queering” because of its attempt to debunk the heteronormative as the only model of thought (9), but her argument is not limited to that. Adair defines as “queer” all subjects that escape the logics of nationalism, in particular diasporic ones, since their displacement and the dissonance between nation and territory enters into conflict with nationalist logics (10). However, that this understanding of identification as rooted in a territory and arborescent in terms of kinship has been sometimes reproduced in the context of diaspora—what Gilroy expresses as “talk[ing] back to [the] nation-state” (*Against Race* 126) —in an attempt to reconstruct “the integrity of the nation” abroad (Gilroy, *Against Race* 127). Since Piri’s family, in chromatic terms, ironically does not fit into the arborescent logic of filiation—some members of the family are white while others are black—the novel is able to unveil the artificial nature of this model. Through the protagonist’s rejection of Puerto Ricanness as his main emotional affiliation in order to embrace black identity, Thomas’s novel proposes a postnational framework, which is by extension a challenge to linear kinship:

“I’m a Negro.” [Piri said]

“You ain’t no nigger,” José said.

“I ain’t?”

“No. You’re a Puerto Rican.”

“I am, huh?” I looked at José and said, “Course, you gotta say that. ‘Cause if I’m a Negro, then you and James is one too. And that ain’t leavin’ out Sis and Poppa. Only Momma’s an exception. She don’t care what she is.” (64)

Therefore, the categorisation of this novel as Latino or African American, which would bear a component of linearity too, has not been able to account for these kinds of challenges. The alternative relations that emerged in the plantations as an “extended family” (Glissant, *PR* 72), though, break away from such rooted notions to engage in more rhizomatic ones, while the hemispheric literary model that critics like Glissant propose also accounts better for the heterogeneity of the novel.

In the plantation context of oppression, the new relationships and affiliations that emerged must be considered legitimate kinship in our analyses if those are meant to surpass the colonial gaze. David Eng similarly suggests that the understanding of kinship should not be relegated to the biological family (4). Particularly in terms of space, “queering” is present in Thomas’s novel with the protagonist’s gradual exploration of spaces that, though presented as full of violence and devoid of possibilities, also allow for a reconsideration of biological kinship, not as a pre-given natural category but as an ideological construct that perpetuates racist and nativist attitudes. Thomas’s novel is set in what I call “queer spaces.” These are spaces where the logics of linear kinship and its consequent assumptions of racial purity are not present. In them, the characters have the possibility of uniting in alternative family networks despite skin colour, nationality, and religion. As a result, they also challenge the logics of nationalism and colonialism by suggesting that affiliation is not linked to territoriality.

The novel begins at the moment when the protagonist and first-person narrator is just a teenager—around thirteen or fourteen years old (Thomas 15)—and walks around his neighbourhood in Harlem—one of the queer spaces—at night expressing the fear of being hit by his father for being late. But just before that there is a prologue in which Harlem—“my *barrio de noche*” (emphasis in the original; ix)—

is celebrated as a heterogeneous landscape where lights, car noises, and music merge. This description of the barrio recalls Glissant's definition of the post-plantation: "the Plantation region, having joined with the endless terrain of haciendas or latifundio, spread thin to end up in mazes of sheet metal and concrete in which our common future takes its chances" (*PR* 72-3). This is the first stage in Piri's life, when he feels the least alienated if we compare this time with the next locations he inhabits.

Life in Harlem is depicted as really hard in the first few chapters, when the family clearly idealises life in Puerto Rico and yearns to move on to a stage with less suffering: the family lives in a crowded and extremely cold apartment where there is no intimacy and the father works at a WPA job in almost inhuman conditions. The apartment and, by extension, the barrio in which it is situated, are described as sorts of "crisis heterotopias" in the sense that Michel Foucault envisioned them. Heterotopias are, according to Foucault, places which are "in relation with all the other sites" by "represent[ing], contest[ing], and invert[ing] them" ("Spaces" 24). Out of the two types of heterotopias which Foucault lists, crisis heterotopias are inhabited by "individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis" ("Spaces" 24), like adolescents or pregnant women. I consider Harlem in this novel a crisis heterotopia because it is inhabited by migrant workers who have recently arrived in the continental U.S. (I use this term so as not to imply that Puerto Rico is not part of the United States), but whose objective is to leave these places and move to "better" neighbourhoods, as if this was only a temporary state. However, this place is interestingly presented in the novel as the only hospitable one for Piri.

Piri's time in his first Harlem block proves difficult, but mainly because of the problematic relationship with his father. Piri expresses that, compared to the treatment his other siblings—non-coincidentally, white—receive, his father always “sounds harder and meaner” when he speaks to him: “*I wonder if it's something I done, or something I am*” (emphasis in the original; 22). After those first three chapters the family moves from the previous Puerto Rican block where “everybody acted, walked, and talked like [Piri]” (24) to an Italian block in a different street in Harlem. There, the protagonist is bullied and brutally hit by a gang of Italian kids not because of being Puerto Rican, but because of being black. How is this a hospitable site for him then, when the problem of blackness—which pervades the novel—appears here as well? Because an alternative form of association becomes available to Piri as he grows up: a gang in which he is accepted after demonstrating his “rep” (reputation) at a street initiation ritual (50-1). The gang functions like a war machine, as described by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. War machines are defined by their functioning outside all state organisations (352-356). For Deleuze and Guattari, these gangs “are groups of the rhizome type, as opposed to the arborescent type that centers around organs of power”; they are “metamorphoses of a war machine formally distinct from all State apparatuses of their equivalents which are instead what structure centralized societies” (358). Piri's gang is a means for group self-defence—“Shit, I had been scared, but that was over. I was in; it was *my block now*” (emphasis in the original; 51)—for people who have been abandoned by the administration and public services. Just before talking about the gang, the previous chapter explains how Piri and his mother go to the Home Relief Office. Piri is witness to the kind of treatment received by the people who are there, in their majority black and Puerto Rican: they are accused of losing their WPA jobs because of their laziness or addiction to alcohol.

This kind of mistrust for state institutions is also represented in the musical film *West Side Story* (1961), one of the first—although problematic because of aspects such as its blackface—filmic representations of the Nuyorican³⁴ experience, in turn based on a Broadway musical. In it, the two rival gangs, namely Puerto Ricans and white Americans (children of European immigrants), would never, despite their enmity, betray each other to the police, who they perceive not even as an enemy but as an entity which they are devoted to ignoring and leaving out of their parallel organisation. There is a scene in the film where the white gang members keep silent as a policeman asks them for information about the other gang. Collaborating with the policeman would have proved useful for the gang's goal of dominating the territory in their Barrio—"Look, fellas, I'm for you. I want this beat cleaned up and you can do it for me. I'll even lend a hand if things get rough" (*West Side Story*)—but they decide not to do it. The gang's silence throughout the scene does not even establish a hierarchy within this band's opponents, only that the organised state is "of another species, another nature, another origin" (Deleuze and Guattari 352) and they should thus not be mixed. The police is a tool for control employed by the state apparatus according to Deleuze and Guattari (352), an apparatus which wants to "prevent[...] all combat" unless it is institutionalised (353), for which it makes use of "police officers and jailers" (352). As a state institution, the police feels menaced by war machines such as the gang just

³⁴ "Nuyorican" is the name attributed to the Puerto Rican community in New York because of its long-lasting presence and the high numbers of population they represent. They have come to compose a community of their own whose identity politics differ from both Puerto Ricans on the island and mainstream Americans and share aspects with the African American community with which they cohabitate in the Harlem blocks (and later the Bronx) (Grosfoguel, *Colonial Subjects* 142). Their politics and poetics—exemplified by the 1960s artistic movement which popularised the term—represent one of our time's biggest cultural challenges to the nation-state. The last example is athlete Jasmine Camacho-Quinn's winning of the gold medal in the 100 meters hurdles for Puerto Rico at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. Camacho-Quinn, whose father is Anglo-American and does not speak proficient Spanish, was born in South Carolina and trained at the University of Kentucky (Meléndez-Badillo 2021, n.p.; Castillo 2021, n.p.). The Puerto Rican and Nuyorican community agrees that this is not at odds with her representing the island, and in fact that might represent its cultural politics even more accurately.

because their workings contest the nature of underlying state structures (Deleuze and Guattari 356). In fact, it is interesting that the policeman's motives in the film are racist, as exemplified by the dialogue quoted above, while the white gang's intentions are only related to street gang dynamics, and—despite having used racial slur throughout the film—they look at the policeman's talk with amazement as he expresses his thoughts.

The gang organisation is, however, not attainable in the Long Island suburb where Piri's family eventually moves once his father "mak[es] good money at the airplane factory" (81). There Piri feels that he is constantly "the only one trying out" (82) and, after trying to become friendly with a girl named Marcia and asking her out for a dance, he feels for the first time the recipient of a sort of hate which has nothing to do with the gang fights in Harlem. After she makes an excuse, Piri hears Marcia talking to a friend, explaining to her that Piri must have had some nerve to ask her out being black and concludes that "[w]e're getting invaded by niggers" (85). Because of this constant racism which his white siblings do not suffer nor denounce, Piri decides to go back to Harlem, where he engages in the business of drug dealing. His siblings's lack of understanding for their brother's situation exposes kinship as a colonial construction. Filiation, as its importance evolved from the Western idea of legitimacy developed through epics as myths in the ancient world, is associated with racial purity: in these ancient texts, what unleashed the tragedy was the "threat of métissage" (emphasis in the original; Glissant, *PR* 50), as in Helen of Troy's abduction. Piri's detachment from his family drives him to explore

new methods of contesting traditional family and kinship structures—of reorganizing national and transnational communities based not on origin,

filiation, and genetics but on destination, affiliation, and the assumption of a common set of social practices or political commitments (Eng 4)

Piri finds a more meaningful relation with his friends Brew and Crutch than with his siblings. With these two he does not only share a common experience; he also learns what this experience means, a task at which his father had failed. Furthermore, the dynamics of these relations are determined by the spaces in which they take place, Harlem being in this case a “queer space” where the power relations that dominate the other spaces do not work.

Blauner explains that while white immigrant groups only live in ghettos for one or two generations before moving to other places, as the logic of the crisis heterotopia suggests, this is not the case with blacks. Blauner’s explanation is that black ghettos function as internal colonies: their businesses are owned by white people and their inhabitants do not participate in their public life and its policy-making (397-8). Piri finds the racism he suffers in Long Island—where he is constantly reminded that he does not belong—less bearable than the Harlem fights between gangs based on “reputation,” because the former reflects the sort of state racism whose institutionalisation is, according to Quijano and Wallerstein, a result of Americanness. In this case, Piri feels—and is—completely deprived of agency and control. Although at the beginning of the novel he refuses to identify as black, claiming that he is Puerto Rican, after experiencing life in a white neighbourhood and later trying to find a job, he realises that “a lot of things that made sense to any Negro [...] made a lot of sense to me” (120). Piri narrates how selling drugs became easily available to him on his return to Harlem from Long Island (98). However, when trying to obtain another job, he discovers the close relationship between racism and labour in the United States: “I opened my mouth to answer and Louie

and I knew what was shakin' at the same fuckin' time. The difference between me and Louie was he was white" (103). After this realisation, and also after assessing his own former denial, whereby he insisted that he was "no damn Negro and [...] no paddy [but] Puerto Rican" (123), Piri decides that going to the Jim Crow South would "set [him] straight on a lotta things" (127).

In his journey of acquisition of knowledge, following the bildungsroman tradition, Piri establishes affiliative connections with those with whom he shares the same sort of oppression, whom he feels closer to and understands better than his family: "I was scared of the whole fucking world. *Brew, baby, you were right!* I cried. *Where the fuck are you, baby? Damn, man, you're my ace, you're my one brother*" (emphasis in the original; 191). These affiliations are established in spaces which derive from the logics of the plantation, where "[w]ithin this universe of domination and oppression, of silent or professed dehumanization, forms of humanity stubbornly persisted" (Glissant, *PR* 65). For Glissant "the Plantation is one of the focal points for the development of present-day modes of Relation" (*PR* 65), by which "identity is no longer completely within the [biological] root but also in [horizontal] Relation" (Glissant, *PR* 18). Glissant's concept of Relation rejects the discourse on absolute origins (Forbes 7-8), therefore contesting the logics of the nation and the consequent racial purity mentioned above. As was the case with the slaves separated from their families in the plantations, the "present-day modes of Relation" in which Piri engages contest biological kinship too. For him, they sharply contrast with the problematic relationships he has with his family. As expressed in the quote above, Brew is not only a part of Piri's family, but his only "one brother," a realisation expressed after they have experienced through the same discrimination in the South and therefore identified with the same cultural practices of resistance.

Identification in terms of chromatics is prone to be criticised as essentialist. In fact, Marta E. Sánchez considers that Brew—from whom Piri learns this identification—is “a dark-skinned African American from Harlem who talks the talk of an angry black nationalist” (117). Nevertheless, this identification is grounded on lived experience rather than essentialist notions of identity, since it leads to an exploration of the power dynamics that operate around non-white people in the hemisphere. As shown in the novel, people of African descent are essentialised by others but their own denial to acknowledge the categories which are imposed upon them perpetuates rather than deconstructs such categorisation. The novel proves how rejecting this category leaves the discriminations inflicted on its base unopposed, as Piri suggests to his also black father: “If you’re really so sure you’re white, come on down South with Brew and me and see where you’re really at” (151). Piri makes his decision to go to the segregated South when the relationship with his family reaches its worst moment. He finds out that his siblings were making excuses for his appearance, claiming that he has “Indian blood”, to the white people they met in Babylon (the Long Island neighbourhood), which unleashes a fight between them (146-7). Some chapters later, his father, after much denial and violence towards Piri, finally confesses that it was the hate that he himself had received from white Americans when he arrived on the continent that he had internalised and projected towards his son (153).

In his confession, Piri’s father recounts how some Americans were baffled at his surname, wondering “how come, if [he] was Puerto Rican, [he] had John Thomas for a name” (153), to which he responded that “[his] father was so proud to be an American that he named all his children with fine American names” (153). This conversation, together with the journey south the Mason-Dixie line, completes Piri’s

process of acquisition of knowledge about his Caribbean homeland and the hemisphere's shared history of slavery. As he explains to his brother José,

“And James is blanco, too?” I asked quietly.

“You're damn right.”

José flushed the toilet chain so hard it sounded as if somebody's neck had broken. “Poppa's the same as you,” he said, avoiding my eyes, “Indian.”

“What kinda Indian?” I said bitterly. “Caribe? Or maybe Borinquén? Say, José, didn't you know the Negro made the scene in Puerto Rico way back? And when the Spanish spics ran outta Indian coolies, they brought them big blacks from you know where. Poppa's got moyeto blood. I got it. Sis got it. James got it. And, mah deah brudder, you-all got it! (145)

Despite the linear tones of the conversation in terms of blood and how kin is transmitted, the ironic situation weaved in this novel through the fact that the siblings possess different skin colours encourages a reconsideration of what family is or—should be. The novel suggests that the failures of the family are due to the racism that is found at the core of biological understandings of kinship, which impede a positive relationship between these two brothers.

The space of the South also participates in this reconsideration. There everyone who belongs to the plantation past is homogenised and treated in the same way:

“Yeah, Brew,” I said, “it must be tough of you Negroes.”

“Wha' yuh mean, us Negroes? Ain't yuh includin' yourself? Hell, you ain't but a coupla shades lighter'n me, and even if yuh was even lighter'n that, you'd still be a Negro,”

I felt my chest get tighter. I said, “I ain’t no damn Negro and I ain’t no paddy. I’m Puerto Rican.”

“You think that means anything to them James Crow paddies?” Brew said coolly (123)

Hence, the constant denial of Piri’s family and their outrage at Piri’s self-definition as black resembles the destruction of kinship which took place during the Middle Passage and in the plantation (Adair 2). This is not to say that all black people should be considered biological kin, but that favouring a traditional understanding of kinship in this novel denies Piri and people in his liminal situation the possibility of deconstructing filiation. Like the emotional affiliation which emerged in the plantation, the internal organisation of queer spaces, like Harlem, challenges the racism and violence that have been transforming and repeating themselves since the European arrival to the hemisphere (Benítez-Rojo, *RI* 73-4; Quijano, “Latin America” 567).

Another space fulfils this role in the novel, this time a “deviation heterotopia,” defined by Foucault as a place “in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed” (“Spaces” 25): the prison. On coming back from the South, Piri goes back to Harlem determined to never again live in a white neighbourhood. He eventually becomes addicted to heroin, hooked on “the way out feeling when that good-o smack was making it with you, that nothing in the whole *mundo* world made no difference, nothing—neither paddies nor Poppa and strange other people” (emphasis in the original; 206). Because he needs money to satisfy his addiction, he first decides to deal with drugs but, after several unfortunate events, the most significant one being Piri’s having an unexpected baby, he and his friend Louie together with some white professional

criminals from Newark plan to raid a night club. The “stick-up” does not go as planned and Piri is shot and ends up in the hospital. He is then sent to jail because in his attempt to defend himself he shoots and injures policeman. The years in prison, although frustrating and alienating for him, expand Piri’s knowledge in terms of more alternative forms of relation. The “plenty of talking” which takes place in the prison (Thomas 258) rehumanises the convicts who narrate their heterogenous and personal stories, counteracting the state’s depersonalisation of prisoners. Another example are the ritualistic fights which remind readers of Piri’s teenage gang years: “Sometimes a fight between two men makes them the greatest of friends, because of the respect that is born between the swinging fists” (261). The most significant example, however, is Piri’s familiarisation with Muslim religion.

In how Muslim religion makes Piri “feel aware of life and [of] what was inside of [him]” (298) and in how Muhammad—the convict who introduces him to Islam—becomes “his *brother*” (emphasis mine; Thomas 294), one can perceive that Piri accesses the multiplicity of the world out of which Glissant builds his theory of Relation: “[i]n Relation the whole is not the finality of its parts: for multiplicity in totality is totally diversity” (PR 192). Muhammad debunks Piri’s initial ethnocentrism by which he associates religion to nationality or to an idea of race. He expresses that “maybe the reason for this jumping of Negroes to become Muslims is on account of maybe Allah is a black man’s god” (291). However, Muhammad teaches him that his religion was born in “the Far East” (291), much before the emergence of the Modern/colonial world-system which Piri has in mind when he makes such an assumption based on Eurocentric racial categories. This is Piri’s contact with the chaos-monde, “a world that cannot be reduced, simplified or normalized” (Glissant, PR 33). This experience, together with an awareness about

the mobility of transnational Caribbean-Americans—the circle by which African slaves were taken to the Caribbean in order to be sold, their acquisition as slaves by the Spaniards, which explains Piri's surname (Thomas), and the later economic migration of Caribbeans to urban centres, determining the Thomas family lives—makes Piri conclude that the linguistic nationalism by which his family defended their identity does not make any sense in the hemisphere.

In conclusion, the sort of thought that Édouard Glissant develops associated with the Caribbean—“an infinitely varied, dauntingly inexhaustible text” (Dash, *TOA xi*)—proves pertinent in this novel. Thomas's text unveils Americanness at the same pace as nationality loses relevance for the characters' identification throughout the narrative. The colonial racial space of dehumanisation shared throughout the hemisphere—namely, the plantation—is rewritten in this novel in the shape of the barrio, the segregated spaces of the South, and the prison. Just as Glissant explained it, despite the dehumanisation inflicted in these places, they are loci of Relation, where the knowledge of the whole ensues. These places are microcosms of what Glissant theorised as “the chaos-monde” (*PR 94*), an aesthetic attempt to contest the colonial obsession with order—the opposite of chaos—materialised in their categorisation of every aspect of human experience into dehumanised monolithic slots such as race or nationality.

In this sense, Piri Thomas' novel can be read as a text of Americanness, shedding light on its working via a bildungsroman structure. It conveys that nationality, as a Modern ideology, perpetuates the inequity of the Modern world-system also within the nation's confines making use of the perception of race. As such, what in the novel might seem an essentialisation of “race”—indeed what Marta Caminero-Santangelo has seen as an engagement on the part of the novel in

strategic essentialism (206)—serves to stress that nineteenth century notions of biological racism continue to operate at a social and economic level in the United States in ways so entrenched that make their identification as constructs difficult. Rather than reinforcing the categorical separation of the world into races in the same manner that this was done during colonialism to place the conquered “in a natural situation of inferiority to the others” (Quijano, “Latin America” 533), *Down These Mean Streets* show how colonial racist ideas operate within the foundations of American society to determine the spaces which the—now internally—colonised occupy. The novel, furthermore, establishes these spaces within the tradition of the plantation by stressing their potential for subverting colonial discourses and ideologies such as the ones operating around the traditional understanding of kinship. In these spaces the colonised establish modes of organisation, relation, and kinship completely different to and, therefore, inapprehensible by the state’s colonial logic of power, and hint towards the possibility of alternative institutions.

2.3. “Proletarians from far waters:” the Coloniality of Labour in Claude McKay’s and Piri Thomas’ Narratives

If the aspect of the town itself was harsh and forbidding, the docks were of inexhaustible interest. There any day he might meet with picturesque proletarians from far waters whose names were warm with romance

C. McKay, *Banjo*

The previous sections have focused on aspects of alternative kinship and postnationalism in the novels analysed. However, they have also evidenced their

strong focus on labour. More interestingly, they situate the class struggle in the context of the American hemisphere, as is suggested by Claude McKay in a letter addressed to his editor Max Eastman, where he discusses his book *The Negroes in America*, originally published in Russian in 1923 (Marian B. McLeod 340):

You assert that I say that the Negro problem is the chief problem of the Revolution in America. When you come to read my book, you will find that I have said no such thing. What I say is that the Negro problem is an integral part and one of the chief problems of the class struggle in America, and I stand by that declaration (qtd. in M. B. McLeod 340)

Hence, the fact that the novels and their characters reject organised labour, as will soon be explored, showcase how labour movements have not properly assessed the racial dynamics of proletarian exploitation born with Americanness. These two novels interpret class struggle within a black internationalist framework, a political movement which constituted a threat to the status quo “because of the transnational and anti-imperialist linkages and alliances they practiced: carrying ‘facts’ from one colony to another, from the French colonial system to the British, from Africa to the United States” (Edwards 9). The texts furthermore engage in an exploration of class in the context of Americanness. They suggest that the inability to locate the origin of the coloniality of power in the American hemisphere has impeded a black solidarity that could override the system, rather resulting in the complicitness of some subjects such as Piri’s father with their own exploitation.

This analysis makes use of John Muthyala’s concept of “Reworlding America”—which titles his 2006 book—as a starting point for assessing knowledge production with regards to labour in the novels of Claude McKay and Piri Thomas, as well as of the idea that Modern labour relations were born with the coloniality of

power when the hemisphere was “discovered”. Muthyala’s concept derives from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s idea of “worlding,” developed in her *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999). To world means to inscribe a certain discourse into space (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Key Concepts* 226). To do this, as Muthyala observes, marginal elements of social existence have to be ignored if they do not carry with them the Eurocentric narrative of the *nation* (*Reworlding* 2; “Reworlding” 93). That is where he believes “reworlding” becomes imperative, especially in the United States since, to create its empire, this country employed an epistemology similar to European Orientalism (Muthyala, *Reworlding* 5), deeming other areas of the hemisphere—like the Caribbean—complicit with the destiny of the Anglo-Saxon United States. Reworlding in these novels starts with the voices of those displaced from their lands following the United States’ imperial inscriptions in the Caribbean in the first decades of the twentieth century. Their destiny was to become this new motherland’s cheap labour force, as portrayed in Thomas’ *Down these Mean Streets*. Reworlding, then, implies taking into account the labour relations which emerged from slave trade and the colonisation of the hemisphere as well as their role in the rise of the mercantile capitalism which made the United States an economic world power. Despite the fact that colonisation did not only take place in the American hemisphere, labour control is a particularly American issue because of the role of slavery in the rise of capitalism. In his ground-breaking study *Capitalism and Slavery*, Eric Williams asserts that the “discovery” of the Americas by Christopher Columbus—with its consequent extension of land (73) to be farmed by the slaves in plantations (19; 25) and the possibilities for commerce that it entailed (51)—fuelled the development of mercantile capitalism and its many consequences and transformations (210) such as the growing hegemony of “American capital”

(26). This idea was anticipated by Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848) when they claimed that

The discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape, opened up fresh ground for the rising bourgeoisie [...] the increase in the means of exchange and in commodities generally, gave to commerce, to navigation, to industry, an impulse never before known, and thereby, to the revolutionary element in the tottering feudal society, a rapid development [...] Modern industry has established the world market, for which the discovery of America paved the way (32-33)

Marx and Engels, however, did not assess the role of slave labour in these developments. In fact, the plantation followed (and solved) a period of crisis in seventeenth century Europe, counteracting what was going to be an apparent rupture in the process of capitalist development (Linebaugh 91-2; Hobsbawm n.p.; Wallerstein, "Crisis" n.p.). In this way, theorising black labour implies an internationalist framework rather than the nationalist one endorsed by the socialist revolutions (Anderson 2). National socialist revolutions did not take into account the transnational dispossession of Black Atlantic peoples, a crucial factor in the rise of capital accumulation (Edwards 202; Linebaugh 107; 112).

The worlding of America is a practice understood by Muthyala as the insertion of both the United States and the marginal parts of the hemisphere into the narrative of the transplantation of protestant Anglo-Saxon culture into the New World. As such, in the field of American Studies, Muthyala advocates for an epistemic "reworlding" of the continent. In his words:

By insisting that all ideas of America are shot through with the woof of "other Americas," I seek to develop different ways of conceiving of historical inheritance that counter the narrowly racialized, excessively territorialized,

and deeply gendered ideas of America that have historically gained hegemony (*Reworlding* 13)

Worlding, in Muthyala's view, starts from a textual impulse that ignores that "non-Europeans [as] agents of history [are] endowed with creative potential" too (Muthyala, *Reworlding* 6). Caribbean-American texts like McKay's and Thomas' are a postcolonial presence reminding that the colonisation, annihilation and slave trade born in the islands were also constitutive of the United States present, now idealised as "the postmodern Eden of Pax americana" (*Reworlding* 6). According to Robin D. G. Kelley, creativity institutes a "dissident political culture" (77) that might manage to disprove, also in terms of the approach to labour, that Western epistemologies as universal (89). This is done in *Banjo*, where the vagabonds refuse to engage in "mak[ing] a respectable living" (*Banjo* 28) and rather prefer "long-term [...] existence on the beach" (*Banjo* 5), thus contesting what Edwards eloquently calls "racist waged labor conditions" (Edwards 203) *Banjo's* depiction of a transnational class of proletarians who wander the globe—expelled from their lands whenever the economic situation worsens—challenges the U.S. exceptionalist national narrative. The voices of Puerto Ricans or African-Americans among others, insiders yet outsiders, shape a different narrative of the New World and contribute to reworlding the hemisphere. As such, by portraying the different struggles of marginalised young men, these two novels engage in knowledge production. In Claude McKay's *Banjo* the protagonist rejects to be part of an organised labour which ties the black proletarian class to the capitalist workings of "the modern world-system and its markets" (Wallerstein, "Feudalism" 879). In Piri Thomas' *Down these Mean Streets* a young Piri defies his family's attempt to fit into the cultural labour demands of U.S.-American nationhood.

McKay's descriptions of his travels and of the international class of "proletarians from far waters" (*Banjo* 67) provides a full apprehension (a reworlding) of the situation of blacks in the American hemisphere. McKay is one of the members of the Harlem Renaissance with the clearest class consciousness, as expressed in *The Negroes in America* where he criticises the black sympathy with France:

The good treatment of individuals by those whom they meet in France is valued so highly by Negroes that they are beginning to forget about the exploitation of Africans by the French [...] Thus the sympathy of the Negro intelligentsia is completely on the side of France. It is well-informed about the barbarous acts of the Belgians in the Congo but it knows nothing at all about the barbarous acts of the French in Senegal, about the organized robbery of native workers, about the forced enlistment of recruits, about the fact that the population is reduced to extreme poverty and hunger, or about the total annihilation of tribes. It is possible that the Negro intelligentsia does not want to know about all this, inasmuch as it can loosely generalize about the differences in the treatment of Negroes in bourgeois France and in plutocratic America (qtd. in Edwards 6)

McKay not only advocates for Black Internationalism, he also holds a particularly American view regarding the duty of Caribbean and U.S. American black intellectuals of establishing networks for the resistance against racism and exploitation. In *A Long Way from Home*, McKay offers the following account of class, race and friendship in the Jamaican city:

A peasant would be proud of a white friend who was influential. But from a social-asset point of view, he would place much more value upon the friendship of a light-colored person of the wealthy and educated class or of a black who had risen up out of the peasantry than he would upon that of an undistinguished "poor white" (34)

The island is many times described in Claude McKay's works as a place where there is a temporal suspension of the racial power dynamics that operate more strikingly in other parts of the world such as the United States or Europe. What McKay is in fact describing is the lack of ethno-consciousness which Wallerstein attributes to areas without a high percentage of industrial workers and which rather provide the world economy with raw materials, as is the case of Jamaica ("Rise" 405-6). This recollection is perhaps a naïve, nostalgic perception of the island of McKay's childhood and adolescence, whereby the writer's persona is situated before the acquisition of class consciousness. In the same work he later contends that his travels to industrial urban centres made him "a peasant become proletarian" (LW 145). McKay was well aware of the fact that in more industrialised places of the world cheap labour was extracted from the peoples of the Black Atlantic diaspora—as *Banjo* seems intent in demonstrating. However, McKay relates the black workers' exploitation the postcolonial poverty which he recorded in his early poems:

You tas'e petater an' you say it sweet,
But you no know how hard we wuk fe it;
You want a basketful fe quattiewut,
'Cause you no know how 'tiff de bush fe cut.

De cowitch under which we hab fe 'toop,
De shamar lyin' t'ick like pumpkin soup,
Is killin' somet'ing for a naygur man;

Much less de cutlass workin' in we han' (CP 19)

Other texts like *Banana Bottom* or the dialect poems insist on demonstrating that poverty in Jamaica is due to the complitness between European colonialism and American neo-colonialism. These works describe fraudulent land schemes that result from the obsolescence of colonial land organisation. After abolition, lands were sold to Englishmen in the metropolis at ridiculous prices (Lewis and Lewis 39)

and black Jamaicans had to migrate on labour schemes such as the U.S.-orchestrated building of the Panama Canal when work was scarce or when the workforce was supplanted by Asian indentured labour (Lewis and Lewis 42). Americanness, therefore, does not stop with the Black Atlantic. Neither do Caribbean texts like *Banana Bottom*, which engage in relationality by recording the exploitation of the Asian indentured labourers.

Banjo is the culmination of the acquisition of a particular class consciousness on the systemic exploitation of blacks across the world. The consequence of the coloniality of power, in McKay's view, "is not only the economic exploitation of colonized peoples and of the local members of the 'underworld' but also the systematic exclusion of black men from European nation-states, citizenship, and labor forces" (Rosenberg, *NCL* 108). This consciousness transcends the nationalism which Edwards identifies in *Home to Harlem* when Ray finds solace in the possibility that the United States military occupation of his beloved nation, Haiti, stops (205-6). Furthermore, *Banjo* rejects the homogenisation that Black Internationalism could cause through its portrayal of mistranslations and ambiguities (Edwards 210) to rather demand the right to opacity that Glissant theorised as part of archipelagic thinking: "[t]o imagine the transparency of Relation is also to justify the opacity of what impels it" (*PR* 56).

The necessary rejection of nationalism for a full understanding of the black workers' condition does not take in *Banjo* the shape of the proletarianism which McKay once promised to teach "the ignorant black masses:"

In contrast to what historian Winston James rightly describes as McKay's "Bolshevist" period in the early 1920s, when McKay wrote (during his trip to Moscow) that the duty of the Negro Communist was to "spread revolutionary

ideas among the ignorant masses of his own race,” *Banjo* would appear to mark a shift in McKay’s political focus away from the proletariat, traditionally conceived, and toward such cosmopolitan, fleeting communities of men (Edwards 199)

Rather, McKay’s view in this novel escapes what Edwards calls “institutional forms of radicalism” (217). The characters of *Banjo*—a transnational array of black men who idly spend their time in the Ditch of Marseilles, occasionally working as dockers—are not exactly proletarians, since they only work when the situation really demands so (Edwards 199). A Marxist analysis of this narrative would prove problematic since these people are not workers unionised to defend themselves from the various exploitations of the capitalist system of production; they rather represent the *lumpenproletariat*: “those who do not fit, or who *reject*, the logic of class struggle” (emphasis mine; Edwards 201). And yet, Claude McKay’s *Banjo* seems to employ Marxist language, reminding readers of the German theorists’ maxim that “The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into *civilisation*” (emphasis mine; Marx and Engels, *Communist* 37) when it is claimed that

the police were strong-armed against the happy irresponsibility of the Negro in the face of *civilization*. For *civilization* had gone out among these native, earthy people, had despoiled them of their primitive soil, had uprooted, enchained, transported, and transformed them to labor under its laws, and yet lacked the spirit to tolerate them within its walls (emphasis mine; 313-4)

The novel thus clearly links class and race in its portrayal of the struggles of the black international workers, suggesting that if black workers are to establish an

epistemic radical resistance, their actions should always be located outside the workings of the capitalist market, exactly as they are portrayed in this novel.

Edwards dismisses what many have seen in *Banjo* as the call to embrace racial class consciousness to rather contend the novel shows an “extreme skepticism” regarding any form of dogmatic class consciousness. *Banjo* replaces unionism with a “vagabond internationalism” (Edwards 198) which I contend produces another kind of knowledge regarding the racist nature of the Modern/colonial world-system. The beach boys’ resistance to participate in the market’s dynamics are the “‘pauses’ or ‘arrests’ in the process of accumulation” (Linebaugh 92) that Peter Linebaugh contends are able to provide the clearest “image of freedom” (96). In Edward’s words, “Banjo, Ray, Bugsy, and Taloufa are men who would rather beg for food from sympathetic black crews on Mediterranean coal freighters than work under the racist capitalism that is the only available mode of labor relations” (200). Marx and Engels’ definition of the *lumpenproletariat*, though pejorative, suggests that it is the only strata of society which escapes the logics of capitalism (*Communist* 45). By doing so, it also escapes the logics of nationalism that Eric Hobsbawm identifies as “the main building blocks of world capitalism during a lengthy period of its development, and with it of bourgeois society in the ‘developed’ world” (n.p.). Hobsbawm goes on to explain that such establishment of bounded differentiated territories is crucial for the flows of capital. It seems no coincidence that, by contrast, McKay’s characters are all “men without country” or a “global community of the dispossessed” (199), who are described as:

 this primitive child, this kinky-headed, big-laughing black boy of the world, did not go down and disappear under the serried crush of trampling white feet; that he managed to remain on the scene, not worldly-wise, not “getting

there,” yet not machine-made, nor poor-in-spirit like the regimented creatures of civilization, was baffling to civilized understanding (314)

The disentanglement from organised labour, civilisation, and the nation situates these texts outside the Marxist historicism which Glissant explains has been compelled to deny its grand narrative logic whereby the proletariat will eventually win: “[r]eality has, for example, forced Marxist thought to concede that it is not in the most technically advanced countries, nor in the most organized proletariat, that the revolution will first be successful” (CD 64). Such traditional understanding of Marxism in terms of inevitable gradual development is equated by Glissant to Hegel’s historicism. Glissant believes this has been way to deprive subalterns from agency and choices in the course of history (CD 64). McKay’s text, by proposing an epistemic reworlding of labour and Marxism, manages to escape Western linear epistemology.

Claude McKay’s *Banjo* in fact starts with the African-American protagonist managing to get deported from his own country so as to go to France where he intends to live a vagabond’s life. The desire to escape the workings of capitalism goes hand in hand in this novel with the need to escape the logics of the nation. According to Edwards, *Banjo*, with its, in Ray’s words, “fine intellectual prerogative of doubt” (324), equally drifts away from nationalist and unionist perspectives because none of these systems hold place for the community depicted. The array of different identities that are represented in the book cannot fit within a single idea of nationhood, racial pride or class consciousness. The characters are only vagabonds and that is what they chose to be with the choice at the end of the novel: “men without country, drifting along the edge of the Mediterranean” (*Banjo* 199). Ignoring Marx’s scorn of the *lumpenproletariat*, McKay, with a notable Marxist interest,

situates Banjo and Ray's choice can as an act of resistance whereby they renounce the working-class condition because that would turn them into cogs of the capitalist machine which enslaved them in the first place in the hemisphere. From Linebaugh's argument we could deduce that the *lumpenproletariat* should not be presented and represented as the "passive recipients of alms" (96). Since "the accumulation of international capital depends on the exploitation of Atlantic labour,"³⁵ the *lumpenproletariat* carries the potential to limit or even debunk "the process of accumulation" (Linebaugh 92). This is exactly the kind of literary representation of this social group that *Banjo* achieves.

Piri Thomas's *Down these Mean Streets* constitutes a similar rejection of the labour market. In this case there is also a rejection of the institutions that the state apparatus creates in order to secure white supremacy in the United States so that capital is accumulated in the hands of a few powerful (white) agents. In *Down these Mean Streets* there are characters—drug dealers, robbers, and prisoners—who represent the same sort of social strata as the beach boys. Piri's father, on the contrary, would be representative of the working class who is complicit with its own exploitation. To give an example, he arrives home every night exhausted from his pursuit of the dream of upward mobility which American exceptionalism perpetuates. And, in fact, when he indeed achieves it, it is only at the cost that Piri and himself become abused by racist behaviours in the new neighbourhood which represents this capitalist success. The novel, thus, also establishes a connection

³⁵ There is room for confusion here, since the characters in *Banjo* do not only come from the Americas but also from Africa and Asia. However, Linebaugh's thesis is that the most relevant contributions to European capitalism and industrialisation came from the particular exploitation of labour, not only natural resources, that was undertaken with the plantation system. As such, the Modern forms of labour exploitation presented in the novel derive from the coloniality of power developed in the American hemisphere.

between racism and social mobility that works as one of the patterns endemic to Americanity.

Piri, like Banjo and his fellow vagabonds, rejects the places and dynamics where the racist ideology of global capitalism reproduces itself and is thus part of those voices from the margins which expose the racial roots of all labour and economic organisation ingrained in the modern world-system. Within the Modern world-system areas or even cultures are—in terms of labour and economy—either peripheral or central³⁶ (Wallerstein, “Rise” 392; 401; Luxemburg 340), thus resulting in an unequal set of relationships where the powerful ones determine the development of the others through intervention (Wallerstein “Rise” 401). By reminding his brother of their slavery past, Piri becomes a subject of knowledge regarding their Caribbean migration(s): “Say, José, didn’t you know the Negro made the scene in Puerto Rico way back? And when the Spanish spics ran outta Indian coolies, they brought them big black from you know where” (145). This knowledge is not only one of racism and discrimination but also of labour relations. As Wallerstein explains, the Caribbean “at only a few points was [...] a center of wealth and most of this wealth flowed out of the region. At all points it was a center of exploitation of labor” (“The Caribbean” 16). It continues to be so in the diaspora, as exemplified by the exploitation of Piri’s father in WPA jobs and—interestingly, considering how the United States’ industry made it possible that the country become “the dominant and intrusive power in the Caribbean area” (Wallerstein “Caribbean” 16)—at the airplane factory. Paralleling the rejection of colonial history by Piri’s brother, in an interesting and violent fragment, Piri’s father refuses to include any mention of slavery in his own life narrative, becoming complicit with the country’s worlding. As

³⁶ Wallerstein notes a third kind of stratum, namely a semi-periphery, but its particularities are not relevant for the discussion taking place here.

such, the hopes of social mobility derived from the nation's mythology require the erasure of the plantation narrative for Afro-Caribbeans—as in Muthyala's argument—and they consequently despise their initial neighbourhood, Harlem, as part of this erasure.

But how does the division between centre and periphery operate within the same country? What about the slaves in the U.S. South? As Marxist thought teaches, there is a proletarian class in industrialised countries which does not own the means of production and who thrives by selling its labour force (Marx and Engels 31). Nevertheless, in the context of the United States, the division of labour has always been determined by race (Quijano, "Latin America" 534-5). With the colonisation of the Americas, racial subjects (a newly created category) were "the most important exploited group, since the principal part of the economy rested on their labor" (Quijano. "Latin America" 534). In the first stages of the colonisation of the hemisphere whites merely had the role of intermediaries between the slaves and their raw production, whose benefits were to be enjoyed in Europe (Quijano, "Latin America" 536-8). But with the settling and independence of the United States industrial power also belonged within the American hemisphere, while racial subjects continued to be the labour force and provided raw materials.

The United States of America, even in its colonial phase, was constituted as a capitalist society, "a society of Europeans on American soil": "Production was primarily for the internal, not the external, market" (Quijano and Wallerstein 555). In this way, while formerly colonised areas such as the Caribbean and Latin America were and continue to be part of the periphery (as a consequence of their particular mode of colonisation (Wallerstein "Rise" 389)), the United States became the most important and powerful core society. The United States sustains a model of internal

colonialism within its frontiers, made evident when it maintained the institution of slavery once it became independent. The cotton revolution which revived slavery in the South pretty much determined the industrialisation of the United States, basically based on textiles (Bailey 374). As American whites were settler-colonisers, they were the owners of the land which the slaves farmed, and it was only natural that they became the owners of the means of production too. While studies in U.S. internal colonialism like Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton's *Black Power* (1967) do not relate this fact to slavery, it becomes clear that the current systemic poverty of blacks in the United States responds to a racial inequity in the control of labour and the means of production.

With the transition to an industrialised society, the independence of the United States, and the abolition of slavery, African-Americans, due to their not owning land or the means of production (not to mention systemic racism), became the working class,³⁷ as historian W.E.B Du Bois noted in his seminal *Black Reconstruction* (1935):

Above all, we must remember the black worker was the ultimate exploited; that he formed that mass of labor which had neither wish nor power to escape from the labor status, in order to directly exploit other laborers, or indirectly, by alliance with capital, to share in their exploitation" (77-8).

Caribbean migration also adds to the equation. The arrival of working-class migrants from different backgrounds to the United States is no big news, but in the case of Caribbean migration Americanness makes an appearance. As already

³⁷ This is not to say, in an over-simplifying fashion, that all whites were land or factory owners and that whites were never the exploited working class. However, it remains clear that even poor immigrants who travelled to the United States to work in the Northern factories could eventually have access to better conditions and schooling, voting, and land-owning rights, while black lives were for centuries determined by racist laws and also ideologies. See Grosfoguel's article "Puerto Rican Labor Migration to the United States: Modes of Incorporation, Coloniality, and Identities" (1999).

mentioned, Quijano and Wallerstein's article also includes within the concept of Americanness the hegemonic role of the United States with regards to the rest of the hemisphere (555-6). Discussing turn of the century Caribbean migration to the United States Grosfoguel and Georas contend that "[t]hese migrants frequently come from regions dominated by the United States, and their status in the host society is in many instances associated with the low standing of their country of origin in the international division of labor" (89). Particularly in the case of Puerto Ricans (let us not forget, American citizens since 1916), when restrictions towards non-American migrants were imposed at certain times in history such as the Great Depression, they, together with African Americans, "became the main source of cheap labor for the Northeast industrial complex" (Grosfoguel, "Labor Migration" 508). As such, they were also stigmatised by other migrants because they became represented in the racist stereotypes associated to the most numerous and oldest ethnic groups othered within the United States. As Grosfoguel and Georas explain, the creation of ethnicity within the coloniality of power does not only make use of categories such as black or Hispanic; categories such as Puerto Rican are associated "with racist stereotypes such as laziness, criminality, stupidity, and uncivilized behavior [which have] important implications in the labor market" (90).

Grosfoguel thus concludes that "the public perception of the migrants [...] affects [their] modes of incorporation to the labor market" ("Labor Migration" 505). Ethnicity, then, is perceivable through the African slaves' historical material dispossession (also the case for Afro-Caribbeans, both groups forming what Grosfoguel calls "internal colonial subjects" ("Labor Migration" 508)), but when there are possibilities of upward mobility there is also a more abstract conception of

ethnicity determined by public opinion (what Grosfoguel calls “extraeconomic means” (504)):

Ethnicity is the set of communal boundaries into which in part we are put by others, in part we impose upon ourselves, serving to locate our identity and our rank within the state [...] In loci and moments of acute social conflict, the ethnic categories utilized were often reduced in number. In loci and moments of economic expansion, the categories often expanded to fit different groups into a more elaborate division of labour (Quijano and Wallerstein 550)

Grosfoguel and Georas go on to explain how Caribbean migrants try not to be associated or confused with groups which have negative stereotypes attached to them (90), which reminds us of the way in which middle class Puerto Ricans “conceal their African heritage privileging the Spanish culture” (Grosfoguel, “Labor Migration” 517) while Nuyoricans rather embrace it in order to “question some of the racist and elitist representations of Puerto Rican identity in the island” (Grosfoguel, “Labor Migration” 517). Piri Thomas’ novel reflects all these issues and shows that some migrants from the Caribbean region make use of this cultural stereotyping and colourism in order to “pass.” The success or failure in the attempt of passing sees itself reflected in the novel in terms of labour. Even if migrants do not still have any access to the means of production, the cultural demands associated to wealth and ownership in the United States can be met in order to have access to better wages. It has been proved that African-Americans and Puerto Ricans received lower wages than other proletarian ethnicities (Grosfoguel, “Labor Migration” 508). It all belongs to the same structure within the colonality of power, as explained by Quijano: “the lower wages ‘inferior races’ receive in the present capitalist centers for the same work as done by whites cannot be explained as

detached from the racist social classification of the world's population—in other words, as detached from the global capitalist coloniality of power” (“Latin America” 539).

In this context Piri rejects to be subject to the cultural “initiation rituals,” in Manzanas Calvo and Benito Sánchez’s words (130), that immigrants, like his father, have to go through in order to achieve an idealised bourgeois class improvement in the United States. After being rejected from a job for the sole reason of his skin colour, as described in the previous section, Piri removes himself from the workings of the capitalist market to engage in activities located outside of it. He returns to the gang, to the drug selling “business” (an activity working outside of the rules of capitalist production whose benefits do not contribute to the nation’s capital accumulation) and eventually ends up in jail, the ultimate removal from society. In *Policing the Crisis* (1978), Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke and Brian Roberts defy the negative connotations of this kind of *lumpen* to explain that activities such as hustling are a way of survival in moments of crisis, when black citizens are the most affected by unemployment (352-3). Ray also acknowledges this fact in *Banjo* when he gets to know the beach boys closer: “[the beach boys’] loose, instinctive way of living was more deeply related to [...] self-preservation than all the principles, or social morality lessons with which he had been inculcated by the wiseacres of the civilized machine” (319). These two reasons are intertwined: it is true that Piri’s choice for earning his income is due to his not having found any other job, but he also consciously chooses to escape the places where other activities could be possible so as not to be the victim of racist humiliation.

The concatenation of events in the novel leading to Piri's final imprisonment can be seen as explanatory of how Americanness affects the division of labour, but also of how other cultural practices of racism make those who cannot pass abandon the places and environments where they are abused. Removing oneself from the racist society is not so much a choice as an indirect expulsion, since Piri constantly finds himself in situations which in the end become unbearable. Racial segregation in the United States, then, responds both to the division of labour and to cultural practices. Piri's final imprisonment illustrates that the removal is also systemic. The aforementioned practices of discrimination are the reason why Piri becomes estranged from his family. It is therefore not surprising that natural course of events lead Piri to prison, an institution designed to keep the convicts away from their families and communities (Davis 10). Angela Y. Davis goes on to describe how the penitentiary prison system in the United States is complicit with the workings of racism and global capitalism, or, rather, their by-product. The ever-increasing population of U.S. prisons is disproportionately racial (13) and, Davies argues, the process of economic dispossession of certain communities (mostly racialised ones), created by the characteristically capitalist migration of corporations into cheaper areas of the globe, makes them "perfect candidates for prison" (16). Here we can identify the community where Piri lives when the "stick-up" takes place. This is the "surplus population" that Linebaugh contends is the genuine image of freedom because of its total disentanglement from the capitalist system (96), but which the state apparatus manages to contain through practices of incarceration.

In conclusion, Piri's choices both raise awareness of an unjust system but also, like Banjo and Ray with their conscious removal from capitalist society, highlight that within a system which is still pretty much determined by the coloniality

of power, there is no solution within, only through passing and only for some members of the community while others are devoted to be internally colonised. Kandiyoti compares Thomas' prison narrative with other "male narratives of crime, punishment, and rehabilitation published in the 1960s and 1970s" by African-Americans to conclude that, unlike them, Piri "emerges from prison not a nationalist but with only El Barrio in his thoughts" (176). Once again, as I concluded in the previous section, Harlem is proposed as an alternative to the nationalist options which sustain the global capitalism analysed by Wallerstein. Harlem resembles in this sense the Caribbean and its many challenges to nationalism. Particularly the Caribbean diaspora, which creates identities linked to abstract ideas of the island, rejects notions of assimilation to promote an alternative space in the narrative of U.S. imperialism. Nuyorican narratives in particular, which conflate with the African-American experience in the United States, are a crucial product of knowledge illustrating postnational options for imagining and conceptualising identification mechanisms which are not complicit with the racist nationalist logics which sustain capitalism. As this section has aimed at demonstrating, these alternatives can be locatable in many other places, but all of them share logics easily explained by the case of the Nuyoricans, which have managed to surpass the very coloniality that affects their history perhaps much more than to any other group.

2.4. Conclusion: An Extended Caribbean



Figure 1: The Extended Caribbean, from Peter Hulme's *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1942-1797* (4)

Banjo's exploration of “horizontal affiliation” (Said, *The World* 18) is prone to be explained through the workers’ need to establish alternative families in the face of dispossession. However, the previous analysis of *Down these Mean Streets* takes one back to the origins of alternative filiation in the American hemisphere: the Plantation. The connection between U.S. American and Caribbean literatures that I contended in the introduction is sometimes forgotten in the scholarly analysis of the Caribbean Diaspora, is not new in terms of sociology. Wallerstein’s widespread concept of “the extended Caribbean” (*Volume II* 103) describes the areas whose socio-economic development is affected by what Benítez-Rojo calls “the plantation machine” or “Plantation” with a capital P (*RI* 9). It describes “not just the presence of plantations but also the type of society that results from their use and abuse” (*RI*

9). Despite transcending the nation-states of the Caribbean through their presence in both North and South America, what all these places also have in common is some degree of geographical contact with the Caribbean Sea,

an important historico-economic sea and, further, a cultural meta-archipelago without center and without limits, a chaos within which there is an island that proliferates endlessly, each copy a different one, founding and refounding ethnological materials like a cloud will do with its vapor? (RI 9)

This is to say, “the discourse of resistance that flows within the pan-Caribbean Plantation” (Benítez-Rojo, RI 128) is also present in some communities of the United States. Piri, originally in a state of alienation when the novel starts, recovers his Caribbeanness once he is subjected to these knowledges or practices of resistance. A better understanding (or a renewed reading) of a novel such as *Banjo* might be achieved after encountering *Down these Mean Streets*. Mobilities across the hemisphere have made these knowledges reappear with contemporary relevance. A hemispheric analysis of the Caribbean diaspora unveils this process.

2.5. A Note Concerning Gender

The experiences related in *Banjo* and *Down these Mean Streets* are exclusively masculine and lack a gender perspective. Latnah, one of Banjo’s fellow proletarians, is a prostitute. She does not only sell her labour force in exchange for capital, there are also aspects of consent and sexual violence that would need a separate analysis. Latnah’s perspective is not sufficiently accounted for, and even the characters themselves, like the text, do not treat her as an equal. At the end of

the narrative, when Banjo and Ray decide to reject the opportunity to work in the American vessel and lead a vagabond existence, Ray asks Banjo if he thinks whether “It would have been a fine thing if we could have taken Latnah along, eh?”, to which Banjo responds:

“Don't get soft ovah any one wimmens, pardner. Tha's you' big weakness. A woman is a conjunction. Gawd fixed her different from us in moh ways than one. And theah's things we can git away with all the time and she just kain't. Come on, pardner. Wese got enough between us to beat it a long ways from here” (*Banjo* 326)

This is the last paragraph of the novel, the final reflection. Despite having crafted a narrative against essentialist conceptions of identity throughout, *Banjo* ends laying down clear cut and static differences between genders. Banjo also refuses to account for the socially constructed nature of these differences—“theah's things we can git away with all the time and she just kain't” (326)—and try to change the more difficult circumstances that, according to him, Latnah faces. He just apprehends these constrictions as natural and neutral—being “fixed [...] different[ly]”—and thus contributes to them. Although Rosenberg and Michelle Stephens have read this rejection as an assertion of queer sexuality and internationalism in the face of the heteronormative conceptions of the nation (Rosenberg, “Modernism” 227; Stephens 199), there is nothing normative (in terms of the bourgeois family or the nation) in the racially and nationally hybrid character of Latnah, a woman who does not know about her origins and self-fashions herself “weighted down with heavy silver bracelets on arms, neck and ankles, their long glossy hair half hidden by the cloth that the natives called coolie-red” (*Banjo* 30). In fact, the associations of femininity with notions of the heteronormative family life and the engendering of the modern nation that pervade *Banana Bottom*, the next novel to be analysed, adapts

to patriarchal stereotypes about women and the drive towards “emotional investment in the domestic sphere” (Mulholland 6). Latnah’s job and attitude proves nothing of the sort; she might be better equipped for the vagabond life than Banjo and Ray are.

The same stereotypes affect Piri’s mother in *Down these Mean Streets*. While the whole plot revolves around topics of entrapment, discrimination and marginality that affect the protagonist based on his physical attributes and the stereotypes associated to them, he relies on his mother’s emotional support when these prove unbearably hard. However, though she only featured within the context of the house, Piri does not seem to realise that the same situation of entrapment affects her, and this is not considered as tragic in the novel because of her being a woman. In fact, it is expressed that it is the father, who regularly leaves the house, the one who “did [...] get trapped” (Thomas 29). On top of that, the mother has to provide his family with what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri call “affective labor,” a type of unwaged labour that “produces or manipulates affects such as feelings of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, or passion” (108). Affective labour, together with the domestic labour that she is portrayed as always doing, are two forms of female exploitation that escape the Marxist logics of capital. While Piri’s father’s exhaustion after a day of hard WPA work is portrayed in a sympathetic manner, his mother’s exhaustion is never shown and she has to provide him with an emotional anchor and a kind attitude on his coming back home. For reasons of space I cannot delve any longer into the feminine experience, which in many ways is different from the experience of the protagonists in these novels, but equally affected by the coloniality of power. They bear the coloniality of gender which María Lugones explored throughout her oeuvre in response to the work on Aníbal Quijano

and his lack of gender perspective. According to Lugones, the coloniality of gender is perpetuated by whites but also by blacks (“Colonialidad” 75-76). Exploring another McKay novel, *Amiable with Big Teeth*, William Jericho contests the idea that the fate of one of the female protagonists is implausible recalling Nella Larsen’s³⁸ narratives about “the plights of trapped women during the Harlem Renaissance era” (123). Though sometimes liberated from the constraints of racialisation through their lighter phenotype or a change of context, the women of Larsen’s novels end up imprisoned by the constraints of gender identity which are perpetuated by male members of their own community. It might be useful for the reader to explore these works in order to get a more accurate picture of the particularities. The following chapter further delves into the discourses that affect women—in particular Caribbean women—in the Modern/Colonial imaginary and the playful responses that Caribbean writers have offered to them.

³⁸ The daughter of a Danish woman and a man from the Danish West Indies (Hutchinson, “Nella” 330), Nella Larsen is of arguable Caribbean descent, although she never knew her father was socialised in the context of her Danish white mother in the United States and Denmark (Hutchinson, “Nella” 330). The power dynamics of the United States made her explore a racial consciousness that proves hybrid and claims allegiance to many affiliations. In this she can be apprehended as embodying the politics of archipelagic thinking, which sees no limits in its representatives.

CHAPTER 3: WRITERS GO NATIVE: PRIMITIVIST TENSIONS IN MCKAY'S *BANANA BOTTOM* AND MARSHALL'S *THE CHOSEN PLACE, THE TIMELESS PEOPLE*

When the work in England or America gets slights or they fall sick or get cold and have to come home, what?

P. Marshall, *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*

Both Claude McKay's *Banana Bottom* (1933) and Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* (1969) apparently denote a primitivist approach towards Caribbean peoples, portraying the area's inhabitants as innately connected to the natural world. The practice of ascribing a certain ethnicity or nationality (even a gender, as we will see below) with an innate predisposition to understand, cherish, and feel attracted towards nature has been frequently pursued by colonialists, and prevails within contemporary discourses as an exoticist and sexist attitude. In Aníbal Quijano's view, this idea responded to the rationalist Eurocentric perspective that saw "other races"—apprehended as uncivilised and irrational—as bodies without the ability of reason,³⁹ hence "bodies closer to nature":

In a sense, they became dominable and exploitable. According to the myth of the state of nature and the chain of the civilizing process that culminates in European civilization, some races—blacks, American Indians, or yellows—are closer to nature than whites ("Latin America" 555)

³⁹ According to Quijano, with the secularisation of society which culminated with Cartesian thought the old religious division between soul and body was transformed into a dichotomy between reason and body. Hence, the corporeal was conceptualised in a more salient way with regards to populations who were deemed unable to reason ("Latin America" 555).

This conceptualisation prevails within more contemporary discourses—see, for example, Jack Kerouac’s description of Mexican Indians in *On the Road* (1957)—and has been analysed as one of the remnants of Eurocentric colonial mindsets. In the era of multinational capitalism, these stereotypes have been employed by companies in order to advertise tourist activities, which in turn respond to neocolonial regimes of economic development (Trask 61), as portrayed in Marshall’s novel.

When writers from an ethnic tradition reproduce such views, it is often said that they have assimilated the colonial mindset which was imposed upon the non-Western world.⁴⁰ Such assimilation may be true for different situations: both Afro-Caribbeans and African Americans deprived of the cultures of their ancestors and second-generation immigrants born or socialised on the receiving land. However, there are also instances when these epistemic practices have been strategically endorsed, particularly when we see them enacted by authors who, as Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert has claimed regarding Paule Marshall, have so far demonstrated a “deep understanding of Caribbean and American cultures” (“Sisterhood” 41). For example, as David Nicholls argues, particularly in Jamaica the “folk” is a political affiliation resulting from the peculiar economic and social model of the island rather than “a pole of meaning in a continuum or [...] a pre-modern state that will eventually be superseded by modern life” (“Folk” 83). As such, these novels strategically imagine the “folk” in order to resist globalisation and promote the desire for alternatives for their authors’ islands which might prevent economic

⁴⁰ We could refer here the case of the Trinidadian V.S. Naipaul, who Barbadian novelist George Lamming accused of being “ashamed of his cultural background” (225), or even McKay himself, usually accused of reproducing colonial forms of art and not having developed a creolised style yet (Lawson-Welsh and Donnell 5; Brathwaite, *Roots* 275). In fact, many like Aimé Césaire in his “Discourse sur le Colonialisme” or in Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skins White Masks*, or even W.E.B. du Bois’ famous phrase on the double consciousness of the African American, have deemed this a natural attitude on the part of ex-colonials because of the psychological aspect of colonisation.

migration—as the epigraph by Marshall suggests—the perils of which had been experienced first-hand by the authors. For these reasons, I argue that the alleged nostalgia attributed to these two works due to their late appearance in the careers of their authors (specially in McKay’s case), may deserve another reading.

Édouard Glissant has challenged the notion that Caribbean people have a naturally proximate relationship to nature. There is not, he claims, an innate connection with nature of sorts; rather, Caribbean history and social thought are so fragmented that Caribbeans conceptualise their experience through their most immediate sensorial perception (CD 63). Kenneth Ramchand describes McKay’s writing as depicting the “life of the senses” (229), a characteristic that pervades this author’s fiction, be it in relation to Harlem’s cabaret music or in the colourful depiction of Jamaica’s nature in *Banana Bottom*. This modernist use of descriptive elements develops a language of confusion, intuition, and ambiguity that empowers McKay to represent political history from a perspective other than the hegemonic one, even when his cultural background is embedded in Western epistemology. Caribbean authors have often appropriated their natural landscapes as mechanisms to conceptualise a history of which they were deprived. In this way does the poet Derek Walcott answer the first couple of questions in his poem “The Sea is History.” When one of the speakers implores, “Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs? / Where is your tribal memory?” Walcott’s second speaker explains that it is all in the sea, because for them “[t]he sea is [their] History”. The trope of the sea has been employed by several authors to express a history of domination without having to resort to traditionally Eurocentric metaphors, symbols or historiographical methods. With the aquatic epistemology shown in poems like Walcott’s—and epitomised in Brathwaite’s claim that Caribbean psychology is

tidalectic, like the movement of the sea, continually “receding (‘reading’) from the island(s) into the perhaps creative chaos of the(ir) future” (*Conversations* 34)—Caribbean authors manage to create their own means to express their perspective in relation to the workings of the World-System. In addition to the sea, the flora of the island also occupies a major place in the Caribbean literary imagination. As Jamaica Kincaid explains in her collection of essays *My Garden (Book)* (2000), Caribbean cultural identity can never be understood detached from its landscape—“What did the botanical life of Antigua consist of at the time another famous adventurer (Christopher Columbus) first saw it? To see a garden in Antigua now will not supply a clue” (100)—particularly as the landscape always reminds Caribbean peoples of their colonial history, the landscape of the crops and the plantations. For example, Kincaid explains that the great presence of the breadfruit on the island is due to the fact that it was a cheap source of nourishment for the slaves (101), and adds that the agricultural society they inhabit reminds Antiguan that “[w]hen they (we) were brought to this island a few hundred years ago, [...] it was for their free labor they could provide in the fields” (103). Hence, the distinctive relationship between Caribbean peoples and the environment is complex and structured by a history of conquest and subjugation, rather than a matter of innate or mystically essentialised relations.

Nevertheless, the texts I discuss in this chapter seem to suggest an innate or even genetic aspect to these relations. In both *Banana Bottom* and *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* there appear two female protagonists that seem to have an inexplicable and irremediable connection to their native lands and also to their agricultural traditions, even when, as in the case of the former’s protagonist who grew up in England, they lack any cultural connection to them. *Banana Bottom’s*

Bitia Plant grew up in England, yet on coming back to her native Jamaica she claims an unconscious and emotional connection to the local traditions and means of subsistence that English people on the island—with the same background and education as her—are unable to feel. In Marshall's novel an American anthropologist in a development mission fostered by the United States encounters the people of Bournehills, who are described as incorrigibly attached to rudimentary means of subsistence and accused of sabotaging all the previous attempts at development undertaken in their village. They also seem to have a spokeswoman, Merle, who despite having been educated in England eventually returns to her island and refuses to take part in the practices of the most "advanced" part of it, equally unable to last for long in modern jobs before being sacked. Each novel, then, seems to pit mysterious intimacy of Caribbean figures with the environment against the exploitative technologies of capitalist development.

In this section I contend that the politics of conservative environmentalism apparently endorsed in these two novels reach further than colonial reproduction. Rather than expressing an innate and ahistorical connection with nature which finds its reason in the primitivist Caribbean character, the novels expose that dominating nature is one of the main colonial and neocolonial mechanisms for the domination of the land and its inhabitants, hence the strategic connection between nature and islanders identities portrayed in the novels. But let us first explore the colonial discourses pertaining to Caribbean topography and their ideological by-product. Primitivist constructions of the population's connection with nature deliberately preclude the region's precolonial history and impose a Eurocentric gaze towards the state of affairs by placing the islands in question as epistemic opposites to modernised societies (DeLoughrey, "Island Ecologies" 302). Island primitivism also

suggests isolationism, which is in turn associated with immobility, an epistemic practice which attaches the native to place (Appadurai “Hierarchy” 37), thus precluding cultural exchanges that might take (and have taken) place among different islands or populations (DeLoughrey “Island Ecologies” 302). In fact, it is already well known that cultural exchange and supersyncretism are endemic to island identities, as the work of Antonio Benítez-Rojo reveals. But the approach to mobility certainly acquires a different taint when conceptualised with regards to the Caribbean second diaspora, driven by an economic compulsion to seek work and escape precarity. Immobility, then, can be desired by the peoples of the Caribbean diaspora, whose mobility has often been determined by hegemonic and global concerns, specifically the US-American control of the archipelago.

If Western cultural anthropologists have seen mobility as freedom and a display of technological and cultural advancement as Appadurai contends (“Hierarchy” 37), then “what are the implications when mobility is not undertaken by people in control of their bodies and movement[?]” (Barba Guerrero 56). Appadurai also explains that the immobility or limited mobility of those conceptualised by the West as “native” people is a result of “their connection to what the place permits” and “a function of their adaptation to their environments”, rather than a “mysterious, even metaphysical attachment of native to physical places” (“Hierarchy” 37). In a similar vein, *Banana Bottom* and *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* depict foreign intervention not only in the cultural practices or administration of the islands but also as regards how they affect their environment through agricultural practices or the development of the tourism industry, which in turn results in the unwilling mobility of its population. As such, the knowledge and control of the environment and agriculture may serve the characters of the novels—

who make repeated references to the colonised and the enslaved—as a way to contest a neocolonisation which, like the first European encounters with America, was based on alterations to the environment. As DeLoughrey contends, landscape for Caribbeans can never cease to remind them of the historical origins of their island presence, as exemplified by the sugar and cotton that dominates the area’s crops (“Island Ecologies” 305). It is in relation to these ideas that I will explore the significance of descriptions of nature and the agricultural landscape in the two novels. I will also consider the epistemic roles fulfilled by Bita and Merle who function as catalysts of anti-colonial radical politics of environmentalism through the parodic mimicry of colonialist and patriarchal discourse.

3.1. Claude McKay’s Ambiguous Female Heroine: Nature and Gender in *Banana Bottom*

By the middle of the novel *Banana Bottom*, once the female protagonist—Bita—has already returned to Jamaica from her schooling period in England, she has a most interesting discussion with Squire Gensir, an English folklorist based in their town whom she meets and becomes friendly with after attending a tea party together. The discussion concerns Christianity and Obeah, the latter of which Bita thinks is “an awful crime” (124). But Squire Gensir argues that the two religions operate within the same paradigms: they are both “form[s] of [...] superstition” (124). He concludes that Bita should appreciate Obeah because it “is a part of your folklore” which in turn is “the link between you and your ancestral origin” (125). This part of the narrative debunks suspicions about the novel being undoubtedly primitivist: it mocks the English folklorist who needs to have his stereotypes about the peasants (whom he treats as a “hobby”, according to the narrator (71)) confirmed. The presence of Bita, a black Jamaican woman whose ideas regarding Obeah are

shared with whites (although not those regarding other issues), confuses Squire Gensir. He rejects her cultural creolisation, blaming the missionaries with whom she lives for being “the wreck and ruin of folk art” (126), but he equally instrumentalises Jamaican culture in trying to make it appear static and essential.

The discussion between Squire Gensir and Bitia regarding Obeah is a key moment for understanding the ambivalence of McKay’s novel. The narrative presents visible tensions between primitivism and acculturation, and it blurs the boundary between psychological colonisation and creolisation. Whereas Bitia here seems to have internalised the colonialist demonisation of Obeah, at other times she seems to embody the characterisation of the primitivist black subject, which ultimately is equally problematic in terms of how the novel risks shaping this character with recourse to exoticist Western premises. Bitia Plant is the daughter of a Jamaican peasant. She is sent to England after being raped by a local boy named Crazy Bow—according to the town’s gossip, since the narrator suggests that there was mutual consent in the act. The Craigs, a couple of English missionaries based at a neighbouring parish, decide to use the occasion to send Bitia to England in order to educate her so that she comes back and becomes an example for her community. The main plot centres on Bitia’s gradual reconnection with the town she had to leave and its native ways of life. Progressively, she realises that she prefers its lifestyle, customs, and the people who enhance them rather than life at the missionaries’ parish in the town of Jubilee, where she lives on coming back from England.

This preference is expressed in the novel through Bitia’s instinctive connection with nature and the merging of her focalisation and the description of the environment that surrounds her. As Elaine Campbell explains, in certain

passages the narrator swiftly moves from “external phenomena” to “an exposition of an internal process” within the same paragraph (25), thus merging the two perspectives into one single perception. An example occurs upon Bitá’s visit to the market, where “the colour, the smell, the swell and press of it” give Bitá “the sensation of a reservoir of familiar kindred humanity into which she had descended for baptism” (40). Throughout the novel Bitá expresses feelings like this, by which natural and even cultural aspects associated with folk culture appear to create uncontrollable emotional and bodily reactions, such as the tea party she attends with Squire Gensir. Once there, at seeing the natives performing a folk line-up dance, Bitá feels the sudden impulse to join them despite the fact that it might cause gossip and trouble for her (she had gone to the party without the Craigs knowing). At that moment, she realises that “the waltzes and the minuets” she danced in Europe did not have such an effect on her and, later, that despite the fact that Squire Gensir and herself have the same background and education, he is not so drawn towards the dance as she is (84-6). She wonders if the Squire’s “nerves and body cells [were] not touched as hers (86). Therefore, the connection with her roots which Squire Gensir insists Bitá must recover is not entirely dismissed by her, who also during a religious revival towards the end of the novel falls into a trance which she believes is the means to be reconnected to ancestral Africa (250). The difference between these opposing scenes is that these last ones are expressed in bodily terms, in contrast to Squire Gensir’s insistence that Bitá appreciates Obeah as an “aesthetic,” as David Nicholls puts it (“Folk” 89), for the sake of ethnic authenticity rather than affective affiliation.

The insistence on the bodily aspects of Bitá’s character development emphasises that these affiliations are not mediated but natural and instinctive.

Bitá's nativism, nevertheless, can also be rendered problematic, since it assumes the existence of an essence which has nothing to do with her upbringing and is rather biological; it is exactly the same biologist argument—scientific racism—that justified racial domination, by which some “races” were savage by nature. In fact, this problematic thesis was appropriated by the authors associated with the Négritude movement such as Aimé Césaire, who insisted on the existence of an exclusively “Negro ‘essence’” (Coulthard 43) despite location, education or any sort of background. I have already mentioned in the previous chapters that McKay deliberately departed from these views, which he criticised in novels like *Banjo*. Therefore, the approach of this one is enigmatic, and so it is worth exploring in detail how and to what extent he endorses these notions which require, in Coulthard's view, “very dubious intellectual gymnastics [...] to [be] justif[ied]” (43).

The unconscious connection, furthermore, is mainly directed towards the natural environment of Banana Bottom, which Bitá repeatedly claims to love in comparison with the more Europeanised town where the Craigs live. On Bitá's arrival from England the narrator remarks that, unlike other people who had left their native lands and despised “tribal life” when back, she felt “pure joy” in the native ways of life, a joy which according to the narrator “was childlike and almost unconscious” (41). The opposites that are established in this paragraph between the “higher culture” (41) acquired by those who left and the descriptions of the street market that Bitá cherishes resemble the description of the Craigs' parish a few pages before. In it, the narrator describes the “three neat parallel streets containing the oblong edifices of the Wesleyan Church” to later contrast it to what one can see at departing from the parish: “a chalky macadamized road passing tilled fields of coffee, yams and sweet potatoes, with pimento and avocado pear

and naseberry trees and little white-washed shingled houses” (34). Just after Bitá expresses that she prefers Banana Bottom rather than the bigger town (55), the narrator describes the sound of the river and the breeze around them. Right after, in the next chapter, a vivid description of the flowers and the fruit trees at Anty Nommy’s garden is also offered. The narrator concludes that upon leaving the house, “[Bitá] was overcome by a feeling to capture and live again that moment of her barefooted girlhood” (59). In this paragraph, even considering the reference to Bitá’s childhood, there is a marked contrast between Bitá’s attachment to the land and Priscilla Craig’s, who has probably lived in Jamaica for longer than her. In sum, taking all these aspects into account, Bitá’s attachment is not based on memories or upbringing but on something innate which she does not share with Priscilla Craig, namely, her “race.”

Bitá’s instinctive relationship with nature as expressed by the narrator “entering her consciousness” (Ramchand 248) is at first sight problematic as it makes use of traditionally stereotypical ideas not only associated with the native but also the female. In fact, one should always take into account the ideological aspects implied in the use of language as such, in particular in descriptions of nature, which have long “presuppose[d] the normative” (Merchant 4). Ecofeminists have argued that the anthropocentric and androcentric vision of the world—that is, that humans are superior to non-humans on grounds of rationality, among others, and that men are superior to women in biological terms too—has resulted in an association between the female and nature (Garrard, *Ecocriticism* 23). Problematically, the convergence of these models of thought has often been acknowledged as innate rather than ideological. It is especially problematic since this assumption has been equally endorsed by both colonialist explorers—and

Western thinkers with visible patriarchal values in general—and ecofeminist scholars and activists (Davion 22; Garrard, *Ecocriticism* 24; Merchant xiv-xvi). The issue is not that nature is reigned by “female principles”, and *vice versa*, using Carolyn Merchant’s terminology (2), but that the exploitation of natural resources and female bodies (in special non-white or colonised ones) responds to the same “logic of domination” (Warren, “Promise” 129). Certainly, there are similarities between Victoria Davion’s claim that “women have been associated with nature, the material, the emotional, and the particular, while men have been associated with culture, the nonmaterial, the rational, and the abstract” (9) and Bita’s “unconscious,” irrational joy at visiting the market (McKay, *BB* 41). That some radical ecofeminists also embrace this association, as Merchant and Davion explain, confirms and cements the stereotypes and world views that permit female exploitation and submission (Merchant xvi; Davion 16-7).

From early in the novel (in the second paragraph) the town of Banana Bottom—which gives the book its title, hence stating its importance—is often defined in terms of its landscape: “Bita’s homecoming was an eventful week for the folk of the tiny country town of Jubilee, and the *mountain village* of Banana Bottom” (emphasis added; 1). The presence of these careful descriptions in the narrative soon finds their significance when Bita’s feelings are associated with them. Bita (whose surname—revealingly—is Plant) stays with the Craigs at the town of Jubilee at her arrival from England, but visits Banana Bottom often to see her father and aunt (referred to as “Anty Nommy” in the novel). When the time of her first visit arrives, she is nervous and prepares for the occasion with excitement, despite her friend’s—Belle Black—teasing her “for looking so grave as if Banana Bottom was important” (50), since it is much smaller than Jubilee. Soon after, the narrator

describes how the people in Banana Bottom live in harmony with nature in terms of space, anticipating the rest of the plot in which their honest farming of the land will take a central role:

The village houses were not clustered together, but spreading around and along up the slope were little fields of tropical plants (yams twining upon poles, coffee, cocoa, cassava, arrowroot, ginger, and erect over all, the banana) and in the midst of them little thatched and shingled, chiefly gable-end houses (50)

The narrator's point of view regarding nature often endorses Bitá's focalisation—it uses the same terms as her to refer to her family, as, for example Anty Nommy—but at other times presents a voice which is clearly autonomous, particularly when it denounces the town's gossip or the deception of the bigger planters. Particularly in this quote it is obvious that there is an emphasis on the agricultural side of nature evidenced by the long list of crops that are mentioned in the description. Importantly, we could well argue that it approximates to Bitá observing that which is in front of her eyes as her vehicle approaches the village, so her voice starts to merge with the agricultural concerns of the narrator, such as the one expressed in the second chapter where a small incident of the past of the village regarding the planting of the coffee—unrelated to Bitá's story—is narrated. The tensions between these two voices will help us determine the confusing assumptions that tie Bitá's character to the land; but let us continue analysing the ecocritical implications of this relationship.

After that first encounter with the town of her childhood, Bitá gradually asserts her passion and innate attraction for the rural life of Banana Bottom, with this attraction conceptualised through the detailed description of the surroundings.

During the first half of the novel, she leaves Jubilee for a long period of time in order to take care of Anty Nommy, who suffers from “excruciating pains in her womb” since she gave birth to Bitá’s cousin, Bab (111). The narrator explains how Bitá feels grateful to her aunt because of her “being instrumental in getting her away” (113), since she has already realised that she despises the Craigs’ lifestyle and mentality. During her stay, on a very hot day Bitá decides to go for a walk by the Cane River and take a bath in Martha’s Basin, one of the river’s pools where the girls swam. Bitá’s feelings towards such a natural scene —although an emotional connection with her childhood memories is also suggested—acquire the aforementioned instinctive taints, as they are described in bodily terms: “[a]ll of her body was tingling sweet with affectionate feeling for the place” (117). Another bodily reaction has already been mentioned above when Bitá falls into a trance at a folk religious festival, reasserting how unconscious and innate her folk affiliation appears:

Those bodies poised straight in religious ecstasy and dancing vertically up and down while others transformed themselves into curious whirling shapes, seemed filled with an ancient nearly-forgotten spirit, something ancestral recaptured in the emotional fervour, evoking in her the memories of pictures of savage rites, tribal dancing with splendid swaying plumes, and the brandishing of the supple-jacks struck her symbolic of raised and clashing triumphant spears (250)

This paragraph presents a rich array of primitivist references. Bitá seems to link the dancing with traditionally primitivist images associated to Africa in the European imaginary—“savage rites, tribal dancing [...] triumphant spears.” Even within this narrative there is evidence that this vision is promoted by Western exoticism. In the recollection of Bitá’s time in Europe it is noted that the girls she met associated all

the black people with Africa and aspects such as cannibalism, without noting that Bitá's homeland was not in that continent (*BB* 46; 82-3). But in this paragraph the connection is reinforced by her: the word chosen to refer to the energy that Bitá senses from the performance is "ancestral," thus emphasising the mystical connection between the African tribes apparently described and Bitá's own cultural identity. The fact that "with a shriek she fell down" (250) even suggests that there is a supernatural force—note the reference to the "ancient nearly-forgotten spirit"—that only affects the people who, like Bitá, have a biologically linear connection to the cultural rite performed there, despite never having seen anything similar.

On top of that, Bitá's feelings of attraction towards native ways of life eventually transcend the connection with nature and culminate with her choice of a peasant husband, around which much of the plot revolves. Thus, the aforementioned connection between the native physical body and nature is reaffirmed, particularly in terms of the female capacity for engendering. Bitá's journey of the recovery of her roots which starts with her return to Jamaica concludes with her motherhood, reinforcing the patriarchal connection between the alleged existence of female innate instincts and motherhood. Traditional patriarchal imagery has cemented this image, since earth was claimed to be "the mother of humankind" (Merchant xxi). The Craigs want Bitá to marry a theology student named Herald Newton Day, whom she finds dull but would be willing to marry just to fulfil her duty: "I suppose we might as well do it and please everybody" (100). The novel exceeds realism and finds a parallel with fairy tales and fables when a perhaps exaggerated⁴¹ event liberates Bitá from that choice. According to

⁴¹ Kay R. Van Mol argues that characters like Newton Day—but also Tack Tally and Yoni Legge, who embrace Obeah—act as types in order to show the extremes of the affiliation forces which Bitá in the end combines: African primitivism and Western intellect (50).

Ramchand, McKay makes use of comic resources for the first time in his career and, in this case, he uses them to eliminate characters who represent “a threat to the heroine” (245) without much development, resorting to a *deus-ex-machina* device. It is discovered that Herald Newton Day has engaged in sexual intercourse with a goat and he is sent to Panama, “humble[d] [and] in disgrace” according to Ramchand (246). At the same time, this fact prevents Bitia from consciously acting and deciding according to her will. The scene leaves her caught up in a tension between what she is ordered to do and her natural instincts. At the end of the day, this unrealistic part of the plot is at the service of leading towards the conclusions that this fable wants readers to take rather than effect a deep character analysis.

The fact that the driving plot of the book is whom Bitia will choose as the father of her future children—the whole idea revolving around engendering the new fate of the Jamaican nation (Dalleo 59)—is no coincidence in terms of ecocriticism. As mentioned above, some radical ecofeminists have endorsed the problematic idea⁴² that females have a particular connection with nature. One of the most essentialist arguments is made by Sharon Doubiago, who argues that ecological thinking is a particularly female ability. To explain her point, she proposes that “women have always thought like mountains [...] There’s nothing like the experience of one’s belly growing into a mountain to teach you this” (42). The conceptualisation of the earth as a mother that Merchant explores has been present from classical times until the Renaissance and saw its reason in the earth’s ability to engender the materials necessary for human survival: “[t]he most commonly used analogy, however, was between the female’s reproductive and nurturing capacity and the

⁴² In her article “Is Ecofeminism feminist?” Victoria Davion analyses several reasons why this stand is problematic. In general, Davion explains that endorsing a single view of femininity of any kind fails to critique gender roles, the main mechanism for the subjection of women under patriarchy. Femininity, Davion explains, cannot be understood as detached from patriarchy; hence arguing that it cannot be feminist (16; 21; 25).

mother earth's ability to give birth to stones and metals within its womb through its marriage with the sun" (25). Doubiago's claim, rather than liberating, stands in line with the same biocentric essentialist argument that has reduced the female to a single artificial flat model and thus supported a division of labour understood as natural (Davion 21), as she also explains that an ecological consciousness "is considered symptomatic; indeed, hormonal, anatomic" (40). The novel similarly links Bita's fertility—her pregnancy culminates the novel—to an innate understanding of nature and an awareness of how to make use of it for the community's purposes.

That said, the narration of Bita's pursuit of marriage seems to turn things around. After the Herald Newton Day incident, Bita starts to be seen with Hopping Dick, the village's official dandy who Mrs. Craig describes as a "worthless man" (*BB* 219) because he "murders his h's and altogether speaks in such a vile manner" (210). Particularly at this moment, Bita has already developed an opinion on the Craigs, whose influence starts to be unbearable. This aversion is defined in the same instinctive terms as Bita's love for nature and the folk traditions, as a "strong feeling" which she "could not quite explain [...] to herself" (211). After Bita's confession that she would be willing to marry Hopping Dick, Priscilla Craig, unable to understand how such a "highly educated" girl can like a person like him, concludes that she must be a nymphomaniac (221). The whole incident becomes so messy that the Plants' protection agreement with the Craigs is terminated and Bita finally moves back to Banana Bottom for good (225). Once there, Bita sees Jubban again, the man whom she ends up marrying and whose child's birth will close the narrative.

Jubban is defined as Bitá's father's "most reliable" drayman (McKay *BB* 115) and Bitá claims that he "was superior in one thing. He possessed a deep feeling for the land" (291). Jubban appears for the first time during the first part of the narrative (Chapter 6), when Bitá attends a picnic at the mountain side of Banana Bottom. His appearance there, only to appear again for saving Bitá when she faints at the religious festival, serves to critique the town's gossip. He confronts Tack Tally⁴³ for gossiping about Bitá's rape when she was younger. Dalleo explains that gossip in the novel acts in ambivalent ways: it is a counter-discourse which circumvents powerful agents but it also leads to "misunderstanding and tragedy" (58). Through his perceived critique of gossip in the novel, Dalleo argues that there is a plea for a public sphere of discussion and intellectual activity in the island (*ibid.*). Yet Dalleo's focus on the novel's apparent claim for intellectual mediation between the folk and power (56) is not completely accurate, as it is Jubban, the worker of the land, who confronts the gossip. The figure of the drayman has many implications here, as he is a reminder that the Caribbean attachment to land is not primitivist because nature is a means for subsistence. Jubban is not a primitive portrayal, as Kay R. Van Mol seems to argue when he defines Black consciousness as Bitá's ability to negotiate between African heritage and its contamination by white education (52). Rather, he is a worker of the land devoid of any such mysticism.

McKay's narrative method is never simply realist and omniscient. In *Home to Harlem's* descriptive paragraphs Ramchand notes that "McKay is not above weighing in with descriptions and assertions in an authorial voice that goes beyond [the protagonist]" but rather offers a projection of an atmosphere (228). In this novel, the atmosphere is that of Harlem's cabarets, which emphasises the political

⁴³ Tack Tally is a villager notorious in the novel for having gone to Panama and come back rich and with bad manner because of, according to Mrs. Craig, his contact with African Americans.

power he believed this place had for contesting essentialist views towards the “race problem”, as was argued in the previous chapter. The same is done in the context of Jamaican society through Bitá’s instinctive perception of nature, what Ramchand calls “a life of the senses” (229). Not only are instincts used for projecting a certain atmosphere but, as with Ray in *Banjo* (Ramchand 235), Bitá acts like a catalyst. Bitá’s discourse is clearly political and anti-colonialist; and, by extension, also anticapitalist. The language of nature in the book does not simply refer to nature; it is the language of autonomous subsistence; it is the language of agriculture. Finally, Bitá’s attraction to Jubban also bears a political component, as is suggested by the insistence to describe him as an honest, reliable worker of the land, as she emphasises when they marry by claiming that this is what made him superior.

In this sense, the novel’s descriptions of nature and the landscape quoted above suggest that they have a human component too, one of subsistence. Landscape—whose existence, according to Helen Tiffin, depends on an observer (199), hence the role of Bitá’s focalisation—is not just “nature-in-itself” (Tiffin 199), but the result of human activity in their choosing of which crop to cultivate or which plants to eliminate for the sake of agriculture. If we take a close look, most of the nature described in the novel are agricultural products. In the paragraph quoted above describing Bitá’s first impression of Banana Bottom, it is made clear that nature is not growing in savage ways but organised around “little fields” (50). Furthermore, the coffee described in the paragraph as a “tropical plant” is not characteristic of the island, but was introduced by the colonisers (DeLoughrey, “Island Ecologies” 299). The emphasis on the human interaction with nature (not always a respectful one) and the consequent creation of a landscape is particularly vivid in the Caribbean literary imagination, as Jamaica Kincaid suggests by asking

“[w]hat did the botanical life of Antigua consist of at the time another famous adventurer (Christopher Columbus) first saw it?” (100). What Bitá is observing and that with which her feelings are mixed is the human relationship with nature in the shape of labour and survival. Rather than embodying an unconscious primeval subject who connects with the natural world thanks to her femininity, we can read Bitá’s portrayal as that of an intelligent individual who sensitively understands the struggles of her community as epitomised by their laborious cultivation of the land. Tiffin also points out that Caribbean writers tend to portray cultivated nature rather than “remnant ‘wilder’ landscapes,” since it better allows them to negotiate their history of physical and psychical colonisation through an understating of their original role in the new place for farming of the land (201). McKay’s interest in nature is similar: Bitá’s marriage with a labourer “becomes a primary means for the novel to address the issues of acculturation, upward mobility and the future of the Jamaican nation” (Dalleo 59). By choosing her affiliation with the folk, Bitá contests the dependency (Nicholls “Folk” 83) which tied her to the Craigs.

3.2. Strategic Environmental Essentialism: *Banana Bottom* as a Text against Dependency

Bitá’s choice, therefore, can be read in at least two ways. In terms of her characterisation, Bitá realises that marrying Herald Newton Day will keep her within the same cultural dependency of the colonised-coloniser continuum, that which Homi Bhabha calls “*dependent* colonial relations” (emphasis in the original; 88). Ramchand defines Herald Newton Day as “a Black who gets a White man’s education and learns to despise his own people” (246). W.E.B. Du Bois famously

defined the black psychological experience as a “double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (*Souls* 8). Similarly, in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) Frantz Fanon concluded that the coloniser’s enterprise of “having [...] made [the colonised] inferior” results in the characteristic neurosis of the black person (43). Bhabha also tackles the topic, explaining that the colonised must at the same time imitate the Western ethos that is imposed upon them and be true to the stereotypes which justify the colonising mission (66-7; 70-1; 88-9). Bitá’s disagreement with Squire Gensir regarding Obeah quoted at the beginning of this chapter challenges these stereotypes and preconceived images and exemplifies that Jamaicans are not fixed types: Bitá’s positioning results from a cultural negotiation “that emerge[s] in moments of historical transformation” (Bhabha 2) such as the one in which the novel takes place. Unlike Herald Newton Day,⁴⁴ Jubban is able to adjust to Bitá’s Western education, and she to his peasant ways (see *BB* 312).

Additionally, and at a more metaphorical level, if Bitá represents the future of the Jamaican nation—or of the Caribbean island—then the novel suggests that Jamaica cannot depend on other more powerful parts of the world. There are clear references made to this claim throughout the novel through the inclusion of anecdotes apparently unrelated to the plot which describe in detail the struggles of the land labourers. That Bitá’s story is framed within these episodes makes the connection firm. When the narrator is autonomous, we can see how the narrative acts like a cautionary tale or a fable, presenting a conventionally fabulist use of the

⁴⁴ Herald Newton Day, despite wanting to make Bitá his wife because of her being educated, still makes obvious to her that she is different than the white people—“You’re joking, Bitá, talking that way. You’re not a white person”—who he thinks are “ahead of us, more modern and progressive and everything” (169).

language, as when events such as the hurricane are used as teaching moments⁴⁵, which might make us consider taking Bitá's stereotyped role less seriously. This intrusiveness is particularly salient at the beginning, in the second chapter, when the narrator explains the coffee pool incident, and makes suggestions related to the capitalist world-system and its effects on the Caribbean small farmers. This is the story of how Reverend Angus Craig, the father of Mr. Craig, once tried to promote the peasants' collective organisation in order to circumvent the workings of the capitalist market. In order to contest the low coffee prices that usually occurred during the flush season, when the smallest peasants "living with immediate needs from crop to crop had perforce to sell" (18), Angus Craig suggested that "the bigger peasants [...] pool collectively their coffee and hold it over for the spring selling season" (18). It was knowledge on the part of the "big white dealers" about the peasants' need to sell that made them keep the prices low until the small peasants had sold their crops (18). The strategy failed terribly because, according to the narrator, "the big buyers [...] were infuriated by the peasants' audacity in coöperating [*sic*]" (20), while the peasants in turn blamed Reverend Craig for their misfortunes. This incident shows how nature cycles affect the world-system (imagine the hypothetical situation of a year of bad crops) but also how the capitalist world-system can affect the landscape of peripheral areas, as agriculture is one example of man-made landscape.

Nicholls also follows the references to agriculture made throughout the novel and suggests that the text works as a cautionary tale of what can happen if a whole community survives on the basis of only one crop ("Folk" 83). He also goes on to

⁴⁵ For example, the narrator finishes a paragraph talking about the ways in which to promote the Jamaican economy in this self-reflective way: "as nothing could have been done to prevent man from taking risks in the beginning, so nothing could ever be done now nor in the future so long as man was man" (295).

connect Bitá's romance of nature and independence from the Craigs with folk political affiliation rather than with a nostalgic exercise on the part of the author (83). Dependency theory in terms of the economy has played a central role in the theorising of the Caribbean archipelago. Immanuel Wallerstein's world-system theory—based on Raúl Prebisch's model of centre and periphery—contends that “in the nineteenth and twentieth century there has been only one world-system in existence, the capitalist world-economy” (“Rise” 390). Some areas are cast into a state of dependency because the labour they provide functions as Capitalism's proletariat, providing it with raw materials (Wallerstein, “Rise” 392-4). George Beckford defines the economic model of the Caribbean as a “plantation capitalist societ[y],” which is “a special socio-economic formation of peripheral capitalism” (Girvan 337). After emancipation and independence, several social scientists, most famously Raúl Prebisch, have identified multinational capitalism as following the same mechanisms of the plantation system in the region, whereby foreign investment and the “repatriation of profit” impede the nations' development (Girvan 336). McKay's novel seems aware of this structure in its Marxist suggestion that the peasants retake their lands (Nicholls, “Folk” 80), while it also anticipates the effects of American neocolonialism in the Caribbean. As Leah Rosenberg contends, “McKay [...] invoked the folk and the romance in a time of fundamental societal change” (NCL 96). The novel's open ending—for the peasants more than for Bitá—suggests that the future is uncertain because of the activity of external forces that at first stance take the shape of a hurricane.

At the end of the novel there is a hurricane which destroys most of the islands' crops. This is followed by the narrator making mention of the people who leave to work for the Panama Canal: “[t]he Panama Canal was the big hope of the

poor disinherited peasant youths of Jamaica and all those islands of the Caribbean Belt that were set in the latitude of hurricanes and earthquakes” (293). The construction of the Panama Canal was an enterprise carried out by the United States where black Caribbeans from many islands worked in poor conditions and whose death rate was the highest among the workers (Greene 24; 66; 220-1; Hathaway 14). The fact that the narrator contends that hurricanes are the reason why the Jamaicans are going to Panama but then also includes reference to the coffee pool incident, among others, is among the ambiguous aspects of McKay’s novel, which like the early poems analysed in Chapter 1, is prone to rereadings where we find hidden information. There are clear veiled references to the effects of foreign intervention in Jamaica, which Rupert Lewis and Maureen Lewis further explain in their analysis of the social setting of the novel: “[p]easant farming was deeply caught up in the export trade” (40). In fact, one of the reasons why “it was men⁴⁶ from the Antilles who constructed the Panama Canal” (Benítez-Rojo, *RI* 25) is that Caribbeans migrated there after the United States closed the sugar commerce with the Caribbean British islands and unemployment rates grew massively (180). McKay’s novel reflects upon the changes that Jamaica is undergoing in imperial terms, as it shows that there is a complicity between the island’s colonial ruler, whose influence seemed to be slowly waning (Lewis and Lewis 30), and the United States’ neocolonialism. These complicities are represented in the character of Marse Arthur (the son of Busha Gengley, a Scottish planter who owned most of the lands), who after the hurricane tries to impede the peasants’ access to his property to pasture the cattle on the waste land to thus see them “forced down to coolie labor” (294). We can now see that nature in this novel is a by-product of historical processes and, rather than acting like a metaphor, is affected by them in the same

⁴⁶ There were also women (Greene 23).

way as characters are. The hurricane might embody the neocolonial devastating force of the United States and its wrecking effects for Jamaica, reminding of José Martí's description of this country as "el gigante de las siete leguas" (15), but it is the bamboos and the banana trees that are wrecked by its force.

Giving precedence to nature works particularly well in terms of exposing dependency. When it comes to the politics of nature, the idea of dependency is highly significant. The notion of island fragility has been criticised by some (Carrigan 11). While it is true that "[i]slands have been ecological crime scenes for millennia" (Garrard, "Islands" 11), they have also become very resilient (13), and the discourse of fragility, vulnerability, and dependence precludes the specificities of the whole issue, namely, "that there are differences between 'inherently' fragile ecosystems and those threatened primarily by human activity" (Carrigan 12). Many have discerned a parallel with colonial ideologies of mercantile dependence while in fact there is much potential within Caribbean ecosystems and geographies because microstates—their smallness also determined by topographical reasons—provide many possibilities of organisation, development, and self-management (Conway 51; 59-61). Their dependency then, arises from foreign intervention, which also affects nature, as has explored above with regards to the creation of plantations. In the Glissantian definition of post-plantation literature, nature can be thought of as another character, not only the means to symbolise the character's inner feelings (Glissant, *PR* 71). Even if elements in nature provoke certain reactions in Bitá, these elements also have a meaning in themselves devoid of the character's feelings towards them. They are part of a larger narrative, as Glissant suggests:

Caribbean people did not relate even a mythical chronology of this land to their knowledge of this country, and so nature and culture have not formed a

dialectical whole that informs a people's consciousness. So much so that obscured history was often reduced for us to a chronology of natural events, retaining only their "explosive" emotional meanings. We would say: "the year of the great earthquake," or: "the year of the hurricane that flattened M. Celeste's house," or: "the year of the fire on Mam Street." And that is precisely the recourse open to any community without a collective consciousness and detached from an awareness of itself (CD 63)

When McKay talks about nature, then, he is articulating history, as many other Caribbean authors have claimed. In particular Derek Walcott, who with his oft-quoted sentence "[t]he sigh of History rises over the ruins, not over landscapes, and in the Antilles there are few ruins to sigh over" (68) suggests that the Caribbean expression of history is much more opaque and symbolic than the Western one.

In conclusion, McKay's tale of the educated native, Bitá, who goes back to her land and falls in love with its nature and its simple inhabitants is a strongly political manifesto towards his homeland to which he could never go back and whose future seemed as imperilled in its way towards independence as it was during Empire. The intrusive role of the narrator gives this novel the aspect of a fable where each character—including natural characters such as the hurricane—has a role in transmitting the cautionary message against cultural, psychological, and economic dependency. McKay's means to present his narrative and its characters by focusing on the relationship with their natural environment stands in line with the *creative* approach described by Glissant: that with which Caribbean authors express the dislocation between the accumulation of experiences (culture) and their surroundings (nature). Starting with slavery, Caribbeans inhabit this nature "in the context of shock, contraction, painful negation, and explosive forces" (Glissant, CD 62). While presenting a reality which, as Heather Hathaway contends,

was influenced by the role of the United States in the hemisphere (16), McKay expresses it via distinctly Caribbean aesthetics. *Banana Bottom* uses descriptions of nature which for the Caribbeans constitute “‘explosive’ emotional meanings” (Glissant, CD 63) that help them make sense of their, in Glissant’s words, *nonhistory*⁴⁷ (CD 62). In other words, this is a history shaped by external forces and thus detached from a “mythical chronology” (63) but whose aspects of daily detail carry with them the real experience of Jamaica, what Bitá so vividly feels travelling through her senses.

3.3. Purposefully Backwards?: The Native Informants of Paule Marshall’s *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*

Paule Marshall’s novel *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* (1969) starts in a manner which seems to reverse the migrations portrayed at the end of *Banana Bottom*. While McKay’s Jamaicans leave their island and head up north, the characters who appear at the beginning of the Marshall’s novel (in the second chapter), whose significance in the plot we do not know yet, are on a plane flying from the United States towards the fictional Bourne Island:

The island that had finally claimed [Vere’s] attention was essentially no different from the others he had flown over since leaving Florida at dawn. From this height it was simply another indifferently shaped green knoll at the will of the mindless sea, one more in the line of steppingstones that might have been placed there long ago by some giant race to span the distance between the Americas, North and South. Like others, it was small, poignantly

⁴⁷ Glissant uses this term not to adjust to Hegel’s notion that the African or the Amerindian as not having a history but to differentiate that from Hegel’s own notion of History (with a capital H), which is “a highly functional fantasy of the West, precisely originating at the time when it alone ‘made’ the history of the World” (CD 64).

so, and vulnerable, defenceless. At any moment the sea might rise and swallow it whole or a hurricane uproot it and send it flying. Like the rest, it seemed expendable: for what could it be worth to the world, being so small?
(12-3)

As happens also at the end of *Banana Bottom*, in this passage we have the metaphor of the hurricane which could blow the island up, the hurricane arriving from somewhere else, as this plane is, reminding of Martí's warning that their bigger and more powerful neighbour might represent a threat to their small islands. The mention of the vulnerability of the island was also discussed in the previous section, where I drew on the ecocritical theories of Anthony Carrigan and Greg Garrard about the conceptualisation of islands. Garrard argues that "the *paradigm of fragility*" (emphasis in the original; "Islands" 21) often endorsed when describing islands is essentially a construct, since there is evidence that, despite imperialist—and now touristic—interventions, islands' ecologies manage to restore themselves ("Islands" 21). This view of the island responds to an external paternalistic conceptualisation from the outside, an attitude which has for long affected the Caribbean and around which much of this novel's plot revolves. The idea of the Caribbean being a mere link between South and North America is also present in this paragraph. This lack of critical attention to the Caribbean is worth exploring, as the lack of attention to the Caribbean in the field of Hemispheric American Studies is commonplace,⁴⁸ as evidenced by Ralph Bauer's review of the scholarship concerned with what he terms "'the hemispheric turn' in American studies" (235). This thesis, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, aims to reverse the neglect. In

⁴⁸ To give an example in a recently published article, Isabel Durán comments in "What is the *Transnational Turn* in American Literary Studies? A Critical Overview" that "some scholars aim to approach American studies hemispherically by linking explorations of Anglo-American and Latin American literatures and cultures" (140) precluding the Francophone and Dutch speaking areas in the hemisphere, and probably only referring to the continental units, North and South America.

short, many concerns that will pervade the novel are already suggested in its first pages.

The character who focalises the paragraph quoted above—Vere—is, nonetheless, not one of the intellectuals on their way to the Caribbean in a developmental mission but an economic exile who is returning home. Marshall underlines here the economically determined confluence between these two domains, the United States and the Caribbean, which through labour schemes and other kinds of patterns influence each other in unequal ways. Even if Mary Jane Schenck claims that “Paule Marshall’s novel, *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* [...] illustrates for the nineties, as it did for the late sixties, the contemporary results of historical interactions between African, European, and American cultures” (49), the novel is essentially about the new colonial relations that affect the Caribbean whereby the United States has replaced the European Empires.⁴⁹ To notice this confluence between problems native to heterogenous cultures would give us insight into a way to understand the novel with regards to its author’s life and career. Paule Marshall was born in the United States to Barbadian migrant parents. After the publication of short stories like “The Valley Between,” Marshall’s first novel *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959) explored the immigrant experience in the United States—specifically the Barbadian (or Bajan) one—in terms of, according to the author, “a kind of commentary on American society” (Brock 199). However, in her second novel Marshall goes back to the Caribbean and explores this domain to help her understand her—and her characters’—presence in the receiving land. In her last work, the memoir *Triangular Road* (2009), she remaps the routes that have

⁴⁹ In the novel, sugar and other foodstuffs companies from abroad—particularly from the United States—own the island almost in its totality. One of these companies is partly owned by Harriet Shipman, one of the Americans who travel on the aforementioned plane, whose family became rich thanks to the slave trade.

influenced her cultural identity. In a fragmented chronological order, she uses three aquatic landmarks—the James River, the Caribbean Sea, and the Atlantic Ocean—to draw a reversed Middle Passage by which the author ultimately returns to Africa not as a slave or a daughter of the land but as an American intellectual who has achieved international recognition. As such, against the problematisation that many Caribbean writers portray their islands from the exile—whereby the “West Indies stopped in time at the snapshot moment of departure” (Brathwaite, “Rehabilitations” 125)—Brathwaite contends that it may not be possible to apprehend the area without “a wider framework of external impingements” (“Rehabilitations” 125)

While these other Marshall works focus on an individual experience, even if representing something larger, *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* is entirely a novel of “economic and political dimensions” (Skerrett 68). In fact, the characters that are on the aforementioned plane already foretell the violent cultural contact that is one of the main themes of the whole narrative. These characters are Saul Amron, Harriet Shippen, and Allen Fuso. Saul is an anthropologist who has long been out of field work and is hired to carry out research about the Bournehills valley with the later aim of implementing a development project in this particular part of Bourne Island, an area that has been subject to little change and is economically and ecologically depressed. Harriet is Saul’s wife, who is described as the last in a line of a traditional rich Protestant family of Philadelphia’s pseudo-aristocracy. Allen Fuso is assisting Saul with the statistical work of the project. Saul is hired by the Center for Applied Social Research (CASR), an “agency created by the Philadelphia Research Institute to administer its overseas program” which carries out humanitarian and development projects with the aim of “uplifting the impoverished

of the world” (36). The Center is funded by important corporations—paradoxically complicit which such impoverishment—which use it to appear humanitarian and, in a nutshell, to evade taxes. One of these corporations, Unicor, is partly owned by Harriet’s family, who in turn made their fortune in the past through, among other businesses, slave trading. Harriet and Saul met through the Center, where he was asked to deliver an inauguration talk, and some years later he joined the Center’s project on Bourne Island and married her. Saul had long been out of field work but Harriet was sure that he would return to it “if offered the right kind of project” (44). The Bournehills project seemed to fit the bill.

According to Wolfgang Sachs, these projects of development imply notions of progress that align with the linear Western ideas characteristic of Modernity that I have discussed thus far (4). In the Western logic, time is measured in linear terms (Glissant, *PR* 47), and in the Modern/colonial logic, civilisation also advances progressively towards more advanced states, with Europeans fixed in the highest state with regards to other populations. Quijano’s sentence “inferior yet anterior” summarises this mode of thought most accurately (“Latin America” 542). While these development projects seem to carry a humanitarian component with them, they are the result of colonialist thought and are often associated with neo-colonialist purposes. In Marshall’s novel, Gary Storhoff argues, within the mission of the anthropologists there “is a series of masked assumptions about values, primary among them the superiority of the Western rationalist vision of the ‘free’ marketplace” (52). Neo-colonialism, he implies, comes along with humanitarian aid, deployed in order to gain control over the manpower and resources of postcolonial areas (52). Nevertheless, Storhoff’s argument is flawed as it confuses Saul’s project with Unicor, as if they were the same entity. Unicor is too big to control the actions

of Saul and his team: it is an industrial empire controlling the distribution and commercialisation of primary goods all over the world, a

giant commercial complex which, like some elaborate rail or root system,⁵⁰ endlessly crisscrosses the world, binding it up, until the world of one of those high-bouncing balls children used to make years ago by twisting layer upon layer of rubber band around a toy marble (37)

Still, while the anthropologists themselves are not interested in the expansion of this firm, it is ironic that they are being funded by it, despite the company's lack of influence upon their decisions. Even more ironic is the brief mention of the fact that Unicorn is linked with Kingsley and Sons Ltd., a sugar company that is not properly introduced until much later in the novel. Kingsley and Sons Ltd. is a sugar refinery which owns much of the island and ends up ruining Saul's plans for improving the conditions of the cane labourers in Bournehills. With all these confluences and the past failures of development projects described in the novel, Marshall supports Johannes Fabian's critique of Western anthropology. He contends that anthropology has "contributed above all to the intellectual justification of the colonial enterprise," as it is aligned with the ideas on linear progress described above (17). This critique, however, is not evident at every point in the novel, as we will now see, especially due to the strange characterisation of the inhabitants of Bournehills throughout the text.

In the narrative, Allen, another anthropologist who is already familiar with the island, offers the following information when he starts working for the Center: there is a valley in the recently independent postcolonial Bourne Island whose small villages, despite previous attempts at development, continue to be in a state of

⁵⁰ Regarding Marshall's terminology here, see my previous discussion on Chapter 2 about the root vs. the rhizome system.

backwardness. Allen believes this place is perfect for the Center's new project, led by Saul. Furthermore, he explains that the previous attempts have failed, so Saul's role is to carry out research to discover why. Saul initially suspects that the previous efforts were unviable because of their "poor planning," the "condescending attitude of the people in charge" or "the failure to include the villagers directly in the project from the beginning" (157). However, there is also a suggestion that the inhabitants' uncommon character determined such failures, as they are deemed inexplicably backwards and tied to the past and its rudimentary means for subsistence. When Saul and his companions arrive in their destination, they first get to know the islanders in New Bristol, the capital. They explain to them that the failures of the past projects were determined by Bournehillian sabotage: "There's no understanding those people" (58). As their compatriots affirm, the inhabitants of Bournehills had willingly rejected better housing and employment conditions: "the housing scheme government built with the help of that Canadian company [...] those people refused to go near it" (56). Those in New Bristol⁵¹ propose that there is something intrinsic to these people—irremediable, and with no reasonable motive other than their being the way they are—which makes them act in this manner.

Throughout the novel there is the suggestion that this behaviour or attitude is connected to something intrinsic to the land itself, since even Saul, who is convinced of the reasons for the past project's failures as quoted above, later

⁵¹ The group is meeting at Lyle Hutson's house. Lyle is a successful lawyer native to Bourne Island who acquired his education in England and who, on coming back, became part of the island's elite as a politician, becoming complicit with the exploitation of its subalterns. In his house at this meeting, we also find Deanes, a Member of Parliament, George Clough, the editor of the English newspaper who has taken over the local one, and Bryce-Parker, an Australian in charge of the soil conservation of Bourne Island. The novel describes the people in this house as follows: "nearly all the men there were senior civil servants and high-ranking government officials. The rest were members of the professions, which in Bourne Island were largely taken to mean only medicine and law [...] They were all, to a man almost, drinking imported whisky, scoring as a matter of status the local rum, which was excellent; all wearing dark-toned conservative, heavy suits in spite of the hot night [...] Down below, along the sweep of driveway, were parked the large, late-model English and German cars they drove" (53).

expresses that “he remained strangely dissatisfied, questioning. He couldn’t help feeling that something apart from the obvious had also been at play. He couldn’t say why he felt this” (157). The language of these sentences is strikingly reminiscent of Bitá’s reactions of “not quite [being able] to explain this strong feeling to herself” but feeling it nonetheless: “[i]t was just there, going much deeper than the Hopping Dick affair” (211). But in this case, we do not have a native female whose intrinsic connection with the land is suggested, but a cold and calculating white male scientist, in fact the clearest embodiment of the Western subject of reason and Modernity (Lugones, “Feminismo Descolonial” 106). Here it seems that nature is acting autonomously and communicates with Saul, as is suggested at the beginning when he is at Lyle’s house: “he could feel the almost human presence of the tropical night waiting just beyond the reach of the lights from the house. It appeared to be listening to him more closely even than the men in his audience” (51). There are reasons to believe that a Bournehillian essence is being transmitted through nature due to their strong connection, since there is the same sense of tropical mystery—even reaching the conventions of an indigenous version of Caribbean noir—around the villagers’ identity in these introductory chapters.

Therefore, despite my previous suggestion that the novel may criticise the Western Modern/colonial anthropological perception of ethnic Others, the description of the Bournehills inhabitants, in particular their reticence to change, subscribes to the same essentialist dynamics explored in the previous section. The portrayal of the town and its inhabitants reproduces discourses of primitivism characteristic of the European colonial imaginary. The idea of primitivism arose with the European Modern conception of civilisation and the consequent mystery that

surrounds those Others who are untouched by it (Davidov 2). Tied to it was the dichotomy between nature and civilisation as completely opposed concepts (Davidov 1). Civilisation, of course, is only assessed as a European belonging. Aníbal Quijano identifies this epistemic tendency as Modernity itself (“Clasificación” 343; “Rationality” 171-2) and situates it, with coloniality, as one of the axes of the Patrón de Poder Mundial that was born, according to him, with the arrival of the Europeans in the American hemisphere (Quijano, “Clasificación” 342):

During the same period as European colonial domination was consolidating itself [this is coloniality], the cultural complex known as European modernity/rationality was being constituted. The intersubjective universe produced by the entire Eurocentered capitalist colonial power was elaborated and formalized [...] as a universal paradigm of knowledge and of the relation between humanity and the rest of the world (“Rationality” 171-2)

Critics such as Joachim Schultz, who elaborated a dictionary of primitivist terms, noted that primitivism became a tendency in the literature and art associated with the *Négritude* movement (Hadatty Mora 107), of which Marshall seems to be heir.⁵² This point is indeed problematic since, as Jorge Marcone points out, ideas like these are based on the same myths perpetuated by the Western colonisers (159; 161; 168). Furthermore, as George B. Handley contends, this is not an accurate manner of self-representation, not only in a globalised world but also in the (using Benítez-Rojo’s terminology) supersyncretic universe which the Caribbean conforms:

The privileging of animism and the essentializing of the native or the black subject can lead to a categorical dismissal of the diasporic subject and of hybridity, and the valorization of wilderness can lead to an unfruitful dismissal of history, technology, and culture (Handley 118)

⁵² Marshall acknowledges the influence of Langston Hughes in her oeuvre in *Triangular Road*. Hughes, as was noted in the previous section, shared intellectual interests with the Cuban most famous exponent of *Negrismo* Nicolás Guillén.

The self-contained world which the Bournehillians have created, seemingly untouched by the hand of civilisation, appears at first sight to be as simplistic as the myth of savagery.

One of the reasons suggested in the novel for the Bournehillian attitude is their being closer to Africa than any other part of the Caribbean. Like Barbados, as Jane Olmsted lets us know, Bourne Island is “located closer to Africa [...] than any of the other islands” (251):

And ever mindful of the responsibility placed upon it in the beginning it remained—alone amid an immensity of sea and sky, becalmed now that its turbulent history was past, facing east, the open sea, and across the sea, hidden beyond the horizon, the colossus of Africa (Marshall 13)

On top of that, Bournehills is the eastern-most part of it, described in the novel with this comparison which uses particularly Western references: “[t]o the east end sealed off from that bright green world lay a kind of valley which occupied less than a quarter of the land space on the island. Viewed from the plane, it resembled a ruined amphitheater whose other half had crumbled away and fallen into the sea” (14). This has been assessed by some critics as Marshall’s dubious identity politics, as Olmsted also explains:

Critics of Marshall’s ‘connective’ politics have accused her of formulating a simplistic, arbitrary, or at the very least predictable and heavy-handed spiritual connection between Africa and the Americas [...] promoting an essentialised Blackness that does nothing to help the causes of African Americans (249)

The novel’s endorsement of the spiritual identification of Afro-Caribbeans with Africa is based on direct biological lineage, the same that has given Harriet her fortune.

Therefore, to contest a world order based on these premises, one might expect the epistemological principles lying behind such organisation to be challenged by Marshall. Furthermore, in terms of identity politics, this overt Afrocentrism, defined by Stephen Howe as the “shared African origins among all ‘black’ people” (1), invokes “fundamentally distinct and internally homogeneous ‘African’ ways of knowing and feeling about the world, ways which only members of the group can possibly understand” (Howe 2). It is therefore suggested at first sight that New Bristol blacks have lost that essence but that something pure remains in Bournehills by direct geographical influence. However, there is room for different interpretations of the previous quote by Marshall, which states that Africa is hidden and that the sea that engendered the Middle Passage is now becalmed, perhaps awaiting a new storm or, as mentioned above, a hurricane coming from the United States.

Indeed, at least at the beginning, as Schenck notices, the characters of the novel act as types (2). Saul is a successful Jewish anthropologist aware of being in an inferior social position to his wife, a Philadelphian WASP: “‘I guess you know we’re something of an odd match,’ he said. ‘Here I am what my father used to call even after we moved out to the coast and had some money a poor little *pitser* from New York. And here you are strictly Main Line Philadelphian’” (emphasis in the original; *CP* 46). Allen is a cold and rational intellectual type who is “more comfortable with statistics than people” (Shenck 2) and who cannot come to terms with his own homosexuality. Besides, Merle Kinbona is the native informant: she overwhelms the visitors with non-stop blabbering and, despite the fact that Allen is familiar with the island, her role is to show the place to the Americans (Shenck 2). Furthermore, despite her foreign education and her familiarity with New Bristol

people, she also seems to share the Bournehillian approach to life and the land, or at least some empathy for it: “‘What’ve you brutes been telling this nice gentleman from America about *us* in Bournehills?’” (emphasis mine; 65). The “native informant” is a concept whose problematisation by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999) could be well applied here. Spivak contends that the native is stripped of all her subjectivity due to the inscriptions of Imperialism: the “native informant” is used to create Western-centric knowledge (Spivak 6). Allen’s explanation makes it perfectly obvious: “she’ll be invaluable to us in terms of the project, having access as she does to everyone up and down the line” (118). Merle’s stereotypical characterisation evidences Spivak’s claim.

As a character Merle Kinbona is paradigmatic of the colonialist view that non-Western cultures maintain the connection with the natural environment that the modernised West had lost through progress and which some, nostalgically, sought to recover. According to the deconstructionist Jacques Derrida, there has been a historical obsession in Western philosophy and anthropology to analyse “non-Western” subjects as the key to natural goodness, as if through them “one could outline the structure, the growth, and above all the degradation of our society and our culture” (115). Merle was born in Bourne Island and is of African descent but left the island to study in England. Therefore, a biological component is added to the anthropological view noted above, since Merle’s education does not differ from the one of people like the American visitors. Furthermore, the issue of gender also affects her characterisation in the novel, which falls within the same stereotypes explored in the previous section with regards to *Banana Bottom*’s Bitia. Like McKay’s heroine did with the Craigs, on coming back Merle decided to stay in Bournehills and refused to be part of the educated society of New Bristol—where,

non-coincidentally, males dominate the social scene, as their wives only occupy passive roles. There is even reference to chromatics as associated with the sort of attributes that Merle embodies, since Lyle Hutson's wife, Enid, who is biologically related to Merle, does not share her attitude but neither does she share her skin colour: "Enid was as white as Harriet seated beside her" (69). Therefore, the problematic issue of innate natural connections by which "contradiction and difference are erased from [non-Western people's] histories" (Slater 286) appears in this novel as well as in McKay's.

Just at the beginning, in the first chapter of a 472 page long novel, before the episode describing the plane journey, Merle is shown in her everyday environment, struggling to drive up a hill because of the muddy mess that the rain had caused, and defined in comparison with those very hills which were the only topographical reason why a slave revolt was possible in that area: "[b]ut it had been despoiled, that face, in much the same way as the worn hills to be seen so piled around her on all sides had been despoiled-stripped of their trees centuries ago, their substance taken" (5). Merle is described many times in the novel both by characters and by the narrator as one with the environment of Bournehills, as Allen explains to Saul: "[s]he's become too much a part of the place. In a way I can't explain, she somehow is Bournehills" (118). Not only is she associated with the place in affiliative terms—"some larger figure in whose person was summed up both Bournehills and its people" (260)—but also in association, as the hills quote above exemplifies, with its natural geography.

Apart from her particular story—which will be commented upon later—Merle seems to possess this special sensitivity because she is a female. Recalling Quijano's previously quoted idea that with Modern thought the newly rational

subject separates itself from the material (“Latin America” 555), Susan Griffin associates the historical inferior position of females in society with the fact that they are conceptualised as part of nature while men consider themselves “superior to matter”: “[this fact] seemed to me to gain significance when placed against man’s attitude that woman is both inferior to him and closer to nature” (xv). Merle’s characterisation seems to problematically be part of this epistemological tendency. On top of that, she is also characterised with maternal and emotional attributes, which, as Genevieve Lloyd explains, is not totally unrelated to the association with nature and, hence, lack of reason. According to Lloyd, because men have historically occupied the public sphere, where reason is expected to dominate, the female relegation to the private sphere and their stereotypical characterisation as more emotional came hand in hand (74-79).

In the novel Merle’s inability⁵³ to conform to educated Western ways and her somehow primitive recklessness makes her lose her job as a schoolteacher as a result of her teaching the story of Cuffee Ned—a slave who led a revolt in Bournehills for several months—rather than conforming to the English colonial education endorsed by the schoolmaster. It is then claimed that Lyle Hutson manages to secure a job for her which consists on a series of social services. As such, towards the middle of the novel, Merle is shown reading a story—which furthermore belongs to the Anancy tales, a pan-Caribbean traditional collection of oral tales of children based on West African mythology⁵⁴ (Benítez-Rojo *RI* 214)—to the children from the almshouse:

⁵³ The sentence “[s]he says what she feels to” (33) exposes an impulsive behaviour rather than meditated unwillingness, thus exemplifying Merle’s characterisation as someone biologically, rather than culturally, determined.

⁵⁴ Benítez-Rojo explains—adjusting to his interest for demonstrating the hybrid nature of the Caribbean culture—that “in spite of their unquestionable African provenance, they can be considered

She was seated on a bench beneath the large silk-cotton tree which offered the only shade to be found in the yard, and grouped around her on the ground were the dozen or so children of the almshouse, the orphaned and abandoned. From her gestures and their laughter it was clear that she was telling them a story, one of the things she did as part of the rather loosely defined job which Lyle had secured for her (223)

The whole scene is idyllic and heartwarming, topped up with the tree which protects them and the later distribution of the mangoes—the local food—for the children to eat. It characterises Merle as the whole island’s mother figure, who provides equal care and compassion for all the children in Bournehills. On top of that, Allen later describes her as someone who embraces emotion and is full of life, representing a contrast with his “IBM machine” character.

According to Brian Bartell, it is “post-World War II American domesticity” that makes Allen the way he is, eventually resulting in “his suppressed sexuality and his unrequited love for Vere” (37). Bartell implies that the technological modernity of the post-World War II United States⁵⁵ creates subjects with “stable domestic masculinit[ies]” (38). These modes of subjectification are racialised, since “Allen comes to the realisation that he has been made from birth into a white calculating machine in the whirl of a post-WWII suburban ‘blender’” (Bartell 38). Through Allen’s claim that he is “a walking IBM machine” that “private industries [are] eager for” (378) the novel again implies that non-white individuals are exempt from such rational characteristics since they, even in the United States in the case of African Americans, were not included in the aforementioned domesticity (Bartell 38).

a part of Caribbean folklore, for the spirit of the tales adjusted itself to conditions proper to the Caribbean. Some of the African characters appearing in these stories underwent changes as well: thus the ‘wax woman’ turned into the ‘tar woman,’ the latter being a more abundant material in the Caribbean, used in building and repairing ships, rigging, and docks” (214).

⁵⁵ This technological US American modernisation was heavily imposed on the Caribbean islands with imperial designs (Bartell 35; Adas 196), as the novel itself states with Merle’s description of the archipelago as “a relatively small American lake” (Marshall 207).

Therefore, maintaining this characterisation for Merle in contrast with Allen's—thus, again, establishing the characters as types—would perpetuate the differentiation which othered black Americans in this process of post-World War II modernisation.

However, the novel, whose extensive length is necessary for the gradual unfolding of the following realisations, ends up telling us that there is more to that than at first sight. While Merle appears widely through the whole novel, we do not get to know her family history until the very end whereas at the very beginning of the novel Merle is described solely in comparison with the hills. Merle's affiliation with Bournehills is first and foremost with its inhabitants, not with its nature. Her education has given her access to more privileged positions, but her own personal story makes her align with the subaltern of the island. As Allen explains to Saul, despite her friendship with “hobnobs with bigwigs in town like Lyle Hutson” (117), Merle is completely “on [Bournehills'] side and really takes their problems to heart” (117). Merle's father, Ashton Vaughan, was the descendant of Duncan Vaughan, a notorious English planter who had over forty children with enslaved women and divided his estate among all of them. Similarly, Ashton had made “the young weeder on his estate” pregnant with Merle, who he sent to a respectable “all-white girls' school” and then to England to study (69). However, much psychological damage was inflicted upon Merle, whose mother was assassinated allegedly by Vaughan's wife in front of her when she was only two, an event which she is aware is the result of a long history of subjugation and violence towards black women. Merle associates this pattern of behaviour—the same by which she was bullied at school because of the fact that she was black and the daughter of a “common laborer” (357)—with the elitism she recognises in the community of New Bristol. Therefore, once the novel is finished one would conclude that Merle's behaviour is based on

an empathy towards the islanders which results from her own personal experiences from childhood. She is also a knowledgeable individual who in her attempt to make justice for the people of Bournehills is deeply aware of the colonial history of exploitation.

Even if critics like Joseph Skerrett, Susan Willis, and Hortense Spillers insist on the one-sidedness of all the characters because of their being “the part that speaks for the whole” (Spillers 154), Merle and Saul’s evolution throughout the text challenges this view. Considering the aforementioned characteristics which have defined this novel so far, there seems to be a turning point for the character whose focalisation has dominated most of the novel and, consequently, for the direction of the novel itself. We could well argue that much of what we see in the first half of the novel—including the descriptions of Merle, which are many times conveyed through the characters’ dialogues—is mediated by the gaze of the anthropologists, especially Saul, who despite his good intentions perpetuates Western notions of evolution epitomised in postcolonial development.

3.4. Man of Reason: Focalisation and the Western Gaze in *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*

According to decolonial thinker Arturo Escobar,

development can best be described as an apparatus that links forms of knowledge about the Third World with the deployment of forms of power and intervention, resulting in the mapping and production of Third World societies (207)

Though linked to colonisation and Enlightened forms of knowledge through its philosophical foundations based on linear progress (Watts 4), ideas on development are only operative since

the post-war period, when the apparatuses of Western knowledge production and intervention (such as the World Bank, the United Nations, and bilateral development agencies) were globalized and established their new political⁵⁶ economy (Escobar 207)

With this, Escobar questions the validity and origins of the definitions of “developed” and “undeveloped.” According to him, development’s logic of “catching up with the West” (209) carries with it the perpetuation and imposition of Western knowledge in the postcolonial world. When it is stated that Merle implied “that there were other, more profound, even mystical, reasons for the place being as it was” (215) what is being conveyed is Saul’s focalisation, not what Merle means. What she actually said is: “Bournehills is the way it is for a reason—that you people in town are too blind to see” (210). Note the significance of Saul’s implication that if he and his team are unable to see or understand something it must be because there is something supernatural about it. As Saul begins to understand the Others’ reality and ways of thinking, his initial plans about the project to carry out also begin to shatter. Merle begins to be seen in another light too.

Furthermore, Saul’s relationship with his wife Harriet deteriorates at the same time as he starts doubting whether the logics of development would work in Bournehills. There is a turning point in a particularly significant moment of the novel when Harriet single-handedly decides to feed the villagers Stinger and Gwen’s

⁵⁶ It is also worth mentioning that at this point the United States led most of these imperialist enterprises since, after World War II, it acquired the world hegemonic status. This issue will be more extensively explored in the next section.

children some eggs that their parents had been saving for selling in exchange for what would be worth a “weekly supply of staples” (180). At Saul’s significant scolding that “[y]our values aren’t necessarily the world’s” (181), Harriet still perpetuates her own vision: “[t]hey didn’t eat it [...] [p]erfectly good, nourishing eggs... I don’t understand” (181). This kind of moment begins to show the inadequacy of development programmes fostered by Western agents who work outside the forms of knowledge native to the place to be developed. This is the sole reason why previous projects had not worked in Bournehills rather than the “mystery” suggested at some points throughout the novel: “he couldn’t help feeling as the weeks came and went vaguely surrounded by a mystery [...] Something [...] was being withheld, hidden from him” (216). At the same rhythm as this marital relationship deteriorates, Saul gradually falls in love with Merle. Rather than a simple exoticising of the native woman, considering the transition of the novel towards Saul’s realisation of the inadequacy of Western forms of knowing in Bournehills, this infatuation represents Saul’s gradual abandonment of his epistemological principles, regardless of how problematic it might be to symbolise them in the form of two women.

Saul’s main epiphany in the novel—one accompanied by a physical reaction of nausea and fatigue—occurs after he spends a whole working day in the sugar fields with the workers of Bournehills. This epiphany does not seem to be motivated by any particular reflection, nor does Saul express any realisation about what he has concluded during the day. He himself expresses that he has observed the same scene many days, but not for the whole working session, just for some minutes or, at most, hours. What he sees on that particular day, that which causes the epiphany, does not seem to be anything special either, just the exhaustion that

comes after a hard day of physical work under the sun. Saul himself observes that Gwen was lively when she arrived, but that at the end of the day “she had fallen silent” (162). Stinger similarly stops uttering the triumphant sounds he used to make whenever he cut a cane. Moira Ferguson’s suggestion that the day at the sugar field represents an illuminating experience about the position of these workers in the world order for Saul (43) does not seem to sustain, since at the beginning of the day their mood was lively and there did not seem to be any indication that their existence was unbearable to them.

Symbolically, what seems to happen is that Saul has just stepped into the villagers’ shoes for one day. Through the momentary possibility to perceive life through the eyes of Others, regardless of what he sees, Saul is able to drift towards an eventual questioning of the usefulness and legitimation of his role in Bournehills:

I’ve even wondered at times [...] whether my kind of work might not in a way be indirectly serving [the elite’s] ends, since all these projects, no matter how ambitious, are committed to changing things gradually and within the old framework. Perhaps whether I realize it or not, I’m really helping to keep the lid on things for Sir John and his kind, and therefore am as much a part of the system as they are (226)

This claim stands in line with Escobar’s belief that “[s]eeking to eradicate problems, [development] ended multiplying them indefinitely” through the creation of “abnormalities” that adapt to its Western imaginary of evolution (208), as is shown in the novel when the villagers actually defend their work in the sugar mills—even if it is inherited from the plantation system—in opposition to the island’s modernisation attempts when Kingsley and Sons intends to sabotage the factory. They also reject the aims of the—only partly independent—postcolonial government of the island to attract foreign businesses related to tourism. This technological

modernisation is not key to the community's improvement but actually damaging for them, just like Justin Haynes suggests when he explains that Vere's killing in an Opel car means that the technology brought over by the West into this island is not meant to improve the islanders' lives but the lives of the manufacturers (4). In sum, the novel here condemns what some characters perceive as humanitarian aid exposing that its logic is not so different from the colonising project.

Through Saul's reflections the novel seems to align with Marxist Immanuel Wallerstein's idea that

the economic structures of contemporary underdeveloped countries is not the form which a 'traditional' society takes upon contact with 'developed' societies, not an earlier stage in the 'transition' to industrialization. It is rather the result of being involved in the world-economy as a peripheral, raw material producing area ("Rise" 392)

Whereas this view of the world-system is pessimistic in terms of the agency and possibilities of resistance of areas such as Bournehills, the novel's main concern is not related to these kinds of struggles but to Saul and Merle's realisations that their views might have been problematic, as were the novel's initial portrayals of the characters as types. As Simon Gikandi explains in his unique study on the modernist politics of Caribbean literature—which he bases on contradictions and tensions that works such as Marshall's present in terms of their negotiation of history—"for most of the text [Saul] is forced to spend time reflecting on the inadequacy of his own modes of interpretation which seek to rewrite the Caribbean landscape in terms of the Western metanarrative on progress and material wealth" (*Limbo* 176). The novel is about Saul's evolution and his emerging awareness of the fact that there is more than one epistemological frame by which to understand

ideas about progress and development. As such, as the novel progresses its images of simplistic native primitivism evolve into the portrayal of a much more complicated reality.

The complexity reaches its highest when it is suggested that Merle's position with regards to Bournehills is problematic as well. Bartell argues that Merle, who has just come back from the West and has experienced a completely different lifestyle to the one in Bournehills, demands much more "immediate" changes (33). More than that, her obsession with the past of the island and her insistence on bringing about actions and solutions that are direct reactions to the ills that were inflicted by the Europeans promotes a historicist approach to the situation of Bournehills: it bears the cause-and-effect logic that Derek Walcott criticises in "The Muse of History" (*WTS* 37). According to the poet, clinging to facts repeats the Old World's particular apprehension of history as a habitable space, as an absolute narrative (36-7), while "the truly tough aesthetic of the New World neither explains nor forgives history. It refuses to recognize it as a creative or culpable force" (37). Merle's obsession with the past is evidenced in the decoration of her room, which looks like a museum of slavery:

There was even a print showing [the slaves] bound to the millwheel along with the oxen used to turn the giant wheel whenever the wind fell. In the midst of these, and overwhelming the wall upon which it was hung, and even somehow the room, stood a large, very old and probably quite valuable drawing of a three-master Bristol slaver (400-401)

These objects in Merle's room are the ruins and monuments whose empirical non-existence Walcott attributes to the Caribbean exceptionality (*WTS* 38; 68). These objects epiphanically are only described at the end of the novel through Saul's

focalisation when he enters the room for the first time after Merle has had a mental breakdown because the sugar factory is about to close. As a matter of fact, Gikandi argues, this exhaustion that characterises Merle derives from her insistence on finding coherent meanings to the situation in Bournehills, those which would make sense from the perspective—even if subaltern—of a unified linear history of colonialism (178). The problem is that Merle does not realise that this history is fragmented, discontinuous, and not easily interpretable through the hermeneutic mechanisms that she has at hand (178). Unlike Merle's, the town's reaction to injustice is based on the Caribbean epistemology described so far.

The expressive mechanism with which the town of Bournehills responds to the island's new power dynamics is a carnival reminiscent, according to Haynes, of Barbados' Crop Over (1). In fact, this sort of carnival is characteristic of areas which were "former slaveholding sites" (Haynes 1). In line with his endorsement of the Theory of Chaos to explain the Caribbean, Benítez-Rojo, who shares this view of the carnival as a post-plantation phenomenon, contends that carnivals⁵⁷ "inscribe themselves within a time lag; they are, above all, concentrations of paradoxical dynamics by virtue of which the world becomes a travestying mirror" (*RI* 306). The carnival of Bourne Island has been appropriated as a tourist attraction by the elite of New Bristol, who try to make profit out of it ignoring its sociocultural value: "[w]e put it on mainly for the tourists, who like that sort of thing" (59). However, out of the many masques that are put together for the event, the one by the people of

⁵⁷ According to Benítez-Rojo, the carnival which is "the [sociocultural practice] that best expresses the strategies that the people of the Caribbean have for speaking at once of themselves and their relation with the world, with history, with tradition, with nature, with God" (*RI* 294).

Bournehills still maintains the spirit of the carnival as a reversal of the violence which has long affected the Caribbean.⁵⁸

According to Haynes, the Bournehills masque, “a working class agricultural and subsistence [reenactment of] an historical and bloody uprising perpetrated by the slave Cuffee Ned,” exemplifies the carnivalesque nature of Bournehills’ cultural expression (Haynes 1). While it seems that the masque of Bournehills resists change—the carnival has been turned into a contest by the New Bristol elite where masques should not be repeated from year to year—and ties the town to the stagnated past, it is well known in the Caribbean theory of Antonio Benítez-Rojo, indebted to Gilles Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* (1968), that repetitions involve change. Benítez-Rojo relies on the Theory of Chaos to talk of the regularities that occur within the disorder of the world (2). In the Caribbean archipelago, which is “a discontinuous conjunction of [...] unstable condensations, turbulences, whirlpools, clumps of bubbles, frayed seaweed, sunken galleons” (2), “every repetition is a practice that necessarily entails a difference” (3). The repetition of the revolt resists the kind of change that is based on linear progress—“the diachronic repetition on an ancient polemic” (Benítez-Rojo, *RI* 11)—and rather results from what Benítez-Rojo calls the meta-archipelago. A culture of meta-archipelago is one where everything returns because of its supersyncretism. Supersyncretism differs from syncretism in that the various cultural influences conflate by way of “erratic displacement” (Benítez-Rojo, *RI* 12), reappearing in the shape of performance through “the desire to sublimate apocalypse and violence” (Benítez-Rojo, *RI* 16). Through the repetitions instituted by the carnival the

⁵⁸ Benítez-Rojo refers to the Carnaval del día de Reyes to state his point. It is a celebration dating from slavery times in Cuba when the slaves killed a snake (*RI* 297). According to Benítez-Rojo, the killing “chanell[ed] the violence of the white against the Black through the death of a scapegoat” (*RI* 298).

dichotomy past/present is thus eliminated (Gikandi, *Limbo* 177; 190). Hence, time is not seen as linear—as is commonplace in Western thought (Glissant, *PR* 47-8; 56)—but, as per Benítez-Rojo, there is only “an immemorial present [which] can be embarked upon by any kind of performer” (*RI* 21). In this way, the masque of Bournehills reflects the way Caribbean forms of knowing reject the idea of moving forward in terms of progress while the other masques in the carnival endorse it through their yearly challenge towards more impressive forms. Rather than reticence to change, the Bournehills masque symbolises a reticence to adapt to the linear progress and evolution characteristic of Capitalism’s endless accumulation, that which so much has to do with the island’s historical mistreatment by the West.

In conclusion, despite the initial apparent Afrocentrism and primitivism endorsed by the novel, as with the rest of the texts analysed in this thesis, *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* remains an exponent of the Caribbean aesthetics of tidalectics, Relation or the meta-archipelago, depending on the term used by each critic. In the end, though the novel exposes the economic precariousness which the capitalist West has thrust upon Bournehills, it does not portray the villagers as victims; it rather offers them the agency which might reverse forms of economic violence through the promotion of alternative forms of knowledge, eventually driving Saul and Merle out of the island. Their carnivalesque apprehension of the state of affairs is an example of the Caribbean aesthetic reacting to a situation which is a result of the Americanness invoked in this thesis: in this case the United States inscriptions in the Caribbean archipelago. The Bournehills masque works as epistemic resistance to the forms of knowledge which still promote the logics of colonialism in the postcolonial era.

3.5. The Caribbean in the Modern World-System: The Peripheral Proletariat in *Banana Bottom* and *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*

When facing literary descriptions of nature in postcolonial settings, critics are fast to bring in notions of jungle fever or the retreat from Modernity. This removal from civilisation features widely in Latin American regional novels such as Rómulo Gallegos' *Canaima* (1935) or Mario Vargas Llosa's *El Hablador* (1987) (to mention two novels which, like *Banana Bottom* and *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*, are apart in terms of publication dates). Notwithstanding apparent similarities, McKay's and Marshall's novels radically differ from the *novelas de la selva*. Marcone explains that the return to nature in Latin American jungle novels represents a rejection of civilisation and modernity (162; 170). This is the reading which Bitá's and Merle's apparent primitivism on coming home seems to encourage but, as discussed above, the novels here analysed explore the characters' precarious positions *precisely within* civilisation and Modernity.

Wallerstein's exploration of the rise of world capitalism situates all the nations in the world as participants in one way or another in the capitalist world-system ("Rise" 390-1), a world-economy⁵⁹ that came into being in the sixteenth century (*Volume I* 67; *WSA* 10) and reached its total world expansion in the

⁵⁹ Wallerstein contends that in order to implement an historical economic analysis based on stages, social scientists need to compare totalities, that is, social systems, and not parts of those totalities ("Rise" 387-390). The two kinds of existing social systems are minisystems, now extinct (systems with a single division of labour within their single cultural unit), and world-systems, (where the single division of labour occurs throughout different cultural units) ("Rise" 390). In turn, it happens that world-systems can actually be world-empires, economically redistributive among their territories and "with a common political system" ("Rise" 390), and world-economies, which are not redistributive and do not have a common political system ("Rise" 390-1; *WSA* 23). Nowadays, world-empires are extinct and the only world-economy existing is the capitalist world-economy ("Rise" 390), also referred to as the Modern world-system because of its emergence throughout the advent of Modernity in the Europe (Wallerstein, *Volume I* 16).

nineteenth (“Rise” 390; *Volume III* xiii-xiv). Apart from the fact that this is the only world-economy which has lasted long and thrived—precisely because of what follows (Wallerstein, *WSA* 17; 23)—the Modern world-system differs from previous ones in that it is capitalist: it “gives priority to the endless accumulation of capital” (Wallerstein, *WSA* 23). A capitalist world-economy is characterised by unequal exchange, that is, the division of “production into core-like products and peripheral products,” the former being controlled by quasi-monopolies and therefore obtaining most of the surplus value inasmuch as the latter need to compete in the free market (Wallerstein, *WSA* 23; “The Caribbean” 21). Orthodox Marxism has failed to see the core/periphery division in that it only identified capitalism where there was a proletarian class which sold its waged labour (Wallerstein, “Rise” 394)—perceived as industrial and mainly located in places like Europe or North America (406). Ernesto Laclau, for example, argues that peasants were not “despoiled of their ownership of the means of production” (n.p.). As such, Marxists considered some parts of the world to be in feudal conditions and not under capitalism (Gunder Frank 221), but Wallerstein posits that “capitalism involves not only appropriation of the surplus-value by an owner from a laborer, but an appropriation of surplus of the whole world-economy by core areas” (401).

Claude McKay’s *Banana Bottom* shows an awareness of the workings of the capitalist world-system, particularly with regards to the precarious nature of competition in the peripheral areas. It is significant that Bitá’s romance with nature is preceded by the narration of an event which took place long before she was born: a coffee pool organised by Malcolm Craig’s father in an attempt to circumvent the pressure put on periphery producers by core producers. The narrator explains that, depending on the season, coffee could be sold for less or more respectively, but the

smaller peasants, “living with immediate needs from crop to crop” (18), were the ones most affected by these dynamics, since they had the need to sell during the worst seasons. Angus Craig convinced the peasants not to sell their coffee at all until the spring season, when the price was usually higher, but the plan did not work. While the peasants blamed Angus Craig, the real reason, as explained by Wallerstein in terms of free market competition in the periphery, was that the big buyers turned to Brazilian coffee. Hence, even if the peasants kept their lands, as Rosa Luxemburg argues, the workings of the Modern world-system turned them into “a capitalist proletariat” (361).

This is how McKay sets the scene for Bitá’s appearance. McKay portrayed in this work a period of many changes for Jamaica, all determined by the changing dynamics of the Modern world-system (Rosenberg, *NCL* 96). Even if it was in the post-World War II period when there was a clear predominance of United States hegemony in the world-system (“Rise” 411; *WSA* 16), McKay’s work reflects what seems the beginning of it,⁶⁰ especially in the Caribbean with Roosevelt’s imperialist policies: “McKay [...] invoked the folk and the romance in a time of fundamental societal change. Caribbean peasants were losing their land and emigrating because of the linked forces of large-scale corporate agriculture and U.S. imperialism” (Rosenberg, *NCL* 96). Though Wallerstein rejects the use of the nation-state as unit of analysis for assessing the development of the Modern world-system, he acknowledges its role in shaping the power dynamics that affect it. He explains that

⁶⁰ In *Black Empire: The Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United States, 1914-1962* Michelle Anne Stephens also locates the beginnings of U.S. world hegemony much earlier, particularly in what concerns the Caribbean. She invokes Melville’s *Moby Dick* to exemplify that in the very beginnings of the development of national consciousness in the United States black Caribbeans were always present and, at the same time, affected by the country’s power dynamics: “black men from the Caribbean were among the first islanders employed in the American imperialist enterprise” (255). In the Pequod’s crew Stephens sees “signs of a new transnational economic order dominated by the United States” (255).

nation-states which are militarily and technologically strong can intervene in the workings of the market, even create constraints (“Rise” 400-3). In fact, “the strength of the state-machinery in core states is a function of the weakness of other state-machineries. Hence intervention of outsiders via war, subversion, and diplomacy is the lot of peripheral states” (403). *Banana Bottom* was published during the protectorate era of the United States, when Roosevelt’s update on the Monroe Doctrine introduced the American military presence in the islands around Jamaica. In this way, the ecological disaster at the end—the draught and the hurricane happening while more and more Jamaicans migrate “to the United States” (McKay, *BB* 234), “the Panama Canal Zone” (237), and “the vast banana and cocoa plantations [of Central America] that the Yankees were making” (238)—foretells many changes for this agricultural community orchestrated by their powerful neighbour.

The hurricane and its effects are an important moment of the narrative to understand the role of nature in the novel not as an essentialised and magnetic force that attracts Bitá almost magically but as part of the production of landscape by labour. Agricultural practices are an essential part of this community because they are the main source of income for the villagers. At this point it becomes clear that the role of nature in the island is anything but paradisiac, neither is its depiction in the novel exoticised. In one of these final chapters there is a huge catalogue of the natural elements of the island that are being affected by the ongoing draught. For two pages what we are witness to is a long list of agricultural products that are being destroyed by the draught:

the thick and heavy vines of the yams were wilting in the sun, the long green banana fronds were turning yellow and shrivelling up, young coffee leaves

folded up as if they were singed by a bush fire, the long stalk leaves of coconuts and tannias, always lush, were empty of juice, the fox tails turned from silver gray to dry brown, the trailing ferns lost their furry quality, little springs gave up the last water to the sun [...] giant bamboos seemed begging for rain [...] the flowers of the hibiscus were like bloodstains in the sun [...] The peasants were not used to that. Their bread was the vegetable roots and fruits of the field: yams, yampies, sweet cassava, coconuts, breadfruit, vegetable pears (229-230)

Bitá's connection with nature is a way of choosing her affiliation with the agricultural proletariat, as per the definition listed above, like Merle also does.

In one of these last chapters there is a personification of several items of nature as they seem to lament the incident: "a cry from the house made them look back to see the wind lift the flat roof of the palm booth [...] Giant bamboos *groaned* and *whined* pitifully [...] banana trees were flattened out *like soldiers* on their bellies at exercise [...] A devastating hurricane causing a little loss of life but a big loss of property" (emphasis mine; 280). These chapters relate the future awaiting this society with its agricultural economy and stand by way of conclusion after Bitá's romance of nature, which seemed more ambiguous in its approach to the land. The agricultural imagination, though, seems persistent in McKay, as demonstrates the way he describes a character's skin colour in one of his short stories of the collection *Gingertown*: "Rosie's complexion was a flat café-au-Lait, giving the impression of a bad mixture, coffee over-parched, or burned with skimmed milk, and the generous amount of powder she used did not make the effect any pleasanter" (57). The influence of agriculture—or, in this case, agricultural products—in the psyche of Caribbean writers is not merely the result of their more powerful connection to nature in metaphysical terms. Quoting Glissant's celebrated dictum that "[o]ur landscape is its own monument [...] It is all history" (CD 11),

DeLoughrey explains that the presence of agriculture in the Caribbean imagination relates to their historical routes, making clear that “natural history [...] cannot be disentangled from the multiple settlements of human history” (“Island Ecologies” 308). Products like coffee were introduced with “the slavery system and monocrop agriculture, significantly contribut[ing] to the near eradication of many indigenous peoples, flora, and fauna” (DeLoughrey, “Island Ecologies” 299). Understanding the presence of the current Caribbean population in the islands involves understanding the role of their ancestry and their labour in the expansion of the capitalist world-system. As Wallerstein contends,

The Caribbean has been part of the modern world-system from its outset [...] The Iberian conquest of large parts of the Americas began in the Caribbean, and the incorporation of these land areas and their population was a crucial element in the construction of the capitalist world-economy as an historical system (“The Caribbean” 15)

In his novel, McKay portrays through an apparently simple plot the whole history of the proletariat (including the slaves)⁶¹ in the Caribbean.

The impossibility of perceiving nature separated from labour is also made clear enough in *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*, when Vere’s gaze from the plane’s window at the beginning of the novel reveals the landscape domination of the Cane Vale sugar factory:

Hidden below to the left, where Westminster’s long northern spur flattened out to almost level ground, was Cane Vale sugar factory, he knew. Cane Vale! where every morning as a boy he had taken his great-aunt Leesy’s husband his eleven o’clock breakfast of rice and saltfish, before the latter had fallen

⁶¹ Again defying the understanding of the proletariat as those who sell their labour for wages, Wallerstein wonders that if under capitalism there “is a relationship in which labor-power is a commodity,” “how could it ever be more so than under slavery?” (“Rise” 400). Slavery, he concludes, is also a form of turning labour into a commodity.

into the deep pit which housed the rollers used to extract the juice from the canes, and been crushed to death (14)

It is the sight of the factory, and not of any geographical accident, what seems to connect Vere to his most recent ancestors on coming back to his island. Unlike McKay's, Marshall's novel is set in the post-World War II era, when theories of national development were the global South's adopted tactic to deal with the North-South economic gap (Wallerstein, "The Caribbean" 21). Development was also "a key principle upon which the United States would seek to build its own global empire after 1945" (Power 11). The participation of the United States in development enterprises directed towards the Caribbean is well known: agreements like NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) allowed the United States to deterritorialise "production offshore in the Caribbean basin" (Heron 754). Marshall's novel shows an awareness of this tie between the two areas, gesturing to Europe's loss of relevance in the area and the protagonism of the United States in what seems a new colonialist regime. The illusion with development was soon broken for intellectuals of the Global South, who realised that these kinds of ideas were based on "the values of the dominant geoculture, hence inevitably tied to the world power structure, and therefore incapable of delivering on their promised transformations" (Wallerstein, "The Caribbean" 22). Processes of independence—and Marshall's novel intently points out that Bourne Island has gone through one when it is claimed that the inhabitants of Bournehills would not "have anything to do with the independence celebrations. Not once of them came to town for them" (58)—paved the way for a new (but also old) world order. Once decolonised, the newly postcolonial states had to participate in a structure already well-established by adopting forms of government based on "colonial institutions" while their "trajectories were [...] shaped by wider international political struggles" (Power 31-

1), be they economic or merely diplomatic. Independence only seemed to be nominal and domination did not vanish but merely transformed.

Facing the changes experienced within the world-system, the agricultural peasants in the novels, although having always been in a position of disadvantage within the process of unequal exchange, try to preserve the ways of life with which they are familiar. If they do not do so, they might have to face new tendencies that will still be controlled by the powerful states of the core-producer areas and which might also lead to their unwilling economically-determined mobility, as was Vere's case. It is the case of the sugar labourers in Bournehills who try to preserve the sugar factory inherited from slavery, but also the example of the industrial developments that are suggested could be made in Banana Bottom after the effects of the draught. The narrator in McKay's novel contends, however, that these developments would be hard to implement in an island which "was wholly agricultural" (231). The difficulty includes the abilities and affinities of the inhabitants, that is, the workers, who in this area of the world seem to be always destined to acquiring new forms of knowledge and mobility other than their own. Therefore, it does not seem coincidental that the person who orchestrates these prospective businesses in *Banana Bottom* is "a Briton named Evan Vaughan⁶² [who] had come to the colony as a young officer of the Salvation Army" (231). Similarly, in Marshall's novel the government favours more profitable businesses like those owned by foreign investors which are related to tourism. Like DeLoughrey contends, new forms of economy in the Caribbean like tourism work in the same way as the plantation; they do "little to sustain the local economy while fattening the

⁶² There is no way to know if the fact that the white planter who is Merle's ancestor in *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* is also named Vaughan is a nod to McKay's novel, but it seems like a worth mentioning coincidence.

wallets of industrialised Northern states and multinational corporations” (“Island Ecologies” 308).

To recap, I take a step back and recall how I started this section, arguing that the struggles of the characters in these two novels respond to the Caribbean’s position within Modernity—that is, the capitalist world-system. If Wallerstein writes that it is almost impossible to locate the Caribbean out of the influence of one of the powerful agents that compose what he describes as the Triadic cleavage (the United States, Western Europe, and Japan) (“The Caribbean” 17), the struggles depicted in the novels are clearly not those of an autonomous exotic Caribbean universe but of the world. In the struggle for hegemony between these powers, Wallerstein situates the Caribbean “basically in the U.S. zone” (“The Caribbean” 27) and, due to its smallness and consequent lack of geopolitical strength, unable to lead any movement of radical alterity or direct confrontation (28). Brian Bartell’s article quoted above comes to mind. He claims that Saul “is primarily someone who genuinely wants the people of Bournehills to be involved in the project, even if he is consistently perplexed by what he sees as the ‘mystery’ of the region” (35). It could be well argued that this mystery is the very impossibility of including the interests of the people of Bournehills in the project, and they seem to know it better than Saul when they refuse both to celebrate the island’s independence and to participate in any development project at all.

Finally, regarding the fact that, as explained in the introduction to this thesis, I locate these works within a framework of Americanness, these two novels emphasise the geopolitical relations between the United States and the Caribbean. In the era following World War II it was the United States that became the hegemonic force in

the world-system (Wallerstein, WSA 9) but in the Caribbean they began to perceive this much earlier.⁶³ After the Spanish-American War, the United States

became the dominant and intrusive power in the Caribbean area. It acquired Puerto Rico, then the Virgin Islands, as colonies, and it turned a nominally independent Cuba into a protectorate, at least until 1933. It showed itself ready to send its marines wherever else it thought that its interests were threatened by local leadership. On the other hand, Caribbean nationals also began to migrate to the United States (Wallerstein, "The Caribbean" 16)

Heather Hathaway contends that what fuelled the curiosity of many Caribbeans in drifting towards the United States was their experience in the Panama Canal, where they also experienced American racial politics: "Jim Crow ruled the Canal Zone just as it ruled the American South" (Hathaway 14). It is striking that a diaspora with a shared nature such as this has been analysed in a way so detached from regional politics of migration. Writings such as McKay's or Marshall's are often assessed as portraying the African-American experience. Differently, it is common to see Black British writers defined as "Caribbean." In other cases, critics talk of national diasporas (particularly when their direction is towards the United States), thus associating the motives for migrating with the internal affairs of the country in question. Anthologies of Caribbean writing suggest that we could consider generations such as Windrush more Caribbean than the ones who migrated in the wake of the United States' imperialist policies in the Caribbean and, upon touching North American soil, suddenly became "ethnic writers." However, why not call them Caribbean if the community's main reason for migrating is the way this area, as a

⁶³ Another world-systems theorist, Giovanni Arrighi, in fact underscores the importance of the American acquisition of resources at a hemispheric level in its eventual domination of the last cycle of accumulation of the capitalist world-system (60), what he calls "the US cycle" (7). This ascendancy became fully consolidated after World War II (67), but the necessary previous step started in the nineteenth century with the enterprises described by Wallerstein that in international terms primarily affected the Caribbean.

whole, is being affected by the workings of the capitalist world-system? With this I stress how, despite their routes, both McKay and Marshall locate the Caribbean within the same system of power relations. They furthermore demonstrate a particularly Caribbean sensitivity in the aesthetics with which they portray these encounters with the U.S., for they employ a strikingly Caribbean form of expression when approaching their history: they make landscape its spokesperson.

CHAPTER 4: HOPE AND AGENCY IN CARIBBEAN WRITING: CLAUDE MCKAY'S *AMIABLE WITH BIG TEETH* AND EDWIDGE DANTICAT'S *CLAIRE OF THE SEA LIGHT*

This Caribbean – this ‘place’ – is not More’s utopia (nor the dystopia it might seem to the observer) but the location of the spirit of hope

Bill Ashcroft “Introduction: Spaces of Utopia”

Immanuel Wallerstein’s theory of the world-system does not necessarily bring with it an assumption of the lack of agency of the subaltern populations in the peripheral areas, as he makes clear in his article devoted to the Caribbean. In this piece of writing Wallerstein notes the existence of three different geopolitical cleavages operating within the world-system, wherein the parties struggle against one another to acquire hegemony. These are as follows:

the struggle among the so-called Triad - the United States, the European Union, and Japan - in their search to be the primary locus of capital accumulation in the coming decades; (2) the struggle between North and South, or between core zones and other zones of the world-economy, given the continuing polarization - economic, social, and demographic - of the world-system; (3) the struggle between the spirit of Davos and the spirit of Porto Alegre about the kind of world-system we collectively intend to build (“The Caribbean” 17)

It is within the last one, Wallerstein contends, that the Caribbean may play a major role through its “voices and energy” (“The Caribbean” 28). Unlike the first two cleavages, the Davos-Porto Alegre split is based on how we collectively wish the world to be rather than how it develops in terms of economic processes dominated by powerful agents. While the spirit of Davos revolves around the interests of “the

powerful [...] seeking to coordinate in some sense their actions and establish a normative worldwide program” (“The Caribbean” 25), the Porto-Alegre spirit (and the word “spirit” already marks the nature of the third cleavage concept) is based on the transformation of the world according to a philosophy of social justice and not to the needs of the capitalist market. Through his inclusion of this last cleavage as one of the agents determining the structure of the world, Wallerstein adds something that was lacking in his highly scientific work so far: that individual and collective wishes and intentions to build a fairer world have a place within the development of the system (he ascribes the same relevance to each cleavage). In short, he devotes space to hope.

In a discussion with Theodor Adorno added in the collection *The Utopian Foundation of Art and Literature: Selected Essays* (1993), the German philosopher Ernst Bloch argues that hope is “not something like nonsense or absolute fancy” (Bloch and Adorno 2). Rather, as the educational thinker Henry Giroux believes, it could well be considered a practice, since in order to hope for a different situation, one has to understand and consider the workings and conditions of the present world (38). In his words, “hope [is] part of a broader politics that acknowledges those social, economic, spiritual, and cultural conditions in the present that make certain kinds of agency and democratic politics possible” (38). Hope, in a nutshell, is a step within the process of acquiring agency. In this sense, hope has a well-established position within Postcolonial Studies. Starting with the wishes for independence, a Marxist notion of utopia was present in the anti-colonial movements. “The postcolonial nation,” Bill Ashcroft contends, used to be “a once glorious utopian idea” (“Utopia” 2) which has now been replaced by disillusionment about the failed projects whose promised independence was only nominal, as the

novel by Marshall analysed in the previous chapter shows. However, hope has never been completely absent from Postcolonial Studies and, after the postcolonial disappointment with the nation-state, a renewed sense of hope has made an appearance specially in literature. In the postcolonial literary texts that Bill Ashcroft considers in his book *Utopianism in Postcolonial Literatures* (2017) hope takes the shape of Bloch's concept of the "anticipatory illumination," whereby there are signs—"not-yet-conscious" thoughts—within daily experience that hint towards ways the future could be. These are not grounded on concrete spaces or concepts (Bloch's idea of concrete utopia) but take more of a spiritual or instinctive form (Ashcroft, "Utopia" 5; Zipes xxiii; xxxii). We consider hope, then, to be present wherever there is a focus on future possibilities and change.

Hence the idea of hope that tends to appear in postcolonial literature is not the same as the concept of utopia, which carries in its own name its very impossibility ("utopia" in Greek means a place, *topos*, which does not exist, *ouk*) (Vieira 4). Rather, postcolonial hope is aware of the material and spiritual conditions of daily experience. It is also characterised by a constant critique of these conditions, by which writers never cease to imagine a different reality without ever fossilising it into a single and definite possibility (Ashcroft, "Beyond the Nation" 15). Claude McKay's *Amiable with Big Teeth* and Edwidge Danticat's *Claire of the Sea Light*, the two novels analysed below, are not narrative utopias; they rather describe articulations of hope in two different societies and portray how sometimes this sort of hope is based on certain utopian ideas or projects. On the basis of this prevalence, studies on utopia might prove indispensable to understand the forms of hope that have been articulated in postcolonial texts.

Bloch differentiates between two kinds of utopia, an abstract and a concrete one, and establishes that only the latter is the effective expression of hope (Levitas 15). Bloch criticises the lack of “solid subject” in abstract utopias, deeming them mere wishful thinking and accusing them of not really carrying a utopian function at all (Bloch, *volume 1* 145). Concrete utopias, differently, are propelled by hope but are located in “real future places” that are an “objectively real possibility” and occur “only when reason starts to speak” (Bloch, *volume 1* 143-4). Bloch’s insistence on the concrete knowledge (one based on rationalism too, a concept with considerable ideological implications) about the purpose of what he deems the real utopias seems to ground them within the existing institutions whose function has many times proved to be to perpetuate inequity. Differently, this study takes as an example the anti-colonial attempts to materialise utopia in a concrete idea such as the decolonised nation-state, or in an ideology such as Stalinism, to problematise Bloch’s notion that concrete utopias are the only expression of hope. In *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (2004) Paul Gilroy, while maintaining a utopian drive in his theorisation of the possibility of an anti-racist era of globalisation, insists on departing from already existing examples. In his ideal society categories such as “cosmopolitanism” or “ethnic nationalism” would be anachronistic precisely because of the particular historical ideologies that have created them (Gilroy, *After Empire* 62; 165). Likewise, this chapter argues that the kind of hope that might effectively transform the current neo-colonial reality is one that considers constant transformation and perpetual processes of becoming and does not aim at an artificial definite materialisation.

Interestingly, the first articulations of utopia were colonial fantasies: “[t]hese were necessarily distant utopias of defined and bounded geographical space,

ambiguous precursors of the national utopias that were to give a vision of a postcolonial liberation” (Ashcroft, “Utopia” 3). As a matter of fact, More wrote his *Utopia* drawing inspiration from the texts of the men who first set sail to America from Europe, men as well-known as Christopher Columbus or Amerigo Vespucci (Vieira 4). These utopias, unlike the later utopianism or hopeful thinking that this study is more concerned with, are grounded in a real, well-bounded place where their project eventually came to be realised. Inevitably, in the modern imagination the idea of a clearly limited and well-defined place crystallises in the nation-state. Utopias imagined as nation-states have been difficult to let go, even in postcolonial articulations of hope. In Claude McKay’s *Amiable with Big Teeth* (2012), a novel that deals with the communist groups which thrived in Harlem in the interwar period, the utopian vision of the independent post-colonial nation prevails, making Ethiopia its particular epitome.

The appearance of Ethiopia as a model for utopia in this novel is not surprising considering the reading of McKay that we have been doing so far, that is, acknowledging the Caribbean dimension of his figure. Within the Caribbean intellectual history, Ethiopia also became a sort of spiritual motherland for the people of Jamaica as per the doctrine of Rastafarianism. Half a religion, half a cultural movement, Rastafarianism draws from the black nationalist tradition whose hope was directed towards concrete spaces or ideas, most commonly those in or related to Africa. For them, then, hope materialises in a concrete space rather than it being a praxis, the kind of attitude that Ashcroft confronts with emancipatory utopianism: “a specific mode of representation” which does not constitute “the act of transformation of coercive power” (“Beyond the Nation” 16). Like the Marcus Garvey’s “Back-to-Africa” movement (already problematised in previous sections as

an essentialist approach to Afro Caribbean and African American identity) “Jamaican Rastafarians initially looked forward to a literal repatriation to their African ancestral homelands” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies* 187). Ethiopia was the promised land of the Rastafarians because they turned its emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia, crowned in 1930, into a Messiah for the Black Atlantic diaspora (Bedasse 1; 22; Price, “Black Messiah” 418-420). As such, Rastafarians claimed to feel exiled in the West (which they referred to as Babylon) and would only encounter salvation in the repatriation to Africa or Zion (Bedasse 1-2).

Amiable with Big Teeth confirms this study’s delineation of a hemispheric connection between the archipelago and the United States, since Ethiopia appears in the novel as the same concept that took shape in Jamaica. In the wake of Benito Mussolini’s imperial designs in the African country African Americans and Afro Caribbeans in the United States “stirred with fervor for Ethiopia’s cause” (Cloutier 559). Meanwhile, Franklin D. Roosevelt’s executive held the “pragmatic belief that free commercial intercourse among nations was a prerequisite to world peace and economic recovery” (Cizel 2), thus dismissing the incipient growth of Fascism in Europe. In the context of what was approached as “racial” solidarity, the Harlemites in the novel see in this struggling nation a possible utopia for the children of the black Atlantic diaspora. Nevertheless, the development of McKay’s novel and its bitter-sweet ending suggest that there are fundamental weaknesses in this particular conceptualisation of liberation. *Amiable with Big Teeth* seems to conclude what many postcolonial scholars have later insisted upon: that real postcolonial liberation cannot rely upon the same conceptual and political mechanisms of the colonisers, in this case the nation-state as a concrete space or signifier of utopia.

Failed utopias, especially the transcendentalist experiments that took place in the United States during the nineteenth century, tainted the term with a negative connotation (L. Martínez 57-8). The current use of the adjective utopian rather emphasises the aspect of impossibility of its etymology. Friedrich Engels was actually the first one who, talking about the transcendentalist communes, uses the word “utopian” with the negative taint (L. Martínez 57) that is commonplace nowadays, implying some kind of childish fancy because of an obvious ontological impossibility, as well as the inability to understand the historical conditions that determine the (im)possible. In the postcolonial imagination, the element of concreteness is dropped, and hence the impossibility disappears. With this more fluid approach, which he terms “utopianism” to confront it with utopia, Ashcroft means that the aimed for is not a “particular model” (*Utopianism* 37). Simply, there is an impulse to change reality in any form that proves available within existing social conditions while maintaining the hope that such change can be possible:

While Europe looked for utopias located in the shimmering distance the distinctive feature of postcolonial utopias was the dominance of utopianism over utopia, because while utopias provided particular models of perfection on which the imagination might contrast the social conditions of the present at leisure, postcolonial hope for the future is both more urgent and more socially integral (*Utopianism* 37)

With this, Ashcroft attempts to define the “spirit of hope” (“Utopia” 10) that dominates in postcolonial literature and which Wallerstein claims is characteristic of the Caribbean archipelago.

Postmodern definitions of utopia like this one by Fredric Jameson in fact account for the utopianist turn:

For where in the older society (as in Marx's classic analysis) Utopian thought represented a diversion of revolutionary energy into idle wish-fulfillments and imaginary satisfactions, in our own time the very nature of the Utopian concept has undergone a dialectical reversal. Now it is practical thinking which everywhere represents a capitulation to the system itself, and stands as a testimony to the power of that system to transform even its adversaries into its own mirror image (110-1)

The transition from utopia to utopianism parallels the postcolonial departure from anti-colonial sentiments. Utopianism, as a fluid concept, can align with the critique of ideology, especially when it establishes the nation as a unit of identification and an object of hope. Like Wallerstein, Ashcroft locates these constructions precisely in the Caribbean: the "Caribbean [...] is not More's utopia (nor the dystopia it might seem to the observer) but the location of the spirit of hope" ("Utopia" 10). This particular association is due to the Caribbean need (and eventual habit) to constantly adapt itself to coerced cultural changes, to destruction and rebirth, and to constantly dealing with Otherness in the wake of its inception as a plantation archipelago (Mintz 295-7).

The theorisation of the archipelago becomes prominent in this context. Archipelagic thought, arising from the relationship between the islands, defies dichotomies, as the archipelago is "conceived as fluid island-island inter-relations rather than the binaries of mainland/island or sea/island" (Pugh, "Thinking" 11). The different units of the archipelago, reflecting Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the "assemblage" where heterogenous components form "a kind of organism" (4), are thus compelled to interact with one another. In this process, the islands become

particularly adept to transformation depending on the changing conditions which the tides bring (Pugh, "Thinking" 11). Hence the importance of the assemblage where the Caribbean islands are located, that is, the archipelago, in determining their thought and culture, which explains "why region dominates the nation in the Caribbean imagination" (Ashcroft, *Utopianism* 148). Therefore, this thesis locates an exceptional presence of hope not only in Caribbean literature but in its diasporic dimension as well.

The novel *Claire of the Sea Light* (2013) by the Haitian-American writer Edwidge Danticat reflects this relationality with its very discontinuous yet continuous structure. Silvia Martínez-Falquina identifies it as a short story cycle rather than a novel (843), though I rather see it as a very fragmented novel. Thus, Danticat's work becomes the "discontinuous conjunction" which Benítez-Rojo claims the Caribbean archipelago is, where disorder also creates patterns (3). The novel, rather than focusing on one single character and their perception of the events, offers a panoramic view of the different dwellers of Ville Rose, "a small and unlucky town" (Danticat, *CSL* 14) in the postcolonial Caribbean island of Haiti, and Cité Pendue, a more urban neighbourhood where some of the characters live. The disappearance of Claire, a seven-year-old girl, prompts the narrator's sweep through the area to look for her but instead finds the particular struggles of a set of diverse characters. These are alike in that their identities diverge from the normative subject of power, what Martínez-Falquina calls "a self-defining subject position" (838). They are furthermore shown as desiring to achieve the "wider horizon" that Pugh describes comes with the tides that unite the islands ("Thinking" 11). This projected futurity in all of the cases lies in the United States, where the characters believe a better life awaits. Claire as well suspects that her father wants to go to

work in the United States and therefore runs away when he decides to leave her with the local fabric vendor as a domestic servant. However, the ending showing Claire's reappearance offers an alternative vision of the American Dream. It presents, through the distress of her disappearance and the anticlimax of her reappearance, a kind of hope that is not associated to materialism and wealth but to affective human relations and community.

These two novels explore the kind of energy which characterises Caribbean culture in its negotiation with U.S. power and how it affects Caribbean lives. The interference of the United States in the lives of the novels' characters is obvious regardless of their location on the islands or on the continent. Their expression of hope, however, is characteristically Caribbean and reflects Caribbean patterns of thought in the anti-colonial and postcolonial periods described above. This last section, particularly in the analysis of Danticat's text, set just before the 2010 Haiti earthquake (Danticat and Brown, n.p.), includes a discussion of the idea of the Anthropocene, a term that describes how our current geological epoch is determined by the activity of humans to the extent that natural cycles are deemed irrelevant (Crutzen and Stoermer 17). Theories on the Anthropocene have a central role in the apprehension of twenty-first century postcolonial texts. In accordance with this thesis' line of research, coloniality of power and Anthropocene go hand in hand in that these human effects on particular locations are determined by unbalanced relations of power across the world-system. In agreement with DeLoughrey's, Mimi Sheller's and Pugh and Chandler's investigations on the role of islands in the Anthropocene, this last section explores the potential of the Caribbean archipelago and its thought and poetics for postcolonial resilience, not as a concrete utopian space but as a historical assemblage encompassing

philosophies and epistemologies which are crucial for the negotiation of power and justice. As Pugh and Chandler eloquently put it in the title of one of their articles, “there are only islands at the end of the world.”

4.1 Reinscribing Agency to Contest Ideological Utopias in Claude McKay’s *Amiable with Big Teeth*

Socialism descended upon
nineteenth-century Europe as utopia

Z. Bauman. *Socialism, the Active Utopia*

Maxim Tazan, a fierce white Stalinist who works as the villain of Claude McKay’s last novel, *Amiable with Big Teeth*, “a key international organizer of the Popular Front” (ABT 53), represents the relationship between ideology and utopia that Ernst Bloch denounces in his philosophical work. For Bloch, ideology is formed by “empty slogans” that express concerns long extinct and deterritorialised (in Landmann 183-4), what in his novel one of McKay’s characters refers to as “pharisaism[s]” (ABT 116). Therefore, they aim towards utopias detached from what Andrew Benjamin calls the “structural condition of the present” (1). As Paul Ricoeur puts it “the utopias that are dangerous are those not grounded in reality” because they result in escapism and an alienation from the conditions of one’s society (215). Through this form of utopian discourse, oppressed groups never get rid of the undesirable conditions, thus perpetuating economic and social exploitation, which actually is the aim of ideology.

In the interview where he expressed that definition of ideology Bloch was referring to the Soviet Union:

The slogans and alibis circulating in the Soviet Union today are pure ideology, and the best that can come from them is the warning: This is not the way to act. What has cultural value expresses more than the goal of one age or one class: It speaks for the future (in Landmann 183-4).

With this Bloch endorses Marx and Engels' (and Karl Manheim's as well) definition of ideology as the "expression" of the prevailing social order posed as a universal set of ideas (*German Ideology* 64), since by the time McKay published his novel communism had acquired a ruling position in the Soviet Union. In the context of the very harsh criticism of communism which McKay's novel sometimes ruthlessly seems to make, it is pertinent to recall this sentence by Wallerstein about the development of ideology in the countries where "Marxism is now the official state doctrine" (388):

The social fate of official doctrines is that they suffer a constant social pressure towards dogmatism and apologia, difficult although by no means impossible to counteract, and that they thereby often fall into the same intellectual dead-end of ahistorical model-building ("Rise" 388).

In the novel, however, communism is the desired not-reached-yet goal of Maxim Tasan and is therefore framed as a utopia. This aligns with Karl Mannheim's definition of ideologies and utopias. He understands utopia as a social order different from the prevailing one:

Because the concrete determination of what is utopian proceeds always from a certain stage of existence, it is possible that the utopias of to-day [sic] may become the realities of to-morrow [sic]: "Utopias are often only premature truths" (183).

In Mannheim's approach, then, utopias are not necessarily better than the prevailing order. Ultimately, they can be better for some, but not always for everyone. In this way, some utopian thinking can carry the ideological components stemming from the society where they have actually been realised, and this is the main concern of McKay's novel: that the communist discourse of the Soviet Union did not apply to the social conditions of Harlem.

Amiable with Big Teeth, as well as the last stage of McKay's career, has been defined as anti-communist in nature (Cloutier and Edwards xxix). This turn begins when the Jamaican-born writer decided to go back to the United States after his twelve-year sojourn in Russia, Western Europe, and the North of Africa. McKay arrived in Harlem when it is nowadays claimed the Renaissance had reached its end (Cloutier 650). He encountered a neighbourhood ravished by the depression of 1929. It "had just suffered through a major riot [and] was plagued by unemployment, labor strikes, and occultists and mystics of all kinds" (Cloutier 564). He also witnessed the historical phenomenon that is narrated in *Amiable with Big Teeth*, the Harlem fervour for the defence of Ethiopia during the Italo-Abyssinian crisis. The Harlemites saw the rise of Fascism in Europe from a distance, as well as the outburst of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). In this context two "twin works" by McKay (Cloutier 564), a fictional and an essayistic one, were born. These are *Amiable with Big Teeth: A Novel of the Love Affair between the Communists and the Poor Black Sheep of Harlem*, considered his last work and written in 1941 but only discovered in 2009 by Jean-Christophe Cloutier and published in 2017, and a

collection of essays that is the result of his research for the Federal Writers' Project (FWP):⁶⁴ *Harlem: Negro Metropolis* (1940).

In the novel, McKay portrays the people inhabiting Harlem as America's subalterns. Their interests never reach high arenas of influence despite the African American and Afro Caribbean constant involvement in political and social fights. Antonio Gramsci's claim that "[s]ubaltern groups are always subject to the activity of ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise" (55) applies to the situation described by McKay. The appropriation of the African American and Afro Caribbean work and activism—for example, Jerre Mangione comments that the Federal Writers' Project appealed to radical artists in order to steer their votes away from the Communist Party (30)—was not only pursued by those in the American hegemony, but also by the Soviet Union. One of McKay's strongest theses in this work is that

the Communist party's disproportionate influence within Harlem over the last decade had only confused and misled many of the black intelligentsia into supporting the Soviet Union and its foreign policy instead of working single-mindedly on behalf of the Afro-American population (Cooper, *RS* 341)

As Cloutier argues (564), the work evidences the development of what Cooper calls McKay's "anti-Communist bias" (*RS* 342).

In the statements that have been read as McKay's anticommunism (see, for example, Jean-Christophe Cloutier's "*Amiable with Big Teeth: The Case of Claude McKay's Last Novel*" (2013) or the eleventh chapter of Cooper's biography titled "Looking Forward: The Search for Community, 1937-1940) the criticism of Marxism

⁶⁴ The project was an initiative developed as part of the New Deal to secure employment for artists and intellectuals during the Great Depression (Mangione 18). It produced high quality research works about diverse areas of American knowledge, most notably guides (Mangione 4-5; 8; 33).

is nevertheless nowhere to be found. Some of these statements express “the danger of Negroes [sic] coming under the control of *Moscow-dominated Communists* exploiting their grievances” (emphasis mine; “Communist Propaganda” 4), or that “Harlem was overrun with *white communists* who promoted themselves as the only leaders of the Negroes [sic] [...] but [who] were actually doing nothing to help alleviate the[ir] social misery” (emphasis mine; *NM* 188). In both of these examples the word “communists” is preceded by modifiers that evidence how McKay did not have any problem with the political agenda of Communism but rather with what Cloutier and Edwards call “white [...] infiltrator[ship]” (xxi). McKay resented that, rather than applying the labour rights principles of communism to the situation of black people in Harlem, the members of the Popular Front used them as propagandistic tools (*NM* 196; 203). His criticism is specifically directed towards the members of the Communist Party of the United States, who had failed to “adequately [...] address the question of race” (Trotter 122), whereas the Comintern⁶⁵ welcomed his talk “about the potential role of blacks in the international Communist movement” in Moscow (Cooper, *RS* 174). Leon Trotsky himself, after the talk, became adamant in fighting the disadvantage of blacks in American society and entrusted McKay with the writing of several pieces in the Soviet press (Cooper, *RS* 181). Against the upset of some dedicated members of the party, in an article for the *New York Amsterdam News* McKay recognised that “it must be admitted that more than any other group the Communists should be

⁶⁵ Cooper notes that the Comintern had already formed a consciousness about black discrimination thanks to the influence of Caribbeans, who were more active and class-conscious than African Americans in these issues (*RS* 180-181). As early as 1882, José Martí, who was a constant denouncer of racism (W. James, *HBE* 243), founded the *Partido Revolucionario Cubano* in Tampa, where the influence of Afro-Cubans informed its resistance politics (James, *HBE* 244-245). Another remarkable name is George Padmore (1902-1959), a Trinidadian immigrant who joined the Communist Party in the United States (L. Martínez 109-110). He eventually became “a leading authority on the black question in the Soviet Union (and a deputy to the Moscow Soviet) during the Stalinist 'third period' which lasted from 1929 to 1935” (Trewela 42).

credited with the effective organizing of the unemployed and relief workers” (“Claude M’Kay, Author” n.p.). What he actually despised was what he interestingly called “political *ideology*” (“Claude M’Kay, Author” n.p.).

As suggested above, the concept of ideology has been linked to utopia by several scholars, in particular Karl Mannheim who was the first one to do so in his 1929 book *Ideology and Utopia*, but also Ernst Bloch and Paul Ricoeur some years later. For Mannheim both utopias and ideologies hide something (Sargent, “Ideology” 266), namely the mechanisms that structure a certain society. Utopias, once they are realised, become ideologies themselves (Mannheim, *Ideology* 183). This transformation follows a process by which utopias unmask ideologies, thus representing the human power to shape history (*Ideology* 236). “[T]he complete disappearance of the utopian element from human thought and action,” Mannheim writes, would mean

that man, who has achieved the highest degree of rational mastery of existence, left without ideals, becomes a mere creature of impulses. Thus, after a long tortuous, but heroic development, just at the highest stage of awareness, when history is ceasing to be blind fate, and is becoming more and more man’s own creation, with the relinquishment of utopias, man would lose his will to shape history and therewith his ability to understand it (Mannheim, *Ideology* 236).

In *Amiable with Big Teeth* the characters invoke a utopia—Ethiopia—to unmask the dangerous schemes of the novel’s villain. The paradox, however, is that these schemes are based on another utopia, the Soviet Union. As the narrator explains making use of a notably utopian language, “Maxim Tasan wanted power over the life and thought of [Harlem’s] people, to turn their mind to Soviet Russia as a *Promised Land*” (emphasis mine; 61). It is easy to see that these two utopias are

similar in one thing: they take the shape of a nation-state. They therefore prove themselves heir to eighteenth-century Europe and the birth of nationalism, which made any other form of group identification virtually impossible (Anderson 205; Balibar 329). It is not unfounded to consider that none of the projects are precisely revolutionary. Drawing on Chatterjee, Ashcroft rightly states that “the colonial institution of the nation was inimical to the cultural realities of colonized societies” (*Utopianism* 5). Perhaps these are the kinds of utopias that Mannheim suggests are “permeated with ideological elements” (183).

As has been said, McKay conveys that applying the ideal of the Soviet Union—lacking a perspective on the racial nature of exploitation in America—to the reality of Harlem is problematic. A very obvious example is Tasan’s annotation that “[t]he Soviet state has abolished race and color” (55) precisely to minimise the power and influence of African Americans in the organisations of Harlem. The perils of colour blindness evidence why social structures cannot be replicated from one context to another without considering the particularities of each one. Colour blindness, which ultimately is what Tasan defends, only results in the invisibility of racism and therefore the impossibility to fix its effects (Alcoff 201). This will therefore have different consequences depending on the society: the more racist a society is, the bigger extent to which colour blindness perpetuates and reproduces this racism. In this context of deterritorialised utopianism there is a less explored element in the novel which is whether the reference to Ethiopia and the spiritual identification with Africa are as problematic.

Amiable with Big Teeth follows the lives of the members of the Harlem-based association “Hands of Ethiopia,” which, under the leadership of Afro Brazilian Pablo

Peixota, organises support for the African country after its invasion by Benito Mussolini's troops in 1935. The novel's main action stems from the fact that

Maxim Tasan, a white man and the leader of the White Friends of Ethiopia, a Marxist-affiliated organization [...] construes Italy's invasion of Ethiopia as part of a global war between Fascists and Marxists rather than another instance of European imperialism (Williams 107)

As such, Tasan aims at overtaking Peixota's organisation to become the leader of the support movement for Ethiopia in order to recruit sympathisers for the Popular Front and "create sentiment among the colored people [*sic*] in favor of Soviet Russia" (McKay, *ABT* 116). His biggest argument is that the Soviet Union is the only agent capable of stopping the Fascists, in his words, "the only great nation" (45). Again, the nation is used as the framework to articulate any sort of discourse of transformation. The pervasiveness of the nation in utopian narratives and in the utopian imagination evidences how ingrained this form of imagining community and, according to Phillip E. Wegner, also space is (xvii). Conversely, Wegner attributes to utopian narratives the role of having perpetuated the imaginary of the nation because of how widely it features in them (xvi). We therefore encounter the need of articulating prospects and hopes for the future in different ways because the nation-state has proved problematic in several aspects.

In the context described in the novel, aspiring to achieve transformation through the intervention (no matter how well-intentioned) of a powerful nation reduces the agency of small states or communities because such transformation depends on the military power that is formed around this kind of territorial organisation. The article in a pro-Soviet newspaper that features in the novel frames it with the same terms: "[t]he article concluded with the statement that Soviet

Russia is the only nation interested in the fate of and fighting for the rights of *small nations*” (emphasis mine; 33). This is obviously a double-edged sword, as Dorsey Flagg, another member of the Hands of Ethiopia, rightly points out when he states that “Russia is selling more war goods to Italy than any nation” (19), as well as “the oil for the airplanes and tanks, and the food for her army to defeat Ethiopia” (215). Nation-states hold military power in order to participate in the dynamics of the capitalist world-system (Wallerstein “Rise” 400; 412), and the Soviet Union indeed did so despite its anti-capitalist discourse (Wallerstein “Rise” 411). Nation-states as political and territorial organisations have a key role within the workings of the capitalist world-system because they are actors holding the power to change the normal development of the system through military power (Wallerstein “Rise” 400). For example, to keep its position as a core state, the Soviet Union carried out “an immense spiralling of military expenditure” that helped her to “protect a privileged market area (eastern Europe), and force entry into other market areas” (Wallerstein “Rise” 400; 412). Therefore, states which do not count on such military power are kept in the periphery. These are normally once-colonised states, especially after independence when the military force weakens considerably given the fact that it was the military force of the colonising power. This, once again, explains how the organisation of the post-colonial nation-states is not beneficial for the inhabitants of the former colonies. Even World War II, which is usually not framed as such, was a conflict including an aspect of black discrimination (Makonnen 116-117), as the invasion of Ethiopia did not trigger the U.S.—or the League of Nations—involvement (Edwards 297) and the European imperial powers were adamant on not showing signs of weakness in front of the International Community (Makonnen 116-117). The members of the “Hands of Ethiopia,” then, decide to frame the struggle in other terms, those of racial and pan-African identification.

In this sense it might seem that the novel does not reflect McKay's opinion on political internationalism, about which he learnt during his years in England,⁶⁶ where he socialised with prominent Marxists like Sylvia Pankhurst (Jarret xx). Williams defines Internationalism as "a political philosophy that privileged global concerns and cooperation over local affairs or the needs of subgroups of people" (119) and explains that McKay realised during this period that none of the concerns discussed in these circles really applied to the working-class reality he had seen in Harlem (119). The rejection of internationalism is not entirely absent in the novel. McKay was always keen on separating the global from the local, and the only aspect that he portrays as working internationally is global capitalism, which is especially harsh on the black proletariat. Though he establishes a connection between all people of African descent in terms of exploitation, the novel does not follow the culturally nationalist approach that was common elsewhere and that Pablo Peixota endorses in the novel:

The Chinese and Hindus are colored, and we don't have exactly the same sentiment for them that we have for Ethiopia. But Ethiopia is African and our people have their roots in Africa. It is the same sentiment that different white Americans have for Europe. They can't feel just the same way about Africa and Asia, because their roots are European. It is a natural human feeling. If a native state can maintain its existence in African and hold its head up among the white nations, it adds to the self-respect of the colored Americans. For Africa is the land of their ancestors, who were brought here in a state of degradation (58-59)

⁶⁶ This was a brief interlude of two years (1919-1921) after McKay moved from Tuskegee Institute to Kansas State College to study agronomy and, later on, "gripped by the lust to wander and wonder" (McKay, LW 9), settled in New York to lead a life of menial jobs (Cooper, 70-71 RS). Once around Harlem, his poetry attracted attention and after the publication of several of his poems in *Pearson's Magazine* and the journal *Liberator* two old admirers of his dialect poetry, the Grays, got in contact with him again and invited him to spend a holiday in England (Cooper, RS 107-198; McKay, LW 35-38). He decided to stay for longer and worked for Sylvia Pankhurst's weekly the *Dreadnought* (Cooper, RS 112). It is after this interlude that McKay went back to the United States and published his poetry volumes before leaving it again for his twelve years sojourn.

In the chapters following this conversation between Peixota and Tasan, the novel explores the tensions resulting from this identification which is expressed in biological more than in social or historical terms.

The events that the novel records are not fictional. In fact, *Amiable with Big Teeth* has been described as a piece of archival fiction (Cloutier 557). The rally which opens the novel, when the Ethiopian envoy Lij Tekla Alamaya arrives in New York and is received with great enthusiasm and excitement, has a historical equivalent:

in December 1935 at the Abyssinian Baptist Church by the Provisional Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia, one of the first aid organization [when] Lij Tasfaye Zaphiro, a young fuctionary who had been a member of the Ethiopian delegation in London, had come to New York that month, and he was one of the featured speakers at the rally, which attracted an audience of nearly four thousand (Edwards and Cloutier xxiv)

Furthermore, the spiritual identification with Ethiopia—described as “an embarrassing new Canaan” in the novel (McKay, *ABT* 28)—among the black community was not only a consequence of what has been interpreted as “an attack to the very principle of black sovereignty” (Edwards and Cloutier xix). It actually has an earlier and more essentialist origin rooted in the black nationalism which Garvey’s Back-to-Africa represents (Singh 18): the Jamaican Rastafari movement. The crowning of the emperor of Ethiopia Haile Selassie I, Ras Tafari, on 2 November 1930 prompted its official beginnings. The adherents to the movement, basing on the old scriptures of King James Bible, interpreted the crowning as the return of a black Messiah who would “redeem Black people and lead humankind” (Price, *Rasta* 60). Both Garvey’s and this movement have an origin in the Caribbean and reflect the Caribbean influence on American radical politics. In fact, using the same words

as *Amiable*'s narrator to define Tasan's perception of the Soviet Union, Simboonath Singh explains that the emergence of Rastafarianism is owed to "Garvey's proclamation that blacks were the chosen people created in the image of God, and that Africa was *the Promised Land*" (emphasis mine; 21).

Despite the novel's statement that "[t]here is a Zionist streak in the hearts of the colored people [which] explains the interest of the masses in Ethiopia" (128), not many studies explore the relationship between the "Rastafari ethnogenesis" (Price, *Rasta* 56) and the fervour that was stirred in Harlem by the Italo-Abyssinian crisis. However, in his monograph *Becoming Rasta: Origins of Rastafari Identity in Jamaica* (2009) Charles Price associates the reaction in the United States to the fact that Rastafarians eventually started to connect "their current plight with past and then-current struggles in Africa" (62) like the Nyabingi movement in Uganda and Rwanda or the formation of "the Ethiopian World Federation" (EWF) in New York City to raise money and build support for Ethiopia's war against the Italian fascists" (63). Price contends that Rastafarianism works as an open system and that its influences and origins are hard to pin-point (*Rasta* 58). Arguably, Garvey, who relocated in the United States more than a decade before the crowning of the Emperor, could be considered the originator because of the influence of his Back-to-Africa idea (Price, *Rasta* 58). In *Banjo*, which was published before the crowning as well, this idea of the return is already discussed. McKay has always been constant in his lack of support for the idea which, in Cooper's words, he considered "impractical, [and of a] dangerously *Utopian* nature" (emphasis mine; *RS* 105).

Rastafarian Zion—the promised land to which the Jamaicans, who considered they were living in exile in Babylon, wanted to return—is a concrete utopia because it points to a real and defined space (Price, Nonini, and Fox Tree

128; Sargent, "Three Faces" 9). As with the Soviet Union and its lack of relevance for the situation in Harlem, concrete utopias do not take changing conditions into account; they are fossilized and do not change with them. Hall makes it clear when he contends that the place where Rastafarians claimed they had come from and where they wanted to go back was not precisely Selassie's Ethiopia: "Africa is not waiting there in the fifteenth or seventeenth century, waiting for you to roll back across the Atlantic and rediscover it in its tribal purity" ("Negotiating" n.p.). According to Singh, these essentialist perceptions of origins and race have naturalised the ethnic categories that were attributed by the colonisers to the colonised and promoted their perception as natural and biological "rather than being understood as social and political constructions" (19). The discrimination of the Indo-Trinidadian community within the 1970s Black Power movement in Trinidad (Mahabir 288; Nicholls, "East Indians" 445; 453-454) shows the potential effects of this essentialist perspective.

Amiable with Big Teeth signals some of these contradictions through the use of humoristic scenes. At one moment of the novel, Pablo Peixota's daughter Seraphine, who falls in love with Lij Tekla Alamaya, tries to compliment the latter's clothes in a rather exoticized way:

"[...] I like that lovely wine color in your pajamas. Were they made in Addis Ababa?"

"No, they are your father's" (29)

The lack of intelligibility between each culture is also manifested in the opposite direction. Williams explains that "Alamaya once imagined African Americans to be wealthier and more socially advanced than Ethiopians before his arrival in America,

he now sees them as crowded together and at [...] disadvantage” (119). Instead, Alamaya encounters a dispossessed community which, only for the sake of Ethiopia, manages to become united, acquire group consciousness, and achieve some of their ends. Towards the end, the novel pictures the general dismay that takes place in Harlem after the airing of a newspaper article stating that the Emperor of Ethiopia rejected any sort of (af)iliative connection with African America: “the Emperor of Ethiopia had declared that Ethiopia was not a ‘Negro’ state, that he was the Lion of Judah and descendant of King Solomon⁶⁷ and that the Ethiopians did not consider themselves kin to the Aframericans” (114). Despite suspicion that the article is fake news orchestrated by Tasan and his lackeys, the event and the responses to it evidence that the role of the emperor in the black community of Harlem is not that of an ideological leader (even if some apprehend it as such). Nor is Ethiopia in this novel a concrete utopia. Borrowing Price’s words for another context, they are both used as symbols “to build a Black community and address concerns of oppression, miseducation, and deracination” (*Rasta* 61).

Even if the statement were true, Alamaya attributes it to the cultural difference and unintelligibility mentioned above:

Alamaya said that even if the Emperor had said anything, he believed that the newspaper article was an exaggeration. He continued to explain why Ethiopia considered itself an African and not a “Negro” state and said that “Abyssinian” was also objectionable and never used. And just as many Aframericans considered “Negro” an offensive word and even banned it in

⁶⁷ There is even suggestion in the novel that the Emperor is wrong in this establishment of roots and ancestry (McKay’s interest in contesting this linearity was explored in chapter 2). Professor Koazhy, the character who proves having the most accurate knowledge of Africa, states at the beginning of the novel that “I have just heard these learned speakers inform you that the kings of Ethiopia are descended from Solomon. I am sorry to correct them, but that is not true, my friends. The dynasty of Ethiopia is older than Solomon; it is older than the Bible” (McKay, *ABT* 9). It is suggested that, like racist nationalists, the Emperor also makes use of a narrative of roots, in this case to legitimate his imperial title.

conversation and in print, so the Ethiopians preferred to be designated by their ancient original name, “Ethiopian” (McKay, *ABT* 118)

Alamaya’s discourse questions the essentialism that both the crafters of this piece of news and those who were outraged by it represent. The novel’s portrayal of the Harlem support for Ethiopia in the end is not essentialist. The development of the novel, where some of the characters (on both sides of the struggle) demonstrate an essentialist perception of identity and hope, leads to an eventual deconstruction of their beliefs when some of the most important symbols for these characters prove to be fake. Like the piece of news suggests, Alamaya is not an official envoy, but that does not mean that he was “enjoying a bohemian existence in a hotel downtown and posing as a prince in Harlem with the arms of Ethiopia engraved upon his car and the door of his reception room” (McKay, *ABT* 115). Alamaya uses a letter associated to an old and postponed mission (because the League of Nations had not approved of it) whereby the Ethiopians, encouraged by prominent Pan-Africanists, were going to visit the African Americans (McKay, *ABT* 251). In the end this much valued authenticity does not matter to Peixota, whose main aim before and after the crisis was to bring his community together. The letter “was authentic [...] not genuine,” Alamaya says (251). As Cloutier puts it, “Alamaya’s belated use of the imperial letter is guided by his own sense of morality regarding group unity” (572). In a similar way, Princess Benebe Zarihana, the fake Ethiopian princess that Tasan creates in order to bring the African Americans closer to the Popular Front, ends up being Gloria Kendall, a local Harlem girl and former member of the Front. She is conned into the deceit but finally realises that Alamaya is well intentioned, stands by him, and in that way “inspire[s] [him] to have hope and confidence” (McKay, *ABT* 252).

Similarly, Professor Koazhy, another important member of the community who is passionate about African cultures and promotes the need for having accurate knowledge of them, has a fake name. He changed it “after his absorption in African fetishism” (McKay, *ABT* 12-13). Koazhy is also the leader of “the Senegambians,” a group of students organised in a masonic-like association to whom he teaches all this knowledge. Like Koazhy, they initially seem a group led by an interest on primitivism. However, making use of all this knowledge in African traditions, they orchestrate the ploy that ends in Tasan’s demise. They organise a reproduction of the African ritual of the Leopard Men and, because Tasan is ignorant “that the white feather attached to his costume designates him as the blood sacrifice victim,” he is unable to escape the trap (Cloutier 566). In this way, “McKay conveys that there is hope in education and becoming more politically involved in the community and the world” (Williams 114). This self-fashioning and the promotion that knowledge needs to be accurate in order to be malleable is reminiscent of the way in which Price describes his ethnogenetic approach to Rastafarianism. He explains that the Rastafarian appropriation of Ethiopian identity is a form of agency. Rastafarians chose their own identity and that actually managed to have an effect on the institutions of Jamaica. They were clever enough in this self-fashioning so that when a couple of Rastafari preachers were accused of political sedition (in their speeches they advocated for the need to stop considering themselves British subjects, which they were at the moment, to consider themselves Abyssinian subjects and thus stop paying taxes) they responded that their discourse was purely religious (Price, *Rasta* 59-60). They employed their knowledge of history and social institutions to provoke the authorities into admitting that these (their sacred text and their colonial territorial organisation) were absurd.

The Rastafarian mastery of the language about identity and politics reminds of Giroux's concept of "educated hope," a concept drawn from Bloch but whose definition by the Giroux is more pertinent here. According to him, it is a kind of hope "that acknowledges those social, economic, spiritual, and cultural conditions in the present that make certain kinds of agency and democratic politics possible" (38). As Cloutier believes, in this novel "McKay suggestively ties agency to archival practice" (567). This is why McKay, who disagreed with Booker T. Washington's "accommodationist racial strategy" (Cooper, *RS* 68), changes in this last novel "the vibrant and rugged truant criminal featured in *Home to Harlem* and *Banjo*" [for] Pablo Peixota, "a mature and wise family man" (Cloutier 569-570). Because of his former business in the illegal numbers game, Peixota is knowledgeable about the vices, necessities, and deprivations of his community, also in the spiritual sense. As it is expressed towards the middle of the novel, after the airing of the Emperor's statement,

When [Peixota] availed himself of the channel of the church to promote the Hands to Ethiopia, it was not because he felt that Aframericans were good Christians, but because the church was a social center and perfect rallying point. In the same manner he found the church useful for Democratic rallies (116)

Ethiopia fulfils the same spiritual community-making role which Peixota ascribes to the black churches of Harlem. Through the organisation of support for the African country, Peixota brings the African American community together in discussing their interests in a democratic manner without external (white) interference.

Following the same logic, if Ethiopia is understood as a concrete utopia, detached from the "flux of historical experience" (Mannheim 71), Rastafarianism

arguably separates Caribbeans from their daily lived experience. Since Rastafarians imagine themselves residing in an impossible place, their power for agency sees itself minimised. But what was actually achieved with this myth, as explained above, was an increase in their agency because of the renewed pride with which they started to perceive their identity (Price, *Rasta* xv). It brings Fanon's sentence about the role of the once-colonised writer to mind: he or she should carry out

passionate research [...] directed by the secret *hope* of discovering beyond the misery of today, beyond self-contempt, resignation and abjuration, some beautiful and splendid area whose existence rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and others (emphasis mine; 210)

As is suggested when Tasan's associate, Newton Castle, exclaims "just imagine wasting all that splendid mass feeling on the jungle Empire of Ethiopia when it could be put to work for enlightened Soviet Russia" (128), the hope and the energy that the African Americans display when they are in unity is considered to be extremely powerful.

The development of the Rastafarian identity was moulded depending on the changing conditions because, according to Price, "change and instability characterize the workings of our life worlds" (*Rasta* 58). This reminds of Benítez-Rojo's description of the Caribbean as a "meta-archipelago [which] has the virtue of having neither a boundary nor a center" (*RI* 4). If we think of this novel as Caribbean on the grounds that it makes, to some extent, reference to Rastafarianism, we must then consider the that McKay left Jamaica long before the start of the movement. However, Price insists on approaching the movement through "[t]he fundamental ideas of complexity [that] urge us to view sociocultural phenomena as dynamic, open systems with shifting boundaries" (*Rasta* 58). Following James' thesis in

Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth Century America, the context of Harlem was extremely influenced by Caribbean who took the lead in articulating radical movements. With this novel McKay goes a step further in this tradition of dissent, daring to oppose what had become the fossilised dichotomies of ideology and rather create, in Bhabha's words, "a space that can accept and regulate the differential structure of the moment of intervention without rushing to produce a unity of the social antagonism and contradiction" (25). In other words, Bhabha believes in the creation of a political culture whose lines of action lie in continuously opening up the space for change to always have room to improve the people's conditions, striving towards continuous improvement. So does McKay. He engages in Ashcroft's definition of utopianism rather than in utopian writing inasmuch as utopianism is found wherever there is any critique of the dominant system (*Utopianism* 12-3).

It is easy to see, knowing what we know about the Jamaican-born writer at this point of the thesis, why the syncretic phenomenon that developed between Caribbean Rastafarianism and the Harlem concern for Ethiopia caught McKay's attention for the topic of this novel. In fact, in an article titled "Provincializing Harlem: The 'Negro Metropolis' as Northern Frontier of a Connected Caribbean" Putnam compares the cosmopolitanism of Harlem, the black metropolis, recipient of numerous waves of working-class migrants from different backgrounds, with the syncretism of the Caribbean (469). She considers Harlem yet another Caribbean region, where international politics were discussed in terms of "a quotidian cosmopolitanism forged to navigate a region-wide labor market," just as it happened in other Caribbean loci (471). The Caribbean islands are characterised by the same capacity of adaptation that McKay demands in his novel. According to

Pugh and Chandler, they produce a kind of thought that “develop[s] relational ways of being (ontology) and knowing (epistemology)” (AI ix-xi). Du Bois may have had something similar in mind when he referred to the Caribbean as the “New Ethiopia” because of its tradition of resistance and the inhabitants’ awareness of the forces that create inequity and exploitation: “this new Ethiopia of the Isles may yet stretch out hands of helpfulness to the 12 million black men of America” (Du Bois, “Rise” 215). Here, Pugh and Chandler denote how “islands and island cultures have become important symbols of hope” because their relational ontologies result in resilient responses (AI 42). Perhaps this approach, more associated with the debates on the Anthropocene that will be dealt with in the next section, was not exactly what Du Bois was referring to. However, in the black imagination the islands of the Caribbean have featured as symbols of hope also because of the Haitian revolution.

The power of Ethiopia for the characters featuring in the novel lies in its being “one of three independent black nations, along with Liberia and Haiti” (Cloutier 564), so attacking its sovereignty felt like a personal affront to all the black dispossessed people around the globe who dreamt they could at some point follow its lead. Apart from Liberia, the other nation was Haiti, to which McKay already paid homage in *Home to Harlem*, making a special emphasis on U.S. interference in the country:

Jake sat like a big eager boy and learned many facts about Hayti before the train reached Pittsburgh. He learned that the universal spirit of the French Revolution had reached and lifted up the slaves far away in that remote island; that Black Hayti’s independence was more dramatic and picturesque than the United States’ independence [...]

For the first time he heard the name Toussaint L'Ouverture, the black slave and leader of the Haytian slaves. Heard how he fought and conquered the slave-owners and then protected them [...]

“A black man! A black man! Oh, I wish I'd been a soldier under such a man!”
Jake said, simply

[...]

“Let me tell you about it,” the waiter said. “Maybe you don't know that during the World War Uncle Sam grabbed Hayti. My father was an official down there. He didn't want Uncle Sam in Hayti and he said so and said it loud. They told him to shut up and he wouldn't, so they shut him up in jail. My brother also made a noise and American marines killed him in the street. I had nobody to pay for me at the university, so I had to get out and work. Voilà!” (131-138)

The characters of this novel also compare the two nations:

Had Jake ever heard of the little Republic of Liberia, founded by American Negroes? And Abyssinia, deep-set in the shoulder of Africa, besieged by the hungry wolves of Europe? The only nation that has existed free and independent from the earliest records of history until today! Abyssinia, oldest unconquered nation, ancient-strange as Egypt, persistent as Palestine, legendary as Greece, magical as Persia (135)

Therefore, despite his particular approach, there are in McKay's writing remnants of utopian thinking regarding the possibilities of the nation-state. To finalise this thesis' attempted panoramic view of diasporic Caribbean poetics, it is pertinent to explore a more contemporary expression of hope from the context of one of these early decolonised nation-states. In the wake of “the sombre realit[y] of postindependence political life” (Ashcroft, “Spaces” 2) in the Caribbean, the decolonised nation is far from being a utopia. The turn of the twenty-first century

has brought forth other global challenges related to environmental disaster where the Caribbean has proved to provide a renewed form of hope.

4.2. Resilience and the “Coloniality of Climate” in Edwidge Danticat’s *Claire of the Sea Light*

The aftermath of the 2010 earthquake in Haiti imprinted an image of the global connections across the American hemisphere, with the U.S. organising “the entire postearthquake ‘recovery’ project involving foreign government organizations, nongovernmental humanitarian aid organizations, missionaries, researchers, engineers, building companies, and many kinds of zealous volunteers” (Sheller 15). At the same time, a parallel act was being developed: the Port-au-Prince airport was placed under U.S. control in order to prevent the affected Haitians from reaching the continents’ shores in order to reunify with family (Sheller 15; 34). In the current state of global capitalism, peripheral areas have seen a shift from colonial administration to national borders. As colonial governance became replaced with foreign investment in the era of multinational capitalism (Freeman 85), national borders have been reinforced in order to protect the international division of labour that comes with it (Bandy 236). Therefore, we could imagine that the creative responses to the state of affairs, when the decolonised nation, once “a widely imagined utopia” (Ashcroft, *Utopianism* 5), became “a carceral archipelago” (Stoler 75; Sheller 55), may teach us how to articulate a future not based on Modern colonial imaginaries and ideologies.

“Given the consistent critique of the failures of the nation” Ashcroft wonders what to do with the “aspirations of a people who have no hope of creating a nation

state?" (*Utopianism* 16). Dash hints at the response when he contends that modern Haitian literature is the key to explore the future ("Afterword" 226) of the oldest decolonized black nation in the world, but also the one that "has especially suffered from an imposed isolation and the expulsion from the international community, producing a state of exception that left it vulnerable to extrastate projects" (Sheller 19). The two main strategies for imagining Haiti's political life after the revolution has not proved suitable to its reality. They were its apprehension either as an isolated pastoral haven, as the Négritude representative Jean Price-Mars and later the dictator François Duvalier did, or as an appendix of the former metropolis France, as was the case with the post-revolutionary elite (Dash, "Afterword" 220-223). Rather, as the Haitian writer Jacques Roumain has insisted upon, Haiti needs to be seen as part of something larger (5), be it the island of Hispaniola, the Caribbean archipelago or the American hemisphere. Dash describes Haitians as "liminal citizens of the hemisphere transformed by U.S. imperialism" and dismisses both Africa and the state—in fact Haitian-Canadian novelist and journalist Dany Laferrière writes, "Duvalier [was] the state" (in Dash, "Afterword" 223)—as a source of identification for Haitian the people ("Afterword" 222-223). This is perhaps why Edwidge Danticat, a Haitian-American residing in the United States and who writes in English, has been considered by some to be the national writer of Haiti.⁶⁸

Edwidge Danticat left Haiti when she was twelve years old to join her parents, who had left before her, in Brooklyn (Danticat, *CD* 59). She has both

⁶⁸ An article featuring in the cultural section of the Spanish journal *El País* (https://verne.elpais.com/verne/2017/04/18/articulo/1492512207_689285.html) took notice of a map drawn by a user of the popular forum Reddit which chose the most representative fiction work for each country of the globe. Edwidge Danticat was the representative for Haiti, as was the case with the Dominican Republic with Junot Díaz, another immigrant writing in a foreign language. This shows how the country's experiences can be better recorded from a distance, as it provides perspective and a less nuanced vision of history. In fact, Mukherjee contends that in countries like Haiti "provocative national literature is banned" and that upon reaching another location writers acquire a more complete "'historical sense' of the homeland" (682). As has been said above, they might also comprehend the external influence that keeps those repressive regimes alive.

claimed that upon reaching her destination she discovered “books about [herself] to help [her] interpret [her] ever-changing country from afar” (Danticat, *CD* 61) but also that she felt out of place and missed her home in Haiti terribly (Danticat, *CD* 59). Both claims might explain why she sets most of her works in the Caribbean country. She comes back like Marcel Numa and Louis Drouin did, though imaginatively. Numa and Drouin were two migrant Haitians who enjoyed comfortable lives in New York but who chose to join a guerrilla group—Jeune Haiti—in 1964 to try to knock Duvalier’s dictatorship down (Danticat, *CD* 2). The attempt resulted in their public execution on 12 November that same year (1). In her collection of essays *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work* (2010) Danticat states that this event informs all of her writing, that it is her own “creation myth:” “[l]ike most creation myths, this one too exists beyond the scope of my own life, yet it still feels present, even urgent” (7). To write the diaspora, Danticat comes back to her homeland and thus uses the potential of fiction in order to be where in reality she was not allowed to be. Furthermore, she situates Haiti in the diasporic context to which she belongs since, though the writings centre on the Caribbean country, she always subtly locates it within a broader context that explains the power dynamics that affect it.

In *Claire of the Sea Light* (2013), Edwidge Danticat’s last novel (there have been other publications but these are either children’s books, young-adult fiction, or short stories, the case of the acclaimed 2019 collection *Everything Inside*), the hemisphere lingers behind all that happens in the society that the writer describes. In other works—in particular *The Farming of Bones* (1998)—the Haitian-Dominican border has a predominant role, but this is not detached from the interference of the United States. The border’s current location dates from the 1929 “Treaty of Haitian-

Dominican Borders” (Coupeau 52), which was revised in 1936 “strongly encouraged by the United States, keen to stabilize a potentially volatile situation for their own benefit” (Fumagalli 20). The rebirth of the sugar industry in Hispaniola attracted the Americans, who “owned eleven out of the twenty-one sugar mills operating in the country and 98 per cent of its sugar exports were absorbed by the United States’ market” (Fumagalli 20). This border has become a signifier of the precarity of “migratory labor system[s]” (Martínez ix) and also of the colonial legacies that inform hemispheric conceptions of race and social class. The management of the border by United States forces and its later nationalisation under the control of the Dominican Republic set “the pattern for the exploitation of the Haitian workforce” (Fumagalli 20). Since then, it has been the setting of multiple violent episodes including the racially-based massacre of the Haitian peasants working on the borderlands (many born under Dominican jurisdiction) mandated by the Dominican dictator Rafael Leónidas Trujillo in 1937 (Turits 589-591). This is the episode that *The Farming of Bones* narrates.

Claire of the Sea Light follows the steps of *The Farming of Bones* and extends its concerns to the environmental realm without ceasing to situate Haiti as the result of external influences and as a participant in an intricate net of unequal global connections. The novel relates the disappearance of a seven-year-old girl, Claire Limyè Lanmè, after she finds out that her father (Nozias Faustin), a fisherman, is going to give her away to the town’s fabric vendor (Madame Gaëlle Lavaud) because he believes he cannot provide her with a good upbringing and that he might someday die at sea while fishing. Although it is not explicitly mentioned, migrating to the United States is something that could be in Nozias’ mind, or at least in Claire’s, as she seems to denote when she claims that she “wonder[s] all

the time where he was *chèche lavi*, looking for a better life” when he goes to “another part of this sea, someplace where she could not spot his boat” (221). After the disappearance, Claire does not appear in the novel again until the very end. As if the narrator was looking for her throughout the town of Ville Rose and the contiguous neighbourhood of Cité Pendue, the rest of the chapters revolve around the struggles and memories of the different inhabitants of these places, who share a net of “unacknowledged connections” (Gibby 356). The possibility to abandon the area—the intended destination being the United States—is ever-present throughout the narrative in the minds of several of the characters (as a goal or even as something that has already happened). However, the narrative, despite the seeming drive to drift towards this country, is always brought back to the insular community, as if propelled by the tidal force of the Caribbean Sea, which, as Brathwaite would put it, is cyclic (Mackey 44), centripetal rather than centrifugal (Torres-Saillant 241).

Though it was written after the occurrence of the natural disaster, Danticat chooses to set her novel in 2009, just before the earthquake, in order to, in her own words, hang “on to something that was” (Danticat, “New Novel” n.p.), portraying the essence of the human relationships that sustain the community depicted and thus providing a clue on the values that might help to deal with the crisis. However, there already are signs of natural degradation throughout the novel that might imperil the life of this community such as the extinction of an animal species or the houses “dragged downstream year after year in flash floods” because “the rivers were swelling in response to the lack of trees, the land erosion, the dying topsoil” (Danticat, *CSL* 52). The novel then also depicts the relationship that humans have with nature as well as the effect they have on it. It could be classed as a novel containing the poetics of the Anthropocene, a twenty-first century concept that

describes our current geological epoch, characteristically affected by human activity to the point that it constitutes its only determining force (Crutzen and Stoermer 17). The centrality of Haiti rather than the United States in this novel then also responds to the latest trends on Anthropocene Studies that see islands and other archipelagic assemblages as key in articulating a sort of thought that might prove helpful in overcoming this sort of environmental collapse.

Depicting natural degradation is constant not only in the novel analysed but in all of Danticat's oeuvre. Her fiction "disrupts tourist fantasies [about the Caribbean] through her portrayal of Haiti's environment" (Gibby 347). Kristina S. Gibby's ecocritical reading of the novel emphasises the fact that "nature remains outside of and beyond human concerns and societal constructs" (348) but a reading of the novel through the lens of the Anthropocene might reveal otherwise. The chapter titled "The Frogs" retrospectively narrates the birth of Gaëlle's own daughter, who in the narrative present is dead as she was the victim of a motorbike accident. Apart from Gaëlle's own pregnancy, the narration of this chapter focuses on the extinction of the town's frogs. Climate change acts as a framework for this chapter, where the frogs arguably die because of the rise in the temperatures: "[i]t was so hot in Ville Rose that year that dozens of frogs exploded" (Danticat, *CSL* 41). This phenomenon is probably the most quoted sign exemplifying the effect of human activity on the environment

While the Anthropocene is popularly still tied to anthropogenic climate change, the term also covers processes such as ocean acidification (which is a consequence of increasing carbon dioxide levels), global population growth, resource depletion, massive species extinction, and ecosystem simplification more generally. Cumulatively, these phenomena point to the unsustainability of the human exploitation of the planet (Vermeulen 9)

Unlike other instances of adaptation, this is not the natural cycle that Gaëlle is “fool[ed]” into inferring from the event: “that a normal cycle was occurring, that young was replacing old, and life replacing death, sometimes slowly and sometimes quickly. Just as it was for everything else” (Danticat, *CSL* 41). Just like the premature death of her daughter which is predicted with this paragraph, the phenomenon is not to be expected within a healthy course of events. Instead, a whole animal species does not have the time to adapt to the increasing temperature and hence dies.

Despite Gaëlle’s fear that “should the temperature continue to rise, she too might burst” (41) like the frogs, both mother and daughter survive. This was not the case of Claire’s mother, whose labour was precarious. Rose, the child that Gaëlle has, becomes Claire’s “milk sister” (Danticat, *CSL* 23), predicting Claire’s eventual adoption by this woman. Because Claire’s mother had died after childbirth, Gaëlle once nurses Claire, seemingly bridging the gap between the wealthy and the poor in an act of the most basic human survival. Poverty and death are continuously associated in this novel, which insists on depicting the perils of the fishermen’s profession from the very opening of the novel, when one of them, Msye Caleb, dies at sea. Danticat follows Derek Walcott’s directive that, against the tourists’ “exploit[ation] [of] the picturesqueness of the poverty,” Caribbean writers should not refrain from exposing a positive portrayal of their lands, including such poverty:

The other reality is that these places are picturesque, that they do look a particular way. I think that it is what illuminates them; when an artist illuminates them, then it becomes a different thing. Because now what you’re looking at is not only the reality of poverty but something beyond it that the artist finds worth illuminating (Handley and Walcott 138)

Exploring poverty is, according to Georg Zipp, one of the characteristics of Caribbean writing, instituted by the Guyanese Eric Walrond with his crude vignettes of the work at the Panama Canal construction

Eric Walrond's short story collection *Tropic Death* (1926) is not only one of the foundational texts of Caribbean literature itself: Walrond was also one of the first writers to note and de-construct the relationship between the picturesque and the poor in the Caribbean imaginary (234)

However, the death of Gaëlle's daughter and the adoption's "complex performative act of doubling" (Montgomery 319) blurs the boundary again, like the act of nursing did, and makes Claire question, before disappearing, whether her identity would change depending on the path she chooses: "when she was a woman, a true Madame, when her adult voice came in, would she sound like her mother too?" (Danticat, *CSL*, 218). The use of the word "Madame," the one used to describe Gaëlle, brings in questions of social class and identity.

The last chapter adopts Claire's point of view to show the reader her thoughts at the decisive moment of the disappearance. Claire's ceaseless questioning about her mother seems to ponder the reasons why she died during childbirth and Gaëlle did not. In an act of allegiance to her origins Claire considers whether she should follow her mother's essence and become a presence by the shore of the sea:

She'd heard some of the fishermen's wives say that the spirits of those who's been lost at sea would sometimes come ashore to whisper in their loved ones' ears. She would make sure [Nozias] felt her presence too. She'd sneak down at dusk to collect fallen coconuts and grab salted fish left out to dry and she'd stop by and say a few words in her father's ear while he slept.

That way she would always be in his dreams. She would go away without really leaving, without losing everything, without dying (235)

Claire's plan for disappearing lies in conflating her identity with that of her lost mother, who in the narrative is sometimes presented as the maternal figure of "Mami Wata (Mother Water), an Afro-Caribbean water-spirit" (Montgomery 316). Just like these characteristically Afro Caribbean figures, orally-transmitted as part of the creole folklore of the islands, "provid[e] continuity for the dispossessed" (Dayan, "Erzulie" 5), those forcibly deprived of ancestral memories, they also ground Claire to her identity "in the face of maternal absence or loss" (Montgomery 318). Claire's loss is an allegory for the collective loss of the Afro-Caribbean subject and also for those dispossessed in the present, like Nozias. Like Mami Wata, Nozias also suspects that his fate lies in the sea, not an uncommon destiny for the fishermen of the town, whose crumbling boats do not offer enough protection.

Claire's decision suggests that not forgetting one's origins as well the reasons why some lead safer lives than others is the only path towards change. Episodes like Rose's death point out that while some tragic events like death and suffering might make us equal, these occur by pure chance, and the suffering of the poor responds to factors easily identifiable. One example is the sinking of the houses of Ville Rose due to the swelling of the rivers when rain is intense. This is not only due to the rain being too heavy, but also because deforestation—a result of colonial and neocolonial enterprises in the island⁶⁹—has historically caused erosion in Haitian lands (Paravisini-Gebert, "Deforestation" 108), "reducing [the soil's] ability to absorb water during heavy rains" (Paravisini-Gebert, "Voudou" 69). In the

⁶⁹ The Haitian novella *Amour* (1968) by Marie Vieux-Chauvet records how in a fictitious Haitian town already devastated by erosion "American ships routinely leave [the town's] ports filled with prized wood from trees the loss of which is causing that erosion" (Danticat, *CD* 67). This chapter highlights the continuity between the colonial and neocolonial treatments of the land and the relevance of American deeds in the Caribbean landscapes of the Anthropocene.

chapter describing the effects of these rains, Gaëlle points out that “[h]ers and Laurent’s was now the only house so close to the rivers. The other houses, newer yet shabbier, had been dragged downstream year after year in flash floods” (52). Sheller highlights the complicities between poverty and the effects of disaster with the use of the term “unnatural disaster:”

Like many “unnatural” disasters before and since, the 12 January 2010 earthquake in Haiti brought to light the highly uneven interdependence and fragility of the complex mobility systems and infrastructural moorings that create the possibility for people to weave together everyday life. During the earthquake, it is estimated that somewhere between 160,000 and 220,000 people perished in collapsing buildings, another 300,000 people received injuries to various degrees, and a further 1.5 million were made homeless (33)

Though Danticat’s novel is set before the earthquake, indirect reference to it—or to the effects it will have—is constant. Despite the liberal dictum that has made a renewed appearance during the Covid-19 crisis stating that human beings are all equal in the face of health and natural crises, Naomi Klein contends that disasters do not only unveil inequity, they also increase it.

Klein’s *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2007) holds the thesis that for the previous decades legislators have waited for disasters such as Hurricane Katrina to advance neoliberal agendas (6). Therefore, rather than identifying the shortcomings of societies in the alleviation of their crises, their structural inequity has been reproduced. Klein gives the example of the Pinochet coup d’état in Chile, whose aftermath saw the imposition of a free market policy. The so called “Chile’s economic miracle” “hoover[ed] wealth up to the top and shock[ed] much of the middle class out of existence” (86). Klein’s book was written

before the earthquake in Haiti, but Mimi Sheller confirms in *Island Futures: Caribbean Survival in the Anthropocene* (2020) that the recovery process seemed to follow the same steps (15). Within this neoliberal pattern, much of the public infrastructure is given to private companies in the aftermath stages, as was the case with the water supply in Haiti (Sheller 94), where these companies are also often foreign (80). The inequity exposed by phenomena such as the privately owned foreign handling of natural resources in Haiti—exemplified by Vieux-Chauvet’s quote about the American cutting of trees—has led to the conclusion that the term Anthropocene was perhaps too neutral (L. Martínez 137; Vermeulen 12), or that the argument behind was too simple (Moore 2-3). The term Capitalocene, in contrast, not only “highlights the destructive and accelerating logics of resource depletion and petrochemical dependency within capitalism as a world system” (Davis et al. 2), but also that the development of the processes that have heavily affected the climate depended on “colonial relations” that have made the profitability of technologies such as steam energy possible (Vermeulen 12). “Capitalocene” better reflects the situations that Klein and Sheller put forth.

Erosion has been a consistent problem in the Caribbean since the colonisers mistook “diversity for fertility” when they arrived (DeLoughrey, Gosson, and Handley 6; Lowenthal 14); it is a reminder of the colonial past. Maxine L. Montgomery underscores Claire’s “ability to utilize legend and lore from the past in charting a hopeful future” in the novel (317). Other critics have also pointed out how the main concern in Danticat’s fragmented narrative seems to be this drive towards hope which reminds of Ashcroft’s idea that utopianism depends on “the prophetic engagement with memory in its critique of the present” (*Utopianism* 15). Martínez-Falquina describes Danticat’s work as an articulation of “narratives of

memorialisation, resilience and *hope*” (emphasis mine; 844) whereas Gibby highlights the role of the unidealized and sometimes cruel portrayal of nature in the novel as a framework for a narrative of “*hope, communion, and belonging*” (emphasis mine; 363). Ashcroft explains that a feature of Caribbean literature is how the collective memory of the past is invoked in order to choose how to live the present and strive for the future:

For those Caribbean writers and artists working in the borderland of language, race and identity the past is the constant sign of the future. One of the most common, and popular, examples of this is the limbo dance,⁷⁰ a performance of slave history, which re-enacts the crossing of the Middle Passage in a continual reminder of memory, survival and cultural resurrection [...] The dance is a metaphor of slave history that celebrates the present with the continuous re-enactment of future hope (*Utopianism* 53)

We could see this in Marshall’s novel with what was perceived as the villagers’ rejection of modernisation but what actually was a defence of their agency. Subaltern Caribbean communities remember historical foreign incursions in their land—transmitted to them through the shape of the landscape like its erosion or the swelling of rivers—and act according to these memories. Claire rejects becoming

⁷⁰ Another popular dance with great significance for the black community, the lindy hop, is represented in McKay’s *Amiable with Big Teeth* in relation to another crossing of the Atlantic. The bar where the characters often meet is called the “Airplane Club,” where a picture of an aviator crashing his plane is placed on the wall. The characters believe the “picture was intended to represent the exploits of the notorious Aframerican Hubert Fauntelroy Julian, who had visited Ethiopia at the time of the coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie and by whom he was decorated and made a colonel of aviation” (McKay, *ABT* 75), which according to Cloutier makes sense because Julian crashed the plane during the ceremony (564). However, the painting’s artista claim he was referencing Charles Lindbergh’s famous first crossing by plane of the Atlantic and that the owner of the bar wanted to name it the “Lindy Hop” in his honour but then he learnt that Lindbergh was a racist. Lindbergh’s hatred for the African Americans was due to the fact that “they had desecrated the sublimity of his glorious hop across the Atlantic by immortalizing it in a popular dance” (76). According to Cloutier, “the anecdote about the evolution of a bar’s name” inserts in the novel a reference to the role of popular dances in the black community’s reappropriation of history—particularly a (hi)story referencing a crossing of the Atlantic, which seems no coincidence—in order to acquire agency about their cultural identity (564). The anecdote also gestures to the power of cultural manifestations—both the novel itself as an “independent archival practice” (Cloutier 656) and the dance—for reversing traumatic events and turning them into symbols of resilience.

detached from the fisherman identity that defines her family and, instead of leaving with Madame Gaëlle, sets out to reproduce the lifestyle of the maroons in the mountains nearby.

When Claire's mother died, before being handed to Nozias, she lived for three years with her mother's family in the mountains. This can be read literally or can also be interpreted as an example of magical realism in Danticat's narrative, a feature not rare in this author. This last interpretation comes from the fact that said family never appears again in the novel and is not considered as an option for taking care of Claire when Nozias worries that he will not be able to. Instead, when she comes back to the mountains at the moment of her disappearance, Claire explains that this is where the maroons lived:

Like the fugitives in Madame Louise's stories—les marons—she would hide inside what was left of Mòn Inital

She would be the first at the foot of the sky. She would find a cave large enough inside Mòn Inital to live in, and at night she would lie on beds of ferns and listen to the bats squeal and the owls moan. She would dig a hole to catch rainwater for drinking and bathing. And she would try very hard not to disturb the marooned spirits who had found refuge there before her (234)

We could interpret that Claire was nursed by the spirits of the maroons and this is why she holds such a deep connection to the country's memory that she also feels the presence of water spirits.

During the times of the plantation, maroons were escaped slaves that usually hid in the nearing mountains and developed an alternative social organisation (Roberts 4; Hantel 88). They have become crucial figures in black utopian thought (Zamalin 169) because they represented the possibility to escape

the oppressive society and “create a fully autonomous community” (Roberts 4). Together with creolisation—and possibly on the opposite side—marronage has become a key concept in Caribbean anthropology defining “a form of cultural opposition to European-American culture” (Wing xxii). However, Glissant does not consider it fit to the Caribbean existence in the present because of “its inability to think about the existential conditions and effects of futurity on the formation of subjectivity, choosing instead flight at expense of the beginning again *with* history’s pain” (emphasis in the original; Drabinski 79). According to Glissant, marronage does not strive towards the future and does not make use of trauma and pain, despite their existence, to articulate the present. This is what Claire seems to understand when she decides to go back, “go down to the water to see [the villagers] take turns breathing into this man [that had fallen in the sea], breathing him back to life” (Danticat, *CSL* 238). Glissant appreciates some aspects of marronage such as the right to a culture’s opacity, but advocates for the need to move beyond it. To this end, he provides the image of the beach, where the novel ends in an act of community and hope.

The beach where the last scene develops, for Glissant, is an element that unites the symbolic power of the mountains, “the historical home of the Maroons, who escaped slavery to set up their own society,” with the Caribbean Sea, “the island’s opening onto the rest of the world” (Hantel 88). In her brief interlude in the mountains Claire, like Glissant, “links the tradition of the Maroon repudiation of the plantation to a new future whose synthesis transcends both that gesture of refusal [and of] submission” (Wynter 638). The novel is not defeatist, it is full of hope. This hope, unlike anti-colonial utopias that take place outside the system, is situated in current Haiti and points towards those real examples which provide the key for

articulating a better future, what Bloch calls “anticipatory illumination” (*Utopian Function* 111). When Ashcroft contends that invoking a pre-colonial memory might help to situate postcolonial communities “outside of imperial structures of linear history,” it does not mean that those communities must retreat from the system of which, like it or not, they are participants. It rather advocates for alternative ideologies and explanatory myths that might improve the daily lives of the inhabitants of these communities. The “political imaginary [of] liberal individualism used to justify colonial slavery” (Roberts 65) has been reinforced in the neoliberal panorama (Jiménez-Rodríguez 191), where the upper-class characters of the novel are depicted as increasingly alienated and unhappy, even called zombies⁷¹ at times. The answer to their alienation in this context seems to lie in their rejection of “the impersonal rhythms of the market” (Jameson, “Third World Literature” 84) to embrace the opposite value: community.

In an interview with Jeffrey Brown, Danticat explains that the novel is about “showing this way of life [...] this communal system that’s really maintained the country where people don’t have that many [*sic*] support except from one another” (Danticat, “New Novel” n.p.). Martínez-Falquina highlights the importance of the novel’s “sequential reading,” by which all the images of violence and barrenness

⁷¹ The zombie is a figure closely linked to the Caribbean—particularly Haiti. Their imagery first originated in the archipelago as an allegory of the slave condition, that is, of subjects acting against their own will, but they eventually came to symbolise American fantasies on savagery and barbarism that justified the country’s occupation by the U.S. from 1915 to 1934 (Dayan, *Haiti* 37-38). As an example, the Harlem Renaissance author Zora Neale Hurston claimed, upon her return from Haiti where she went as part of an ethnographic research journey funded by the Guggenheim Foundation to study vodou (Dunbar 240-242), that she had seen a zombie: “I had the rare opportunity to see and touch an authentic case. I listened to the broken noises in its throat, and then, I did what no one else had ever done, I photographed it. If I had not experienced all of this in the strong sunlight of a hospital yard, I might have come away from Haiti interested but doubtful. But I saw this case of Felicia Felix-Mentor, which was vouched for by the highest authority. So I know that there are Zombies in Haiti. People have been called back from the dead” (Hurston 182). Hurston’s claim is arguably informed by these racist imaginaries that depersonalise the Global South to perpetuate practices of domination. Thus, what Hurston actually saw was poverty and its dehumanising effects. By ascribing to rich people the categorisation of zombies Danticat reverses this exoticist story that shows how some of the politics and poetics of the Harlem Renaissance are not representative of subaltern realities.

that had defined it so far “are now replaced [with the ending] by images of reconciliation, community, and home” (848). The novel finishes when Max Jr., a resident in Citè Pendue recently returned from the United States who tries to commit suicide at the unbearable guilt of having raped his maid in the past, is “returned from the sea and welcome by the community, the poor and the rich attending to him together” (Martínez-Falquina 848). The resolution points towards these small moments that provide the possibility of (emotional and material) healing when all the members of the community share their resources, rather than on a neoliberal tale of rag-to-riches in another country. The narrative rather wonders what would happen if the forgotten fishermen, who are “at the bottom of the social hierarchy” (Gibby 357) of Ville Rose’s but an integral part of the Caribbean labour identity, were provided with “a bigger boat [...] where the crazy waves would not get them” (Danticat, *CSL* 221). What if the resources that are needed by the islanders were kept rather than being exported with all the rest, enriching the island’s elites but impoverishing the lowest classes? This discourse emphasises Haitian resilience but also the need for its global participation in equal terms (Cope 100). As Danticat put it in the same interview, talking about the possibility for resilience in small communities, “the town is the hero [where] you get to see the mayor, who is also the undertaker,” but there is a lot to be done. She insists on showing this aspect of human organisation in Haiti “that is not talked or heard about” (“New Novel” n.p.). Danticat’s energy reminds us of Glissant’s hopeful statement that he “still believe[s] in the future of small countries” (*CD* 3). This is why rather than engaging in a narrative of upward mobility like many migrant writers have endlessly done, Danticat pays attention to the island, pointing to the fact that, regardless of how many narratives of migration are created, the Caribbean is still in existence and demands our attention.

The manner in which Danticat weaves this narrative also proposes an answer to the question posed at the beginning of this section of how to define the cultural identity of Haiti. Just as she chooses to develop a narrative where the community rather than an individual is the protagonist of the story, the answer lies in apprehending Haiti as part of an island, the island as part of an archipelago, and the archipelago as part of a hemisphere, one dominated by complex hierarchical relations. This is the reason why the sea proves a central setting for many parts of the narrative such as Claire's mother's announcement of her pregnancy, because "the currents between and among islands reveal a wider horizon," as Pugh puts it ("Thinking" 11). And, eventually, the novel's own structure resembles Pugh and Chandler's island theory of relationality that "recasts the world as rich and full of creative possibilities" (AI 84). According to Robyn Cope, the way in which all the apparently fragmented parts of the novel are related to one another despite the characters not knowing it reflects the fact that "not just for Haiti but for the whole world [there is an] interdependent nature of human interaction and history [...] a powerful poetics of relation in which no person is separate from humanity and no moment exists outside the temporal continuum" (101). Martínez-Falquina has described the work as a short story cycle (855) whereas in most academic analyses it is classed as a novel. I am rather inclined towards the latter definition, since each of the chapters is not organic enough and the order matters. However, it is true that it is very fragmented insomuch as, rather than following one single narrative, it spans from one character of the community to the other. Talking about another novel with a very similar structure, *The Dew Breaker* (2004), Danticat describes it as "neither a novel nor a story collection, but something in between" (CD 62). It could be said that the formal structure is archipelagic, as it presents several isles, but they are all related into a bigger structure that comprises them (the Caribbean

Sea), and in the by now classic Caribbean move they expand but they come back to the centre: Claire.

The articulation of hope in *Claire of the Sea Light* sharply differs from narrative examples of anti-colonial utopias in a context where these have been common: “Reductive race- and nation-based currents like Indigenism and Africanism [...] are not representative of Haitian literature as a whole, even in the twentieth century” (Cope 99). Establishing the Haitian society as part of a bigger net of international and precarious relations, the novel presents a characteristically Caribbean poetics that emphasises the interconnectedness of the world as well as the imperilled communities’ right to opacity in order to protect their resources. The concept of the “transnation” as defined by Ashcroft—“the utopian idea that national borders may not in the end need to be the authoritarian constructors of identity that they have become”—that pervades contemporary utopianism (Ashcroft, “Beyond” 13) contrasts with what Sheller contends has become a “carceral archipelago” in the neoliberal strengthening of national borders in poor communities (79). The vision of hope that pervades the novel acknowledges the oppressed situation of Haiti and it is based on a criticism of the status quo and the Haitian demand for a voice and opinion within the international system. The image of a poor small girl claiming her agency in her crafting of a strategy that defies the plan of the adults (one of them rich) is the image of Glissant’s “small countries” having a voice and making it count, thus providing with examples of alternative world orders.

4.3 Can Literature Change the World? Utopistics, or Some Final Reflections on the Nature of Literary Hope within World-System Analysis

What is the origin of the Caribbean? How do we come from? Where do we come from? And why are we as we are? Why are we so leaderless, so fragmented, so perpetually caught up with the notion of hope and still at the same time Sisyphean?

E. K. Brathwaite, *Conversations with Nathaniel Mackey*

In an interview I recently conducted, commenting on the gothic literature of Mexico literary scholar David Punter expressed that “Mexico has numerous indigenous difficulties and problems which won’t be solved by simply reading its literature” (n.p.). This statement brings in the long—and apparently impossible to settle—debate about the relationship between literature and socio-political transformation. This debate has a special presence in the field of the postcolonial, where scholars have built upon the relationship between power and discourse laid down by Foucault, notably Edward Said. It is Said’s contention that it was discourse about the Orient that enabled its domination by the West “during the post-Enlightenment period” (*Orientalism* 4) and that such discourse was carried in its literature (Said, *Orientalism* 5; Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *EWB* 3). As Kenyan novelist Ngugi wa Thiong’o puts it, it is language and, by extension, culture that carries

the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture, at their politics and at the social production of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature and to other human beings (16)

Whereas Said’s ground-breaking study centres on the creation and maintenance of that power, it was not until the publication of Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin’s *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* in 1989 that a clue on reversing the process through literary practice was given. According to these

critics, postcolonial literature not only offers glimpses on new worldviews, but also does so by engaging with the dominant ones and, in the process, demonstrating the culturally specific rather than given origin of their discourses (*Empire* 221).

However, Punter is partly right in noting that the availability of alternative worldviews tied to a bigger awareness of the ideologically constructed nature of identity has not had such a relevant effect on the world order and the world-system. The failed promises of the nation-state and of the projects of development due to the nature of the capitalist world-system discussed in section 3.5. leaves us with a pessimist tinge. However, Wallerstein, who laid down the details of this ingrained and therefore apparently immutable order, is also one of the biggest advocates of change and its empirical possibility, as defended in articles like “The Caribbean and the World-System” (2002) and especially the book *Utopistics: Or Historical Choices of the Twenty-First Century* (1998). Therefore, rather than focusing on discourse, it might be more pertinent to start asking how imaginative writing can change the world in the Marxist, economic, and materialist terms that this thesis has so far explored. Wallerstein explains that states have not always remained in the same world-system area, as some have shifted from the semi-periphery either to the periphery or to the core (“Rise” 407-408). However, this leaves us with the question of whether exploited segments of the world population will always need to exist. The organisation of exploitation is in part perpetuated by the very institution of the nation-state and its machineries: “Coloniality was essentially the creation of a set of states linked together within an interstate system in hierarchical layers. Those at the very bottom were the formal colonies. But even when formal colonial status would end, coloniality would not” (Quijano and Wallerstein 550). Theorists of the Postmodern like Roger Rouse or Paul Gilroy contend that in today’s current state of

globalisation, diversity, and border crossing discourses on the nation or nationalism are proving inadequate. However, as we saw above, this does not warrant that, from a legislative point of view, the state has disappeared. On the contrary, its borders have been reinforced (Sheller 35).

To this day, the biggest disruption of the statal organisation remains diaspora. Diasporas dwell on the hyphen between the nation and the state. They dissociate the nation from territoriality. The diasporic group's interest might lie somewhere completely different from the nation-state where it is located, for example in the place where "their most important friends and kin are" (Rouse 13), and also their ancestral memories and sympathies. We could argue that these groups, then, lack political decision-making power.⁷² Conversely, their interests might lie within the nation-state they inhabit, but they may not have any citizenship rights, these being the paradoxes of liberal democracy. Furthermore, how is decision-making exclusively lying within the state relevant when, as we have seen, state machineries use their power to affect the cycles of the world-system? That is, the system is international but democratic decision-making is not, or at least it is done from the perspective of one nation-state. Modern notions of diaspora, unlike what Hall calls "backward-looking conceptions of diaspora" ("Cultural Identity" 235), contest all the intolerant logics of the state and nationalism:

diaspora does not refer us to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return, even if it means pushing other people into the sea. This is the old, the imperialising, the hegemonising, form of "ethnicity" ("Cultural Identity" 235)

⁷² It is not contended here that the only form to make politics is voting, there are many other forms. This will be discussed later.

It suggests another way of living and identifying not tied to the confines of certain borders, and ideally this should also apply to legislation and not only to identity.

In an article on the potential strategies by which the Global South could improve its situation in the World-System, Wallerstein notes migration as one of them (“The Caribbean” 24). He contends that migrants from the global South living in the global North could acquire the “ability to pursue their interests in the North-South struggle” of the World-System (25). Their actions might in fact carry a huge potential or else why would their migration be made illegal under the excuse that immigrants “threaten jobs and wage levels, and amplify antisocial tendencies in these countries” when they are actually, in terms of labour, much needed by Northern states? (“The Caribbean” 25). Wallerstein continues, “[w]hat this means over time is that the North is creating a large stratum of persons resident in the country who have less than full political, economic, or social rights” (25). Decision-making through citizenship in democratic systems seems to be one of the ways by which, through legislation, the actions (military, diplomatic...) that perpetuate the inequity of the World-System can be affected. Wallerstein contends that the increasing mobility of migrants from the Global South will eventually imperil the North’s “ability to pursue their interests in the North-South struggle” (“The Caribbean” 25).

A feature of diasporas also is “neighborhood and area quasi-segregation” in the countries of the Global North, which helps the groups’ self-organisation against the system that oppresses them (Wallerstein, *Utopistics* 62). Wallerstein contends that the gravity of the riots produced by the migrants’ organisation and discontent could actually result in a great instability with the power of seriously affecting the system (*Utopistics* 62-3). However, it is not only the decision-power of the migrant

groups—either through democratic practices or through rioting—that should be taken into account. In *Utopistics*, Wallerstein contends that “[i]n the modern world at least, we all have to appeal for support for our arguments from a much wider group of people than those who share our immediate interests and preferences” (4). Ideally, privileged groups should open their eyes and not apprehend these situations of instability as well as the migration of inhabitants of the Global South as a menace to a System perceived as “the best of all possible worlds” (Wallerstein, *Utopistics* 63) but understand that such inequity is the result of their own place in the system that inevitably feeds on the misery of their counterparts. The attempts to “rig the political structure so that these migrants have no (or fewer) political and social rights” on the part of the Global North’s countries, or “rig it so that the migrants have the least well-paying jobs” (*Utopistics* 61), somehow acknowledges that this system necessitates the poverty of some to keep the wellbeing of others.

Now then, where does writing fit in all this? Wallerstein’s attributes to morality a crucial role in these changes. It sounds simple and perhaps a bit naïve, but it makes sense in a system governed by inequity. In his development of the concept of “Utopistics” he contends that morality might help us in determining an ultimate goal that would affect the decision-making involved in securing the means for reaching that goal (*Utopistics* 2-3). He also links morality to legitimacy, which is determined by the fact that the chosen system is not to only appeal to a privileged minority but to the aforementioned “wider group” (*Utopistics* 4). This sort of argument is often understood in the context of the nation-state, but since the system is international, it should also apply to the inhabitants of the Global South whose economic structure supports the Global North. As Wallerstein puts it, “if we mean by revolutions a change that transforms the underlying social structure and

mode of functioning of the state that presumably had a revolution” then we can conclude “that there have been no revolutions at all in the states comprising the modern world-system” (*Utopistics* 9). I contend that the writings authored by immigrants that focus on the conditions of their homelands contribute to a great extent to establishing moral goals at the level of the World-System. It is widely accepted that literature and cinema enhance empathy and ethical and emotional responses from readers and spectators, a reaction not perceived as natural and spontaneous but as something to be practiced and cultivated (Nussbaum 14) so that it “enter[s] politics” (Ahmed 33).

The history of immigrant writing in the United States often begins with European migration during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. These immigrants wrote narratives of integration and assimilation into the mainstream culture (Wald 177-178) like Abraham Cahan’s *Yekl* (1896), Anzia Yezierska’s *Bread Givers* (1925) or Pietro Donato’s *Christ in Concrete* (1939). Later on, Oscar Hijuelos’ *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love* (1989) marked

the ascendancy of a Latino literature which, however nostalgic for the old culture and resentful of the new, is markedly assimilationist toward American society and its culture, thus departing from the contestatory and oppositional stance characteristic of much writing by Latino authors in the past (Flores 170)

However, there were also narratives that depicted the struggle to assimilate, pointing to the racial nature of this process, like Julia Álvarez’s *How the García Girls Lost their Accents* (1991). It is my contention that it is a feature of the literature of the Anthropocene—a global, rather than national, category, though with different effects in each place—to go back to the homeland and imaginatively write about it,

as Junot Díaz's last work "Monstro" (2012) demonstrates, as also does Roxane Gay's *Untamed State* (2014). Danticat's novel analysed above belongs to this category, although as we have seen, there have been earlier examples like *Banana Bottom* and Marshall's *The Timeless Place, the Chosen People*. All of them (Danticat, Díaz, and Gay), furthermore, write about their lands in a different language, in the language of the receiving land. This is obviously because English is their first language, the one in which they have been educated and are more fluent in, but it also tells a lot about the intended public. As Sarah Ahmed puts it, in the process of making pain enter politics, "the reader's feelings are the ones that are addressed" (21). In this way, reading practices could subside the Northern citizens' discontent with lenient migratory policies as they confront what Ahmed contends should necessarily be the Others' experience:

Our task instead is to learn how to hear what is impossible. Such an impossible hearing is only possible if we respond to a pain that we cannot claim as our own. Non-indigenous readers do need to take it personally (we are part of this history), but in such a way that the testimony is not taken away from others, as if it were about our feelings, or our ability to feel the feelings of others (35)

The challenge to the national represented by diasporic narratives set on the homeland appeals to a wider range of citizens whose privilege is interpellated and who, in their own language, are invited to participate in a decision-making that affects global as well as other—or Others'—local realities.

Furthermore, Wallerstein contends that his notion of "Utopistics" "involves a close reconsideration of the structures of knowledge" (4-5). This claim is made in relation to his discussion about "legitimat[ing] systems" (*Utopistics* 4). Legitimacy,

as mentioned above, involves the system's appeal to a vast number of people, but it is also about

persuasion of a particular sort: it involves persuading those who seem to be doing poorly in the short run that they will do better, even much better, in some longer run, precisely because of the structure of the system, and that consequently they should support the continued functioning of the system and its decision-making process (*Utopistics 4*)

This could apply to the more privileged end of the World-System, whose members tend to fear that any disruption to its workings could create great damage:

The greater the ambition, the greater the damage, say they. The heart of conservatism as a modern ideology is the conviction that the risks of conscious collective intrusion into existing social structures that have historically and slowly evolved are very high (*Utopistics 5*)

According to Wallerstein, one way of legitimating systems is through "so-called rational arguments," which "are delivered in the discourse of science, and assert their validity on the grounds of accepted scientific knowledge" (*Utopistics 4*). Therefore, the field of knowledge is invoked, and, coming back to the beginning of this section, we know it is not neutral.

Regarding knowledge and discourse, the field of Postcolonial Studies has aimed at promoting alternative ideologies that contest the negative racial self-perception of the once-colonised. We should take things one step further, towards the development of a working-class consciousness in the context of the World-System. According to Claude McKay, *history* is the field of knowledge that should be addressed here ("Group Life" n.p.). Cloutier argues that archival information needs to be organised around a certain narrative form so that it can make sense to

diasporic communities, including the black Atlantic diaspora that is at the centre of McKay's *Amiable with Big Teeth* (572). In fact, Dipesh Chakrabarty describes history as "a knowledge system," one that furthermore "is firmly embedded in institutional practices that invoke the nation state at every step" (19). As such, "a new, recuperative diasporic archive" put forth in a novelistic form reorganises the readers' vision around historical processes and political structures in a way that hopeful futures—the means that Wallerstein mentions—can be situated in the horizon (Cloutier 19). It is virtually impossible to discern the right and feasible alternative to the capitalist World-System. However, given the relevance of the nation and its military technologies in its perpetuation, imaginative creations developed outside the structures of the nation-state seem necessary milestones. I have already contended that all the works analysed in this thesis do so.

In her book *Utopía no es una Isla* (2020) Layla Martínez lists the partial successes that have actually occurred in the struggle to challenge the tendencies of the capitalist system. These are real, tangible examples of political projects or activist action situated in the material world that have managed to dispel the violence endemic to the system. She also contends that without narratives that imagine these possible alternatives, their eventual materialisation would have never—and will never again—taken place: we need narratives that train our imagination in the possibility of alternatives. Layla Martínez gives the example of how in our current times the presence of dystopias has experienced a rise in popular culture (10-11; 133). According to her, this has affected the general imagination whereby no one is able to consider a better future and societies are caught up in conformism (133; 135). In view that the future can only be worse, we assume that the present is good enough. It reminds of Wallerstein's description of

the “Spirit of Porto Alegre,” one of the forces that, in his opinion, is in tension with opposite ones in determining the direction to which the World-System is headed. The “Spirit of Porto Alegre” is “built on the premise that major structural changes are possible, imminent, and desirable” and depend on choices that “have a realistic possibility of affecting the outcome” of the World-System’s increasing polarisation. Wallerstein’s *Utopistics* also offers a more detailed explanation on why he gave such importance to the Caribbean, its “voices and energy” (Wallerstein “The Caribbean” 28) in the article just quoted that might point to the kind of narratives that are needed to transform the capitalist World-System.

According to Wallerstein, the only possible way to change systems is chaos, which, as mentioned above, is a characteristically Caribbean feature according to Benítez-Rojo. Wallerstein explains that

chaotic realities produce, by themselves, new orderly systems. This may not be much consolation if I add that such a process might take as much as fifty years to complete. The second thing to bear in mind is that the science of complexity is teaching us that, in such chaotic situations resulting from a bifurcation, the outcome is inherently unpredictable (*Utopistics* 63)

Wallerstein disagrees with Martínez’s demand for utopias which he claims “are breeders of illusions and therefore, inevitably, of disillusion” (*Utopistics* 1) but points towards archipelagic thinking as capable to contribute to a consideration of “the multitude of small inputs that will have crucial impact” in the World-System (*Utopistics* 64). In the wake of the disillusionment with the independence projects in the Caribbean, basing on the work on Affect Theory of Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman, Pugh suggests another definition of “sovereignty” as the assertion of the peripheral communities’ own meaning-making frameworks (“Postcolonial

Development” 870). This form of sovereignty develops throughout the course of “everyday situations, encounters and atmospheres” (Pugh, “Postcolonial Development” 870). If the capitalist World-System feeds on international commerce and the North’s involvement in the Southern economies in order to obtain the biggest possible profit for its products, then the opacity which Glissant demands might entail a powerful arrest. Not only in the case of the peripheral areas but also appealing to the diasporic “group life” in the North that McKay describes in an unpublished essay (Cloutier 571), a form of independence that does not stop at political independence might improve the life quality and conditions of these groups. In Glissant’s words, “that which protects the Diverse we call opacity” (*PR* 62).

Similar to the attempted work carried out within the field of Postcolonial Studies, the rediscovery of new frameworks that opacity allows for contributes to the disruption of the dominant group’s interests. The circulation of narratives that differ from the hegemonic one does not stand in opposition to opacity. Rather, as Ahmed contends, they work in the desired way when the reader cannot claim these as his or hers (35). Opacity is relation: it is an approach to the Other without appropriating his or her knowledge and consequent power. Relation is also chaos: because systematisation is avoided, its “order is continually in flux and [its] disorder one can imagine forever” (Glissant, *PR* 133). This is the necessary disorder that Wallerstein contends gives way to new systems while the transnational circulation of narratives revealing chaotic and relational realities might help us all to think outside our current system and strive towards a legitimate one. Even if I cannot fully apprehend it, for the sake of realities other than my own, it is worth the change.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the series of existing similarities present in American works across time and space having some form of connection to the Caribbean. Hathaway contends that had McKay not been Caribbean, his testimony of the Harlem Renaissance would have been much different (53). This study has considered the question of what is missing when we analyse Caribbean-American works without reference to the Caribbean. With this I do not refer to the particular national background of each author—neither his or her migration story—but to Caribbeanness as a concept. The Caribbean contains specific knowledges about heterogeneity, cultural syncretism, and anti-essentialism that explain its writers' particular apprehension of everyday experience. This is an approach determined by “une philosophie ou des philosophies de la Relation” (Glissant, *Philosophy* 70), a philosophy that considers the interconnectedness of the world but that also claims each culture's right to opacity. That is, accepting that one will never understand the Other, for they see the world from different perspectives. Otherwise, attempting to understand “people and ideas from the perspective of Western thought” would result in the creation of violent scales and hierarchies (Glissant, *Relation* 189-190). In fact, attempting to find Caribbeanness in works thematically or geographically detached from the Caribbean does not turn the area's cultural specificity into placeless universals. The set of recurrent ideas that, to reference Benítez-Rojo, repeat themselves in texts around the world written by Caribbean diasporic authors easily find their origin in the Caribbean archipelago from where they emerge, even in its geographical characteristics.

Despite the fact that Caribbeanness accounts for this—in a way postmodern—play of differences, the Caribbean is also local, “hemispheric, specifically historical, particular in its memories” (Drabinski ix). The Caribbean archipelago is entangled within the American hemisphere, within the New World perspective that Dash describes in *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context* (1998) as witness to “the most extreme features” of colonialism and imperialism (4), resulting in a set of different creolised cultures. Furthermore, the American hemisphere contains its own stories of imperialism and migration which are particularly remarkable in terms of Caribbean-American relations. Since the end of the nineteenth century the United States has treated the Caribbean as “an imperial frontier,” a stronghold for its military, economic, and territorial interests (Lamming n.p.). While Caribbeans have maintained their particular relational approach, they have also experienced phenomena like American-style racism and segregation through their large presence in enterprises such as the construction of the Panama Canal or through migration to the United States (Hathaway 14). Their responses to these kinds of phenomena, considering their differential epistemology, might be worth exploring in these contexts. In light of all this, I considered identifying a corpus which results from these connections.

The words of scholar in Caribbean thought Lorna Burns capture the oppositional nature of these responses. In this very specific context of the hemisphere—in particular with relation to the vast colonising power the United States is—where a certain kind of violence related to the American coloniality of power occurs, Caribbean epistemology creates

lines of flight, deterritorializations and counter-actualizations that disrupt the norms and hierarchies, such as colonialism, that structure our plane of

organization; demonstrating a sensitivity to moments of creativity and newness as signs of a vitalistic force we can never fully access (140)

This project has been structured around these norms and hierarchies that Burns mentions, identifying three concepts around which colonial discourse has been located: kinship, nature, and utopias. The divergences in the responses analysed—which present, above all, striking similarities—account for specific periods in the history of Caribbean social thought and American international relations. One example is the rise of Rastafarianism perceivable in McKay's *Amiable with Big Teeth* or the American deliberate disregard for the fascist occupation of Ethiopia in the same novel. This means that the novels analysed might initially seem very different from each other but, after identifying the source of these differences, they are all in a way representative of Caribbean archipelagic thought.

Chapter 2 explored the topic of kinship. Glissant has extensively analysed how the linear biological conception of kinship which we are used to apprehending as natural is not only a characteristically Western philosophy (Glissant, *PR* 49), but has also contributed to legitimising conquest and invasion (Glissant, *PR* 52-56) Adair reminds that destroying kinship and cultural ties in the extended Caribbean context of the plantation was a common colonial strategy used to psychologically weaken slave communities (18). In these plantations, as a response, modern alternative notions of kinship emerged, and I say “modern” because there had been alternatives before, since the biological, linear model is mostly characteristically Western (Glissant, *PR* 47). The model acquired renewed force with the bourgeois revolution in the West, when marriage organised “the joint bourgeois values of private property and private life” (Adair 94). On the contrary, the kinship developed in the Caribbean plantations as well as in the maroon communities was based on

resistance (Martínez-Falquina 855). Similarly, contemporary forms of “horizontal affiliation” (Said, *The World* 18) also contest biological kinship by being based on destination rather than origin, “affiliation, and the assumption of a common set of social practices or political commitments” (Eng 4).

Finding alternative resistant forms of kinship in Caribbean novels that apparently do not make any reference to the plantation or to the maroon mountains, nor are set in the Caribbean, demonstrates the long reach of this epistemology. The development of alternative family ties in McKay’s *Banjo* and in Thomas’ *Down these Mean Streets* makes them uncommon examples of postplantation literature. It also demonstrates the extent to which oppressive technologies based on kinship have been reproduced in the postcolonial era. An example is the citizenship papers that appear in *Banjo*. These novels underscore how the oppressive mechanisms that prevail worldwide and keep affecting peoples throughout the world are heir to Americanness, a concept developed by sociologists Quijano and Wallerstein which informs this study’s claim about the existence of a transnational American literary canon. Americanness is a concept describing the singularity of American societies in terms of the coloniality that affects their organisation (Mignolo, *Latin America* 46-47). The workings of coloniality are related to the control of labour in racial and ethnic terms (Mignolo, *Latin America* 47; Quijano and Wallerstein 549), a topic widely present in all of the novels analysed and with a particular saliency in the proletarian opus of McKay. In terms of their approach to labour, *Banjo* and *Down these Mean Streets* interestingly situate their characters outside of the logics of labour—either through vagabondage or a barriocentric alternative economic organisation. These novels thus demand for an alternative understanding of social organisation far from the frame of capitalism.

The colonial “massive exploitation of labor” (Mignolo, *Latin America* 47) whose reproduction these novels account for originated in the Caribbean and the perspective of writers like McKay and Thomas is one that begins anew in the aftermath of this dispossession. That is, they begin in a New World with a new perspective.

Glissant also contends that the “conquering linearity” behind colonising projects is equally perceivable in Western “scientific discover[ies]” (PR 56). In fact, they often go hand in hand since, as Glissant explains, “each used the other in its growth” (PR 56). The logic of exploration, of holding control of the means to conceptualise nature in one’s own terms, determines who discovers and who is discovered (Glissant, PR 56). Therefore, I am not only referring here to the environmental degradation that followed the European’s arrival especially in the Caribbean (Campbell and Niblett 1), but also to the discourse on nature. Explorers’ texts about lands to be colonised range from describing a savage and menacing nature and thus promoting the human need to master and govern it (Adams 17; Marx 43) to portraying islands as empty paradises of abundance for the visitor to enjoy (Sherrard-Johnson 240). In *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992), Mary Louise Pratt contends that the control of this discourse displaced subaltern knowledges (5), consolidated at a planetary level “bourgeois forms of subjectivity and power,” and facilitated “a new territorial phase of capitalism propelled by searches for raw materials” (9). Even to this day, similar rhetorical distortions continue to be in place in order to promote tourist initiatives among others (Benson 64). Chapter 3 explored Caribbean responses to this discourse in two novels that show an awareness of the colonial and neo colonial rhetorical mechanisms of power. As such, they playfully build on these discourses in what

seem engagements with primitivism but what actually are language games that tackle focalisation, discourse, and voice.

McKay's *Banana Bottom* is his only novel where there is a female protagonist and coincidentally (or not) also the only one where the setting is his native island of Jamaica, apparently idealised as a fertile land of abundant tropical products. The plot revolves around the female protagonist's relationship with the island's nature, seemingly drawing on the patriarchal association that sees women in intrinsic relation to the natural world. Ecofeminists have noticed these recurrences and have concluded that the matter is not that females are in a deeper connection with nature but that their submission carries the same "logic of domination" as the colonial control of the environment (Warren 129). As a result, black and indigenous women are all the more stereotyped as being closer to nature, as is the case of Merle, the protagonist of the other novel analysed in this chapter—Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*. If read through the lense of Caribbean discourse, however, the novels include elements that disrupt these connections, and these are revealed through the texts' particular descriptions of nature and community.

The nature depicted in *Banana Bottom* is man-made and foreign, imported for agricultural purposes, and the hurricane that ends the story is, as Glissant would put it, "a character in th[e] process [...] of creating history" (CD 105-106), just like the foreign investment in the coffee industry that dominates the islands. The novel includes many more elements than apparent at first sight; if one pays attention to the specificity of the nature described, it tells a story other than that of the Jamaican girl reconnecting with her roots. It tells the story of the land and how, like the protagonist, it has been modified by external agents. Similarly, the rural

community that features in Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* escapes the characters' conceptualisation of time and development by stages because it exists within a philosophy of Relation that "does not 'grasp' any [...] antedecent" (PR 57). The villagers of Bournehills thus resist Enlightened conceptions of linear progress. In this way the novels reject theories of postcolonial development and rather situate the islands as peripheral zones within the divisions of the capitalist World-System theorised by Wallerstein. These Caribbean novels, rather than retreating in the unadulterated primitive nature that the colonial texts describe, locate the islands within the Modern World-System. Thus, against their conceptualisation as isolated Edenic lands that still prevails for commercial and neo colonial purposes, they embrace oppositional ways of knowing that are pertinent to surviving in this system and not outside it.

Controlling the language around nature is closely related to the utopian imagination. The desert island has featured vastly in the development of colonial utopias, serving the purpose of portraying places like the Caribbean as uninhabited and then fit to fulfil the colonisers' desires for a better life (Sargent 200-204). On the contrary, Caribbean literature has insisted on depicting the islands' syncretism and their connections both with other islands—as part of their archipelagic condition—and within the American hemisphere. As Sarah Nimführ and Laura Otto have put it, "[t]he sea [...] is not perceived as isolating but as a constitutive and connecting part of islands" (3). This is the case of the novels analysed in Chapter 4. Despite the fact that *Amiable with Big Teeth* is not set on an island, it carries this epistemology of connectedness and a patchwork approach to futurity (Pugh and Chandler, *AI* 15). These are works that also contest the nationalism which at some points in the anti-colonial fights for liberation was also endorsed as a utopia by the

once-colonised. As was the case with colonial utopias, concreteness and lack of fluidity in the conception of these projects proved to be problematic. Instead, the possibility of a future in the Caribbean lies on the process of “becoming,” which is “the effect of an obstinate future. A future that always comes” (Drabinski 72), a celebration of the “cultural resurrection” that took place in the Caribbean after the Abyss (the Middle Passage as per Glissant, who capitalises this word) (Ashcroft, “Spaces” 8). Utopias, differently, are static. The structure of utopia has not served the postcolonial cause, and Caribbean works rather emphasise the power of educated hope and the need for agency.

The failure of utopia has also served to highlight the problematic act of endorsing the nation-state as an option for the Caribbean, as it is a model rooted in Western epistemology and not fit for the archipelago’s realities. This is ironically hinted in McKay’s novel *Amiable with Big Teeth* when the Harlemite identification with the nation-state of Ethiopia is soon discovered to be an illusion once the dwellers of the neighbourhood find out about their differences with Ethiopians. However, the black community depicted in the novel encounters other ways to acquire agency and for hope to be instilled in the community through their development of grassroot initiatives aimed at mutual protection and the defence of their own interests. Presented in a very different context, Edwidge Danticat’s novel *Claire of the Sea Light* tackles the same issues. The example of Haiti points towards how, in the neoliberal age, the model of the nation-state has served the purpose of confining peripheral population to its borders in the wake of crises of natural disasters. The novel rather advocates for the agency of small communities in the Caribbean in the face of imperial power. As Epeli Hau’ofa puts it, smallness actually “is a state of mind,” invoked in order to minimise the agency of certain

communities, but this is again a continental point of view that dismisses alternative cosmologies based on diverse geographical agents (152). Chapter 4, thus, advocated that diasporic narratives hold the power to transform reality through their bridging of the gap between Global North and Global South, bringing the latter's subjectivities to wider audiences who, through democratic decision-making practices, might affect the workings of the world-system.

After this brief recounting of the conclusions reached, the reader might be wondering about the reasons why the previous works were chosen. The lack of centre and of limits in the conception of Caribbean literature that this thesis advocates for has resulted in the possibility to choose works from a very vast corpus. This choice of works was determined by two questions. Where has the potential of Caribbeanness been more dismissed? Where are its teachings more necessary? Though ethnicity and migration have always been persistent issues to be negotiated within the confines of the United States, the last decades have brought forth "a vigorous resurgence in U.S. immigration" (Hondagneu-Sotelo 565) and a consequent growth of migrant and post-migrant narratives in the publishing market (Portes and Rumbaut 363). This new trend of narratives has been praised as providing a new perspective on the racial and mobility dynamics of the United States, as, unlike nineteenth century narratives of European migration, they "redefine immigrant literature not as narratives of the integration and assimilation of protagonists, however painful and incomplete, into 'American' life, but as narratives that explicitly remake what is meant by 'American'" (556). This celebration, however, might preclude the fact that Caribbeans have since much earlier been in constant circular movement with the United States and that their

presence in the continent is not due to this contemporary “age of diversity” (Rumbaut 1) under which the authors chosen for this thesis are often categorised.

It is true that the categorisation of the authors of the books analysed as either Latinx, African American or Haitian nationals acknowledges the racial dynamics and discrimination tendencies of the country, but it still does not allow for the authors’ self-definition. Perceiving them as Caribbean rather than as pertaining to their own national or racial background brings in issues pertinent to Americanness and its power dynamics whereby the United States has been, for more than a century, “imbricated with insular and archipelagic spaces” (Russell Roberts and Stephens 3), in particular with the Caribbean. Even since much earlier had Caribbean slaves been brought to U.S. soil (W. James, *HBE* 9). McKay’s society was, as portrayed in *Banana Bottom*, impoverished and subject to extensive migration processes—many towards Panama and Costa Rica in labour schemes orchestrated by the United States—due to a sugar crisis, a commercial arena deeply dependent on U.S. imports (Macdonald and Demetrius 43). It also heavily affected Barbados and Puerto Rico (Freeman 85; Ayala and Bernabe 96). Danticat’s family migration may have easily been owed to the effects of a brutal dictatorship in her home country equally sustained and supported by the United States (Lennox 696). Unveiling the similarities of an interwar figure such as McKay with these contemporary writers serves the purpose of laying down the hemispheric specificities of the Caribbean diaspora in a moment when the scholarship, as mentioned in Chapter 1, accounts for it more in terms of each of the islands’ former metropolises. Americanness-determined Caribbean migration should be as accounted for as its postcolonial counterpart.



Figure 2: screenshot from In the Same Boat's webpage, locations of Claude McKay

What about Claude McKay then? Why him as a starting point? Let me begin (or, at this point, end) by mentioning the online project “In the Same Boats” (<https://sameboats.org>), a scholarly initiative developed to visually illustrate the intercultural contact that informs the writing of a number of Caribbean and American intellectuals by tracing their routes and roots. When clicking on Claude McKay’s name, the picture shown reveals the vision of the Caribbean I contend should be held: not an isolated and remote conjunct of insular unities, but a network of transatlantic and, most interesting for this study, transhemispheric connections that all come back to the Caribbean, absorbed by the tidal waves that surround the isles. McKay wrote at a crucial moment in the development of Caribbean intellectual thought and in the hemispheric history of the Americas. As explored in Chapter 1, his literary career sweeps through the development of dialect in black writing towards the loss of plot unity in the modernist enterprise. He bears witness to the implementation of the Roosevelt corollary in the Caribbean, the area’s process of mass migration at the beginning of the century (W. James, *HBE*

11), Jamaica's development of national identity (Rosenberg, *NCL* 1-2), the post-slavery African American rural exodus, the rise of Fascism and the disillusionment with the Soviet project, and the planting of the seeds of the civil rights movement in the United States (Trotter 128). Because of how he weaved a response to multiple key events in the history of the Americas, studying his oeuvre might prove crucial to the student on Caribbean post-essentialist poetics. Chapter 1 aimed to demonstrate that the relevance of his figure is not only due to this biographical information, but to his engagement with different traditions, which evidences the reach and the malleability of the poetics of the Caribbean, shaped by multiple inscriptions. It was also the aim of Chapter 1 to show how, in this long career, the sense of archipelagality was never lost through the writer's refusal, in different ways, to accept absolutes and essentialisms. In this enterprise, McKay always maintained, quoting Bhabha, "the repetitious slippage of difference" (90) with regards to the colonial discourse that, even if it shaped his own culture, can always be modified to *become* something else and work towards futurity. McKay might have been the first author who comprehensively wrote the coloniality of the hemisphere and soon defied American exceptionalism with a vision of the possible reach of alternative archipelagic epistemologies. He furthermore took these epistemologies to unexpected places, as if propelled by the sea that in the theoretical texts examined so far represents cultural contact. Thus, while his writings scarcely dwell on this region, it is not too daring to admit that to read McKay is to read the Caribbean.

Works Cited

- Acosta Cruz, María. *Dream Nation: Puerto Rican Culture and the Fictions of Independence*. Rutgers UP, 2014.
- Adair, Gigi. *Kinship across the Black Atlantic: Writing Diasporic Relations*. Liverpool UP, 2019.
- Adams, William M. "Nature and the Colonial Mind." *Decolonizing Nature: Strategies for Conservation in a Post-Colonial Era*, edited by William M. Adams and Martin Mulligan. Earthscan Publications, 2003.
- Adas, Michael. *Dominance by Design: Technological Imperatives and America's Civilizing Mission*. Harvard UP, 2006.
- Agamben, Giorgio. *Means without Ends: Notes on Politics*. Translated by V. Binetti. University of Minnesota Press, 2000.
- Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh UP, 2004.
- Alcoff, Linda Martín. *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self*. Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Alvarez, Julia. *Something to Declare*. Algonquin books of Chapel Hill, 2014.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso. 2006.
- Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- . "Putting Hierarchy into Place." *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1988, pp. 36-49.
- Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Harvest Book, 1951.
- Arrighi, Giovanni. *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of our Times*. Verso, 2010.
- Ashcroft, Bill. "Beyond the Nation: Post-Colonial Hope." *The Journal of the European Association of Studies on Australia*, vol.1, 2009, pp. 12-22.
- . "Introduction Spaces of Utopia." *Spaces of Utopia: An Electronic Journal*, no. 1, 2012, pp. 1-17.
- . *Utopianism in Postcolonial Literatures*. Routledge, 2017.

- Ashcroft, Bill, Griffiths, Gareth, and Tiffin, Helen. *Post-Colonial Studies: the Key Concepts*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000.
- . *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures*. Routledge, 1989.
- Ayala, César J. and Rafael Bernabe. *Puerto Rico in the American Century*. The U of North Carolina P, 2007.
- Balibar, Etienne. "The Nation Form: History and Ideology." *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1990, pp. 329-361
- Bailey, Ronald. "The Slave(ry) Trade and the Development of Capitalism in the United States: the Textile Industry in New England." *Social Science History*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1994, pp. 373-414.
- Bandy, Joe. "Bordering the Future: Resisting Neoliberalism in the Borderlands." *Critical Sociology*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2000, pp. 232-267.
- Barba Guerrero, Paula. "Migrant Bodies and the Transnational South: Dissecting Colonial Presence in Ana Lydia Vega's 'Encarcanublado.'" *Ex-Centric Souths: (Re)imagining Southern Centers and Peripheries*, edited by Urszula Niewiadomska-Flis, Publicacions de la Universitat de València, 2019, pp. 53-76.
- Bartell, Brian. "The Material Imperialism of the Home in Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*." *Journal of Literary Studies*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2020, pp. 25-42.
- Bauer, Ralph. "Hemispheric Studies." *PMLA*, vol. 124, no. 1, 2009, pp. 234-250.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. *Socialism, the Active Utopia*. George Allen & Unwind Ltd, 1976.
- Beasley, Rebecca. *Theorists of Modernist Poetry: T.S Eliot, T.E Hulme, and Ezra Pound*. Routledge, 2007.
- Bedasse, Monique A. *Jah Kingdom: Rastafarians, Tanzania, and Pan-Africanism in the Age of Decolonization*. The U of North Carolina P, 2017.
- Bell, Michael. "The Metaphysics of Modernism." In *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, edited by Michael Levenson. Cambridge UP, 1999, pp. 9-32.
- Benítez-Rojo, Antonio. *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*. Duke UP, 1992.
- . "Three Words Towards Creolization." *Caribbean Creolization: Reflections on the Cultural Dynamics of Language, Literature, and Identity*, edited by Kathleen M. Balutansky and Marie-Agnès Sourieau. University of Florida Press, 2017.
- Benito, Jesús. "The Poetics and Politics of Resistance." *Narratives of Resistance: Literature and Ethnicity in the United States and the Caribbean*, edited by

- Ana M^a Manzanas and Jesús Benito. Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1999.
- Benjamin, Andrew. *Present Hope: Philosophy, Architecture, Judaism*. Routledge, 1997.
- Benson, LeGrace. "Haiti's Elusive Paradise." In *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*, edited by Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, Oxford UP, 2011, pp. 62-79.
- Bernard, Emily. "The Renaissance and the Vogue." *The Cambridge Companion to the Harlem Renaissance*, edited by George Hutchinson. Cambridge UP, 2007, pp. 28-40.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
- Blauner, Robert. "Internal Colonialism and Ghetto Revolt." *Social Problems*, pp. 393-408.
- Bloch, Ernst. *The Principle of Hope: Volume One*. Translated by Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight. The MIT Press, 1995.
- . *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*. Translated by Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg. MIT Press, 1988.
- Boehmer, Elleke. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*. Oxford UP, 1995.
- Bolland, O. Nigel. British Honduras (Belize). *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers (The Caribbean Diaspora, 1910-1920)*, by Robert A. Hill, Duke UP, 2011, pp. clxxv-clxxx.
- Bonfiglio, Florencia. "Notes on the Caribbean Essay from an Archipelagic Perspective (Kamau Brathwaite, Édouard Glissant and Antonio Benítez Rojo)." *Caribbean Studies*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2015, pp. 147-173.
- Bost, Suzanne, and Aparicio, Frances R. Introduction. *The Routledge Companion to Latino/a Literature*, edited by Suzanne Bost and Frances R. Aparicio. Routledge, 2013.
- Boyce-Davies, Carole. *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject*. Routledge, 1994.
- Brah, Avtar. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. Routledge, 1996.
- Brathwaite, Edward Kamau. "Caribbean Culture: Two Paradigms". *Missile and Capsule*. Jürgen Martini (ed.). Bremen: Universität Bremen, 1983. 9-54.
- . *Roots*. Ann Harbour Paperbacks 1993.

- . “Rehabilitations: West Indian History and Society in the Art of Paule Marshall’s Novel.” *Caribbean Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1970, pp. 125-134.
- Brock, Sabine. “‘Talk as a Form of Action’: An Interview with Paule Marshall.” *Conversations with Paule Marshall*, edited by James C. Hall and Heather Hathaway. UP of Mississippi, 2010, pp. 194-206.
- Burns, Lorna. *Contemporary Caribbean Writing and Deleuze: Literature Between Post-colonialism and Post-Continental Philosophy*. Continuum, 2012.
- Byers, Thomas. “The Revenant.” *Revista de Letras*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2011, pp. 9-27.
- Caminero-Santangelo, Marta. “Latinidad.” *The Routledge Companion to Latino/a Literature*, edited by Suzanne Bost and Frances R. Aparicio. Routledge, 2013. Pp. 13-24.
- . “‘Puerto Rican Negro’: Defining Race in Piri Thomas’s ‘Down These Mean Streets’.” *MELUS*, vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 205-226.
- Campbell, Chris and Michael Niblett. “Introduction: Critical Environments: World-Ecology, World Literature, and the Caribbean.” *The Caribbean: Aesthetics, World-Ecology, Politics*, edited by Chris Campbell and Michael Niblett. Liverpool UP, 2016, pp. 1-16.
- Campbell, Elaine. “Two West Indian Heroines: Bitá Plant and Fola Piggott.” *A Journal of Caribbean Culture*, vol. 29, 1983, pp. 22-29.
- Cannon, Nissa Ren. “‘A Unique Plan of Getting Deported’: Claude McKay’s Banjo and the Marked Passport.” *sympløke*, vol. 25, no. 1-2, 2017, pp. 141-153.
- Caparoso Konzett, Delia. *Ethnic Modernisms: Anzia Yezierska, Zora Neale Hurston, Jean Rhys, and the Aesthetics of Dislocation*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
- Castillo, Jorge. “Jasmine Camacho-Quinn Wins Gold for Puerto Rico, Sparking another Identity Debate. Los Angeles Times, August 2 2021, accessed August 9 2021. <https://www.latimes.com/sports/olympics/story/2021-08-02/puerto-rico-identity-jasmine-camacho-quinn-tokyo-olympics>.
- Chalk, Bridget T. “Chapter 3: ‘Sensible of being Etrangers:’ Plots and Identity Papers in Banjo.” *Modernism and Mobility: The Passport and Cosmopolitan Experience*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2014, pp. 93-118.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh “Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for ‘Indian’ Pasts?” *Representations*, no. 37, 1992, pp. 1-26.
- Chandler, David and Jonathan Pugh. “Islands of Relationality and Resilience: The Shifting Stakes of the Anthropocene.” *Area: Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, vol. 52, no. 1, 2020, pp. 65-72.

- Chaney, Michael, A. "International Contexts of the Negro Renaissance." *The Cambridge Companion to the Harlem Renaissance*, edited by George Hutchinson. Cambridge UP, 2007, pp. 41-54.
- Chatterjee, Partha. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*. Zero Books, 1986.
- Chauhan, P. S. "Rereading Claude McKay." *CLA Journal*, vol. 34, no. 1, 1990, pp. 68-80.
- Childs, Peter. *Modernism*. Routledge, 2000.
- Cizel, Annick. "Anticolonialism, Peace in Europe, or Neutrality?: America's Reactions to Mussolini's Invasion of Ethiopia." *Transatlantica*, vol. 1, 2006, pp. 1-16.
- Clifford, James. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Harvard UP, 1988.
- Cloutier, Jean-Christophe and Brent Hayes Edwards. Introduction. McKay, Claude. *Amiable with Big Teeth*. Penguin Books, 2017, pp. xiii-xlvi.
- Cloutier, Jean-Christophe. "Amiable with Big Teeth: The Case of Claude McKay's Last Novel." *Modernism/modernity*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2013, pp. 557-576.
- Conway, Dennis. "Microstates in a Macroworld." *Globalization and Neoliberalism: The Caribbean Context*, edited by Thomas Klak, Rowman & Littlefield, 1998, pp. 51-63.
- Cooper, Wayne F. Introduction. McKay, Claude. *Home to Harlem*. Northeastern UP, 2011.
- . *Claude McKay: Rebel Sojourner in the Harlem Renaissance: A Biography*. Schocken Books, 1987.
- Cope, Robyn. "'We Are Your Neighbors': Edwidge Danticat's New Narrative for Haiti." *Journal of Haitian Studies*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2017, pp. 98-118.
- Coulthard, G. R. "Négritude – Reality and Mystification." *Caribbean Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1970, pp. 42-51.
- . *Race and Colour in Caribbean Literature*. Oxford UP, 1962.
- Coupeau, Steeve. *The History of Haiti*. Greenwood Press, 2008.
- Cousins, A. D. "Shakespeare's Sonnets." *The Cambridge Companion to the Sonnet*, edited by A.D. Cousins and Peter Howarth. Cambridge UP, 2011.
- Crutzen, Paul J. and Stoermer, Eugene F. "The 'Anthropocene,'" *Global Change Newsletter*, no. 41, 2000, pp. 17-18.

- Dalleo, Raphael. "Bita Plant as Literary Intellectual: The Anticolonial Public Sphere and *Banana Bottom*." *Journal of West Indian Literature*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2008, pp. 54-67.
- Dash, Michael J. "Afterword: Neither France nor Senegal: Bovarysme and Haiti's Hemispheric Identity." *Haiti and the Americas*, edited by Carla Calarg, Raphael Dalleo, Luis Duno-Gottberg, and Clevis Headley. University Press of Mississippi, 2013.
- . *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context*. The UP of Virginia, 1998.
- . Introduction. *Edouard Glissant Caribbean Discourse*
- . *Edouard Glissant*. Cambridge UP, 1995.
- . "Postcolonial Caribbean Identities." *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature, Volume 1*, edited by F. Abiola Irele and Simon Gikandi. Cambridge UP, 2004, pp. 785-796.
- Danticat, Edwidge. "Edwidge Danticat Reaches Back and Forward in her New Novel. An Interview with Jeffrey Brown." *PBS Newshour*, 17 September 2013. Available online: <http://video.pbs.org/video/2365081056/>. Accessed 23 August 2021.
- Claire of the Sea Light*. Penguin Random House, 2013.
- . *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work*. Princeton UP, 2010.
- Davidov, Victoria. "From Colonial Primitivism to Ecoprimitivism: Constructing the 'Indigenous' Savage in South America." *Arcadia: International Journal for Literary Studies*, vol. 46, no. 2, pp. 467-487.
- Davion, Victoria. "Is Ecofeminism Feminist?" *Ecological Feminism*, edited by Karen J. Warren. Routledge, 1994, pp. 8-28.
- Davis, Angela Y. *Are Prisons Obsolete?* Seven Stories Press, 2003.
- Davis, Janae, Alex A. Moulton, Levi Van Sant and Brian Williams. "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, ... Plantationocene?: A Manifesto for Ecological Justice in an Age of Global Crises." *Geography Compass*, vol. 13, no. 5, 2019, pp. 1-15.
- Dayan, Joan. "Erzulie: A Women's History of Haiti." *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1994, pp. 5-31.
- . *Haiti, History, and the Gods*. U of California P, 1995.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Translated by Brian Massumi. U of Minnesota P, 1987.

- Delgado Wise, Raúl. "Migration and Labor under Neoliberal Globalization: Key Issues and Challenges." *Migration, Precarity, and Global Governance*, edited by Carl-Ulrik Schierup, Ronaldo Munck, Branka Likic-Brboric, and Anders Neergaard. Oxford UP, 2015, pp. 25-45.
- DeLoughrey, Elizabeth, M. Renée K. Gosson, and George B. Handley. Introduction. *Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture*, edited by Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, Renée K. Gosson, and George B. Handley. University of Virginia Press, 2005, pp. 1-30.
- DeLoughrey, Elizabeth. "Island Ecologies and Caribbean Literature." *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, vol. 95, no. 3, 2003, pp. 298-310.
- . "'The Litany of Islands, the Rosary of the Archipelagoes:' Caribbean and Pacific Archipelagraphy." *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 21-51.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. The John Hopkins UP, 1997.
- Dirlik, Arif. "Bringing History Back in: of Diasporas, Hybridities, Places, and Histories." *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1999, pp. 95-131.
- Donnell, Alison and Lawson Welsh, Sarah. Introduction. *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*, by Donnell and Lawson Welsh, Routledge, 1996, pp. 1-21.
- Donnell, Alison. "The Questioning Generation: Rights, Representations and Cultural Fractions in the 1980s and 1990s." *The Routledge Companion to Anglophone Caribbean Literature*, edited by Michael A. Bucknor and Alison Donnell. Routledge, 2011, pp. 124-135.
- . *Twentieth-Century Caribbean Literature*. Routledge, 2006.
- Doubiago, Sharon. "Mama Coyote Talks to the Boys." *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*, edited by Judith Plant. New Society Publisher, 1989, pp. 40-44.
- Drabinski, John E. *Glissant and the Middle Passage: Philosophy, Beginnings, Abyss*. University of Minnesota Press, 2019.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. "Pan-African and New Racial Philosophy." *The Crisis* 40 (November 1933).
- . "Review of Claude McKay's *Banjo* and Nella Larsen's *Passing*," *The Crisis* 36 (July 1929).
- . "Review of Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*, Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem*, and Melville Herskovits' *The American Negro*," *The Crisis* 35 (June 1928).

- . "The Rise of the West Indian." *The Crisis*, vol. 20, no. 5, whole number 119 (September 1920).
- Duany, Jorge. "Nuyorican and Diasporican Literature and Culture." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*, 2018.
<https://oxfordre.com/literature/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.001.0001/acrefore-9780190201098-e-387> (accessed June 24, 2021).
- Dubey, Madhu. "Postmodernism as Postnationalism? Racial Representation in U.S. Black Cultural Studies." *The Black Scholar*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2003, pp. 2-18.
- Dunbar, Eva. "Woman on the Verge of Cultural Breakdown: Zora Neale Hurston in Haiti and the Racial Privilege of Boasian Relativism." *Indigenous Visions: Rediscovering the World of Franz Boas*, edited by Ned Blackhawk and Isaiah Lorado Wilner. Yale UP, 2018, pp. 231-257.
- Dunn, Richard S. "The English Sugar Islands and the Founding of South Carolina." *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, vol. 72, no. 2, 1971, pp. 81-93.
- Durán, Isabel. "What is the *Transnational Turn* in American Literary Studies? A Critical Overview." *ATLANTIS: Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2020, pp. 138-159.
- Edmondson, Belinda. *Making Men: Gender, Literary Authority, and Women's Writing in Caribbean Narrative*. Duke UP, 1999.
- Edwards, Brent Hayes. *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism*. Harvard UP, 2003.
- Elias, Amy J. "The Postmodern Turn on(:) the Enlightenment." *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 37, no. 4, 1996, pp. 553-558.
- Eng, David. "Transnational Adoption and Queer Diasporas." *Social Text*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2003, pp. 1-37.
- Erman, Sam. "Citizens of Empire: Puerto Rico, Status, and Constitutional Change." *California Law Review*, vol. 102, no. 5, 2014, pp. 1181-1241.
- Escobar, Arturo. "Imagining a Post-Development Era." *Power of Development*, edited by Jonathan Crush. Routledge, 1995, pp. 205-222.
- Fabian, Johannes. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*. Columbia UP, 2002.
- Fabian, Johannes. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*. Columbia UP, 2002.
- Fabre, Geneviève and Feith, Michel. "'Temples for Tomorrow:' Introductory Essay." *Temples for Tomorrow: Looking Back at the Harlem Renaissance*, edited by Geneviève Fabre and Michel Feith. Indiana University Press, 2001, pp. 1-30.

- Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Présence Africaine, 1963.
- Ferguson, Moira. *A Human Necklace: The African Diaspora and Paule Marshall's Fiction*. State U of New York P, 2013.
- Fernández Jiménez, Mónica. "Defying Absolutes and Essentialism in Derek Walcott's *Omeros*: An Epic of Traces." *Miscelánea: A Journal of English and American Studies*, vol. 62, 2020, pp. 29-47.
- Flores, Juan. *From Bomba to Hip-Hop: Puerto Rican Culture and Latino Identity*. Columbia UP, 2000.
- Forbes, Curdella. "The End of Nationalism? Performing the Question in Benítez-Rojo's *The Repeating Island* and Glissant's *Poetics of Relation*." *Journal of West Indian Literature*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2002, pp. 4-23.
- Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces." Translated by Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1986, pp. 22-27.
- . *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Translated by A.M Sheridan Smith. Pantheon Books, 1972.
- Freeman, Carla. *High Tech and High Heels in the Global Economy: Women, Work, and Pink-Collar Identities in the Caribbean*. Duke UP, 2000.
- Fumagalli, Maria Cristina. *On the Edge: Writing the Border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic*. Liverpool UP, 2015.
- Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism*. Routledge, 2004.
- . "Problems concerning Islands." "What is the Earthly Paradise?" *Ecocritical Responses to the Caribbean*, edited by Chris Campbell and Erin Somerville, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007, pp. 10-22.
- Gibby, Kristina S. "'So much had Fallen into the Sea:' An Ecocritical Approach to Danticat's *Claire of the Sea Light*." *The Bloomsbury Handbook to Edwidge Danticat*, edited by Jana Evans Braziel and Nadège T. Clitandre. Bloomsbury Academic, 2021.
- Gikandi, Simon. "Poststructuralism and Postcolonial Discourse." *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, edited by Neil Lazarus, Cambridge UP, 2006, pp. 97-119.
- . "Picasso, Africa, and the Schemata of Difference." *Modernism/modernity*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2003, pp. 455-480.
- . *Writing in Limbo: Modernism and Caribbean Literature*. Cornell UP, 1992.
- Gilroy, Paul. *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture beyond the Color Line*. Harvard UP, 2000.

- . *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Verso, 1993.
- Girvan, Norman. "Caribbean Dependency Thought Revisited." *Canadian Journal of Developmental Studies / Revue Canadienne d'études du Développement*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2006, pp. 328-352.
- Giroux, Henry A. "When Hope is Subversive." *Tikkun*, vol. 19, no. 6, 2004, pp. 38-39.
- Glissant, Édouard. *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*. Translated by Michael Dash. UP of Virginia, 1989.
- . *Philosophie de la Relation*. Éditions Galliman, 2009.
- . *Poetic Intention*. Translated by Nathalie Stephens with Anne Malena. Nightboat Books, 2010.
- . *Poetics of Relation*, translated by Betsy Wing. The U of Michigan P, 1997.
- . *Traité du Tout-Monde: Poétique IV*. Gallimard, 1997.
- Gordon-Chipembere, Natasha. "Carving Caribbean Spaces in Between: The Life of Ruth Gourzong in 20th Century Puerto Limon, Costa Rica." *Journal of International Women's Studies*, vol. 17, no. 3, 2016, pp. 117-129.
- Gosciak, Josh. *The Shadowed Country: Claude McKay and the Romance of the Victorians*. Rutgers University Press, 2006.
- Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections of the Prison Notebooks*. Lawrence & Wishart, 1971.
- Greene, Julie. *The Canal Builders: Making America's Empire at the Panama Canal*. The Penguin Press, 2009.
- Griffin, Susan. *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her*. Harper & Row Publishers, 1978.
- Grosfoguel, Ramón. "Puerto Rican Labor Migration to the United States: Modes of Incorporation, Coloniality, and Identities." *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, vol. 22, no. 4, 1999, pp. 503-521.
- Grosfoguel, Ramón and Georas, Chloe S. "'Coloniality of Power' and Racial Dynamics: Notes towards a Reinterpretation of Latino Caribbeans in New York City." *Identities*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2000, pp. 85-125.
- Grosfoguel, Ramón. *Colonial Subjects: Puerto Ricans in a Global Perspective*. U of California P, 2003.
- . "Puerto Rican Labor Migration to the United States: Modes of Incorporation, Coloniality, and Identities." *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, vol. 22, no. 4, 1999, pp. 503-521.

- Gunder Frank, Andre. *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil*. Monthly Review Press, 1967.
- Hadatty Mora, Yanna. "La Fiesta de la Vanguardia, 'Primitivismo' y Negrismo en Cuba y Brasil." *America: Cahiers du CRICCAL*, no. 28, 2002, pp. 105-113
- Hanna, Monica, Jennifer Harford Vargas and José David Saldívar. Introduction. *Junot Díaz and the Decolonial Imagination*. Duke UP, 2016.
- Hall, Stuart, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, and Brian Roberts. *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. The Macmillan Press, Ltd, 1978.
- Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford. Lawrence and Wishart, 1990, pp. 222-237.
- . "Negotiating Caribbean Identities." *New Left Review*, no. 209, 1995, <https://newleftreview.org/issues/i209/articles/stuart-hall-negotiating-caribbean-identities>. Accessed August 17, 2021.
- . "The West and the Rest." *Formations of Modernity*, edited by Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben. Polity Press, 1992.
- Handley, George B. "The Postcolonial Ecology of the New World Baroque." *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*, edited by Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley. Oxford UP, 2011, pp. 117-135.
- Hanna, Monica, Jennifer Harford Vargas and José David Saldívar. Introduction: Junot Díaz and the Decolonial Imagination: From Island to Empire. *Junot Díaz and the Decolonial Imagination*, edited by Monica Hanna, Jennifer Harford Vargas and José David Saldívar. Duke UP, 2016, pp. 1-32.
- Hantel, Max. "Toward a Sexual Difference Theory of Creolization." *Theorizing Glissant: Sites and Citations*, edited by John E. Drabinski and Marisa Parham. Rowman and Littlefield, 2015.
- Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. Penguin Press, 2004.
- Hathaway, Heather. *Caribbean Waves: Relocating Claude McKay and Paule Marshall*. Indiana UP, 1999.
- Hau'ofa, Epeli, "Our Sea of Islands." *The Contemporary Pacific*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1994, pp. 147-161.
- Haynes, Justin. "Ghosts in the Posthuman Machine: Protheses and Performance in *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*." *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2017, pp. 1-12.

- Hayward, Philip. "Aquapelagos and Aquapelagic Assemblages: Towards an integrated study of island societies and marine environments." *Shima: The International Journal of Research into Island Cultures*, vol 6, no. 1, 2012, pp. 1-11.
- . "The Constitution of Assemblages and the Aquapelagality of Haida Gwaii." *Shima: The International Journal of Research into Island Cultures*, vol 6, no. 2, 2012, pp. 1-14.
- Heron, Tony. "The US-Caribbean Apparel Connection and the Politics of 'NAFTA Parity'." *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2002, pp. 753-767.
- Hessler, Stephanie. *Tidalectics*. Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Academy Booklet.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. "Some Reflections on the Break-up of Britain." *New Left Review*, no. 105, 1977, <https://newleftreview.org/issues/l105/articles/eric-hobsbawm-some-reflections-on-the-break-up-of-britain>. Accessed July 2019.
- Holcomb, Gary Edward. *Code Name Sasha: Queer Black Marxism and the Harlem Renaissance*. UP of Florida, 2007.
- Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette. "Introduction: Gender and Contemporary U.S. Immigration." *American Behavioural Scientist*, vol. 42, no. 4, 1999, pp. 565-576.
- Hovet. "Bannabees," Bananas, and Sweet Potatoes: Claude McKay's *Songs of Jamaica* and Traditional Jamaican Foodways as a Nationalist Expression." *Oregon Undergraduate Research Journal*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2019, pp. 9-15.
- Howe, Stephen. *Afrocentrism: Mythical Past and Imagined Homes*. Verso, 1998.
- Huggins, Nathan Irving. Introduction. *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance*, by Huggins, Oxford UP, 1976, pp. 3-11.
- Hunter, Walt. "Claude McKay's Constabulary Aesthetics: the Social Poetics of the Jamaican Dialect Poems." *Modern Philology*, vol. 111, no. 3, 2014, pp. 566-584.
- Hurston, Zora Neale. *Tell my Horse*. HarperCollins Ebooks, 2009.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. Routledge, 1988.
- Hutchinson Miller, Carmen. 2012. "The Province and Port of Limón: Metaphors for Afro-Costa Rican Black Identity." *Journal of Arts and Humanities* 1.2: 1-17.
- Hutchinson, George. Introduction. *The Cambridge Companion to the Harlem Renaissance*, by Hutchinson, Cambridge UP, 2007, pp. 1-10.

- Huysen, Andreas. *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*. Indiana UP, 1986.
- James, C.L.R. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Overture and the San Domingo Revolution*. Revised 2nd ed., Vintage Books, 1963.
- James, Winston. *A Fierce Hatred of Injustice: Claude McKay's Jamaica and His Poetry of Rebellion*. Verso, 2001.
- . *Holding aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Twentieth Century America*. Verso, 1998.
- Jameson, Fredric. *Marxism and Form: Twentieth Century Dialectical Theories of Literature*. Princeton UP, 1971.
- . "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism." *Social Text*, no. 15, 1986, pp. 65-88.
- Jarret, Gene Andrew. Introduction. 2007. *A Long Way from Home*, by Claude McKay, 1937, Rutgers UP, 2007, pp. xvii-xxxviii.
- Jiménez-Rodríguez, Jorge. "Neoliberalismo y Subculturas Activistas en las Redes Sociales." *Actas del II Congreso Internacional Move.net sobre Movimientos Sociales y TIC*, 25-27 de Octubre 2017, pp. 190-200.
- Kandiyoti, Dalia. *Migrant Sites: America, Place, and Diaspora Literatures*. Dartmouth College Press, 2009.
- Karrer, Wolfgang. "Black Modernism?: The Early Poetry of Jean Toomer and Claude McKay." *African-American Poets, Volume 1: 1700s-1940s*, edited by Harold Bloom. Chelsea House Publishing, 2009, pp. 35-48.
- Kelley, Robin D. G. "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South." *The Journal of American History*, vol. 80, no. 1, 1993, pp. 75-112.
- Kincaid, Jamaica. *A Small Place*, Plume, 1988.
- . *My Garden (Book)*. Vintage, 2000.
- Klein, Naomi. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. Metropolitan Books, 2007.
- Klor de Alva, J. Jorge. "The Postcolonization of the (Latin) American Experience: A Reconsideration of "Colonialism," "Postcolonialism," and "Mestizaje." *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements*, edited by Gyan Prakash. Princeton UP, 1995, pp. 241- 275.
- Kraniauskas, John. "Hybridity in a Transnational Frame: Latin-Americanist and Post-Colonial Perspectives on Cultural Studies." *Hybridity and its Discontents:*

- Politics, Science, Culture*, edited by Avtar Brah and Annie E. Coombes. Routledge, 2000.
- Laclau, Ernesto. "Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America." *New Left Review*, no. 67, 1971, <https://newleftreview.org/issues/i67/articles/ernesto-laclau-feudalism-and-capitalism-in-latin-america>. Accessed January 18, 2021.
- Lamming, George. "Sea of Stories." *The Guardian*, 24 October 2002, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/oct/24/artsfeatures.poetry>. Accessed 28 August 2021.
- Landmann, Michael. "Talking with Ernst Bloch: Korcula, 1968." *Telos*, no. 25, 1975, pp. 165-185.
- Lantigua Williams, Juleyka. "Interview with Junot Díaz." *Camino Real*, vol. 3, no. 4, 2011, pp. 195-204.
- Lefever, Harry G. *Turtle Bogue: Afro-Caribbean Life and Culture in a Costa Rican Village*. Susquehanna UP, 1992.
- Lennox, Malissia. "Refugees, Racism, and Reparations: A Critique of the United States' Haitian Immigration Policy." *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 45, no. 3, 1993, pp. 687-724.
- Levitas, Ruth. "Educated Hope: Ernst Bloch on Abstract and Concrete Utopia." *Utopian Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1990, pp. 13-26.
- Levenson, Michael H. *Modernism*. Yale UP, 2011.
- Levenson, Michael. Introduction. *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* by Levenson, Cambridge UP, 1999, pp. 1-9.
- Lewis, Rupert and Lewis, Maureen. "Claude McKay's Jamaica." *Caribbean Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 2/3, 1977, pp. 38-53.
- Linebaugh, Peter. "All the Atlantic Mountains Shook." *Labour/ Le Travail*, vol. 10, 1982, pp. 87-121.
- Lloyd, Genevieve. *The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy*. University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- Lobo, Tatiana. *Calypso*. Farben Grupo Editorial Norma, 2000.
- Lowenthal, David. *West Indian Societies*. Oxford UP, 1972.
- Lugones, María. "Colonialidad y Género." *Tabula Rasa*, no. 9, 2008, pp. 73-102.
- . "Hacia un Feminismo Descolonial." *Hypatia*, vol. 29, no. 4, 2010, pp. 105-117.

- Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Accumulation of Capital*. Translated by Agnes Schwarzschild. Routledge, 2003.
- Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- Mackey, Nathaniel. "An Interview with Edward Kamau Brathwaite." *Hambone*, no. 9, 1991, pp. 42-59.
- Mahabir, Kumar. "Whose Nation Is This? The Struggle over National and Ethnic Identity in Trinidad and Guyana." *Caribbean Studies*, vol. 29, no. 2, 1996, pp. 283- 302
- Makonnen, T. Ras. *Pan-Africanism from Within*, Oxford UP, 1973.
- MacDonald, Scott B. and F. Joseph Demetrius. "The Caribbean Sugar Crisis: Consequences and Challenges." *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, vol. 28, no. 1, 1986, pp. 35-58.
- Mangione, Jerre. *The Dream and the Deal: The Federal Writers' Project, 1935-1943*. Syracuse University Press, 1996.
- Mannheim, Karl. *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*. Translated by Louis Wirth and Edward Shils. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1936.
- Manzanas Calvo, Ana M^a and Jesús Benito Sánchez. *Hospitality in American Literature and Culture*. Routledge, 2017.
- Manzanas, Ana M^a. "Ethnicity, Mestizaje, and Writing." *Narratives of Resistance: Literature and Ethnicity in the United States and the Caribbean*, edited by Ana M^a Manzanas and Jesús Benito. Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1999.
- Marcone, Jorge. "Jungle Fever: Primitive Environmentalism: Rómulo Gallegos's *Canaima* and the Romance of the Jungle." *Primitivism and Identity in Latin America: Essays on Art, Literature and Culture*, edited by Erik Camayd-Freixas and José Eduardo González. The University of Arizona Press, 2000.
- Marshall, Paule. *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*. Vintage Books, 1969.
- Martí, José. *Nuestra América: Edición Crítica*. Centro de Estudios Martianos y Universidad de Guadalajara, 2002.
- Martínez, Layla. *Utopía no es una Isla: Catálogo de Mundos Mejores*. Episkaia, 2020.
- Martinez, Samuel. *Peripheral Migrants: Haitians and Dominican Republic Sugar Plantations*. U of Tennessee P, 1995.

- Martínez-Falquina, Silvia. "Postcolonial Trauma Theory in the Contact Zone: The Strategic Representation of Grief in Edwidge Danticat's *Claire of the Sea Light*." *Humanities*, vol. 4, pp. 834-870.
- Marx, Leo. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. Oxford UP, 1964.
- Marx, Karl and Engels, Frederick. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Foreign Languages Press, 1970.
- . *The German Ideology Part One, with Selections from Parts Two and Three, together with Marx's "Introduction to a Critique of Political Economy."* International Publishers, 2001.
- Massey, Douglas S, Joaquín Arango, Graeme Hugo, Ali Kouaouci, Adella Pellegrino, and J. Edward Taylor. "Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal." *Population and Development Review*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1993, pp. 431-466.
- Maxwell, William J. "Claude McKay." *A Companion to Modernist Poetry*, edited by David E. Chinitz and Gail McDonald. Wiley Blackwell, 2014.
- . Introduction: Claude McKay—Lyric Poetry in the Age of Cataclysm. *Complete Poems* by Claude McKay and William J. Maxwell, U of Illinois P, 2004, pp. xi-xliv.
- McKay, Claude. *A Long Way from Home*. Rutgers UP, 1937.
- . *Amiable with Big Teeth*. Penguin Books, 2017.
- . *Banana Bottom*. Harper & Row, 1933.
- . *Banjo*. Harper & Brothers, 1929.
- . "Claude M'Kay, Author, Decries Inroads Made by Communists," *New York Amsterdam News*, September 17, 1938.
- . *Complete Poems*. U of Illinois P, 2004.
- . *Gingertown*. Books for Libraries Press, 1972.
- . "Group Life and Literature," box 9, folder 287, Claude McKay Collection.
- . *Harlem: Negro Metropolis*. E. P. Dutton, 1940.
- . *Home to Harlem*. Northeastern UP, 1987.
- . *My Green Hills of Jamaica and Five Jamaican Short Stories*. Heinemann Educational Book, 1979.

- . *Harlem: Negro Metropolis*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968.
- . “Pact Exploded Communist Propaganda among Negroes.” *New Leader*, September 23, 1939.
- McLeod, A.L. “Memory and the Edenic Myth: Claude McKay’s Green Hills of Jamaica.” *World Literature Written in English*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1979, pp. 245-254.
- McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester University Press, 2000.
- McLeod, Marian B. “Claude McKay Russian Interpretation: ‘the Negroes in America’.” *CLA Journal*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1980, pp. 336-351.
- Meléndez-Badillo, Jorell. “Camacho-Quinn’s Gold Medal Sparked a Debate about Puerto Rican National Identity.” *The Washington Post*, August 2 2021, accessed August 9 2021). <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2021/08/05/camacho-quinns-gold-medal-sparked-debate-about-puerto-rican-national-identity/>.
- Merchant, Carolyn. *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*. Harper & Row: 1980
- Mignolo, Walter D. *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization*. The University of Michigan Press, 1995.
- . *The Idea of Latin America*. Blackwell Publishing, 2005.
- . *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Models, and Border Thinking*. Princeton UP, 2000.
- Mintz, Sydney W. “Enduring Substances, Trying Theories: The Caribbean Region as Oikumene.” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1996, pp. 289-311.
- Montgomery, Marine L. “A Lasiren Song for the Wonn: Edwidge Danticat’s *Claire of the Sea Light* and the Legend of Mami Wata.” *CLA Journal*, vol. 59, no. 4, 2016, pp. 316-329.
- Moore, Jason W. Introduction. *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*, edited by Jason W. Moore. Karos, 2016.
- Moore-Gilbert, Bart. *Postcolonial Theory: Context, Practices, Politics*. Verso, 1997.
- Mukherjee, Bharati. “Immigrant Writing: Changing the Contours of a National Literature.” *American Literary History*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2011, pp. 680-696.
- Mulholland, Kate. *Class, Gender and the Family Business*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

- Newton, K. M. *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory: a Reader*. Macmillan Education, 1997.
- Nicholls, David. "East Indians and Black Power in Trinidad." *Race*, vol. XII, no. 4, 1971, pp. 443-459.
- . "The Folk as Alternative Modernity: Claude McKay's *Banana Bottom* and the Romance of Nature." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1999, pp. 79-94.
- Nickels, Joel. "Claude McKay and Dissident Internationalism." *Cultural Critique*, no. 87, 2014, pp. 1-37.
- Nimführ, Sarah and Otto, Laura. "(Un)Making smallness: Islands, spatial ascription processes and (im)mobility." *Island Studies Journal*, Ahead of Print, pp. 1-20.
- Norman, Alma. *The People who Came: book one*, Second Edition. Longman Caribbean, 1986.
- North, Michael. *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth Century Literature*. Oxford UP, 1994.
- Nunn, Tey Marianna. "What is Postnationalism?" *Hemisphere: Visual Cultures of the Americas*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2011, pp. 10-15.
- Nussbaum, Martha C. *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997.
- Nuttal, Sarah. "Johannesburg–Lagos: From the Speculative to the Littoral City." *The SAGE Handbook of the 21st Century City*, edited by Suzanne Hall and Ricky Burdett. SAGE Publications Ltd., 2018, pp. 567-582.
- Olmsted, Jane. "The Pull to Memory and the Language of Place in Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* and *Praisesong for the Widow*." *African American Review*, vol. 31, no. 2, 1997, pp. 249-267.
- Orlando, Valérie. "The Politics of Race and Patriarchy in *Claire-Solange, âme africaine* by Suzanne Lacascade." *Studies in 20th and 21st Century Literature*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2005, pp. 118-134.
- Otto, Melanie. "The Caribbean." *The Routledge Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, edited by John McLeod. Routledge, 2007, pp. 95-107.
- Paravisini-Gebert, Lizabeth. "Deforestation and the Yearning for Lost Landscapes in Caribbean Literatures." *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*, edited by Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, Oxford UP, 2012, pp. 99-116.
- . "Gade nan mizè-a m tonbe: Vodou, the 2010 Earthquake, and Haiti's Environmental Catastrophe." *The Caribbean: Aesthetics, World-Ecology*,

- Politics*, edited by Chris Campbell and Michael Niblett, Liverpool UP, 2016, pp. 63-77.
- . “*The Chosen Place, the Timeless People: Race, Colonial Power, and the Absence of Sisterhood.*” *Caribbean Quarterly*, vol. 48, no. 4, 2002, pp. 41-53.
- Pedersen, Carl. “The Caribbean Voices of Claude McKay and Eric Walrond.” *The Cambridge Companion to the Harlem Renaissance*, edited by George Hutchinson. Cambridge UP, 2007, pp. 184-197.
- Penier, Izabella. “Globalization, Creolization and ‘Manichaeism delirium.’ Jamaica Kincaid’s Dialogue with Postcolonial ‘Radically Non-Racial Humanism’ in *The Autobiography of my Mother.*” *Orbis Linguarum*, vol. 36, pp. 241-254.
- . “Modernity, (Post)Modernism and New Horizons of Postcolonial Studies. The Role and Direction of Caribbean Writing and Criticism in the Twenty-First Century.” *International Studies: Interdisciplinary Political and Cultural Journal*, vol. 14, pp. 23-38.
- Pierce Flores, Lisa. *The History of Puerto Rico*. Greenwood Press, 2010.
- Piper, Karen. “Post-Colonialism in the United States: Diversity or Hybridity?” In *Post-Colonial Literatures: Expanding the Canon*. Edited by Deborah L. Madsen. Pluto Press, 1999.
- Platt, Len. Introduction. In *Modernism and Race*, edited by Len Platt. Cambridge UP, 2011.
- Portes, Alejandro and Rubén G. Rumbaut. *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second-Generation*. U of California P, 2001.
- Power, Marcus. *Rethinking Development Geographies*. Routledge, 2004.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. Routledge, 1992.
- Price, Charles, Donald Nonini, and Erich Fox Tree. “Grounded utopian movements: Subjects of neglect.” *Anthropological Quarterly*, vol. 81, no. 1, 2008, pp. 127-159.
- Price, Charles. *Becoming Rasta: Origins of Rastafari Identity in Jamaica*. New York UP, 2009.
- . “The Cultural Production of a Black Messiah: Ethiopianism and the Rastafari.” *Journal of Africana Religions*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2014, pp. 418-433.
- Pugh, Jonathan and David Chandler. *Anthropocene Islands: Entangled Worlds*. U of Westminster P, 2021.
- . “Islands of Relationality and Resilience: The Shifting Stakes of the Anthropocene.” *Area*, vol. 52, no. 1, pp. 66-72.

- Pugh, Jonathan. "Island Movements: Thinking with the Archipelago." *Island Studies Journal*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2013, pp. 9-24.
- . "Postcolonial Development, (Non)Sovereignty and Affect: Living on in the Wake of Caribbean Political Independence." *Antipode*, vol. 49, no. 4, 2017, pp. 867-882.
- . "Relationality and Island Studies in the Anthropocene." *Island Studies Journal*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2018, pp. 93-102.
- Punter, David. *50+ Shades of Gothic | David Punter: Closing Session*. Youtube, uploaded by PopMeC Research, 19 May 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mFoSi6AtaRs&t=2834s>.
- Putnam, Lara. "Provincializing Harlem: The 'Negro Metropolis' as Northern Frontier of a Connected Caribbean." *Modernism/modernity*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2013, pp. 469-484.
- Quijano, Aníbal and Wallerstein, Immanuel. "Americanness as a Concept, or the Americas in the Modern World System." *International Social Science Journal*, vol. 29, 1992, pp. 549-57.
- Quijano, Aníbal. "Colonialidad del Poder y Clasificación Social." *Journal of World-Systems Research*, vol XI, no. 2, 2000, pp. 342-386.
- . "Colonialidad y Modernidad/Racionalidad." *Perú Indígena*, vol. 13, no. 29, 1992. pp. 11-20.
- . "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality." *Cultural Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2-3, 2007, pp. 168-178.
- . "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America, *Nepantla* vol. 1, no. 3, 2000, pp. 533-580.
- Ramchand, Kenneth. *The West Indian Novel and its Background*. Ian Randle Publishers, 2004.
- Raussert, Wilfried, Tim Lantz, and Joachim Michael. "Modernism and Postmodernism." *The Routledge Handbook to the Culture and Media of the Americas*, edited by Wilfried Raussert, Giselle Liza Anatol, Sebastian Thies, Sarah Corona Berkin, and José Carlos Lozano. Routledge, 2020, pp.156-169.
- Reckin, Anna. "Tidalectic Lectures: Kamau Brathwaite's Prose/ Poetry as Sound-Space." *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal*, vol. 1, iss. 1, 2003, pp. 1-16.
- Reed, Anthony. "'A Woman is Conjunction': The Ends of Improvisation in Claude McKay's Banjo: A Story without a Plot." *Callaloo*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2013, pp. 758-772.

- Reed, T. V. "Re-Historicizing Literature." *A Companion to American Literature and Culture*, edited by Paul Lauter. Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, pp. 96-109.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *Time and Narrative*. Translated by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer. U of Chicago P, 1988.
- Roberts, Neil. *Freedom as Marronage*. The U of Chicago P, 1976
- Rosenberg, Leah. "Caribbean Models for Modernism in the Work of Claude McKay and Jean Rhys." *Modernism/modernity*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2004, pp. 219-238.
- . "Modern Romances: the short stories in Una Marson's 'The Cosmopolitan' (1928-1931)." *Journal of West Indian Literature*, vol. 12, no. 1-2, 2004, pp. 170-183.
- . *Nationalism and the Formation of Caribbean Literature*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Rosenfelt, Deborah H. "Feminisms and Literatures." *A Companion to American Literature and Culture*, edited by Paul Lauter. Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, pp. 528-562.
- Roumain, Jacques. "La tragédie haitienne." *Regards*, no. 18, 1937, pp. 4-6.
- Rouse, Roger. "Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernism." *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 1991, pp. 8-23.
- Rumbaut, Rubén. "Transformations: The Post-Immigrant Generation in an Age of Diversity," *JSRI Research Report #30*, 1999, pp. 1-16.
- Russell Roberts, Brian and Michelle Ann Stephens. "Introduction: Archipelagic American Studies: Decontinentalizing the Study of American Culture." *Archipelagic American Studies*, edited by Brian Russell Roberts and Michelle Ann Stephens. Duke UP, 2017.
- Sachs, Wolfgang. "Global Ecology and the Shadow of 'Development'." *Global Ecology: A New Arena of Political Conflict*, edited by Wolfgang Sachs. Zed, 1993, pp. 3-21.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. Penguin, 1977.
- . *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. Harvard UP, 1983.
- Saldívar, José David. "Conjectures on 'Americanness' and Junot Díaz's 'Fukú Americanus' in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*." *The Global South*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2011, pp. 120-136.
- . *The Dialectics of Our America: Genealogy, Cultural Critique, and Literary History*. Duke UP, 1991.

- . “Conjeturas sobre Amor Descolonial, Transamericanidad y el ‘Fukú Americanus’ de Junot Díaz.” *Revista Casa de las Americas*, no. 277, 2014, pp. 85-91.
- Sargent, Lyman Tower. “Colonial and Postcolonial Utopias.” *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, edited by Gregory Claeys, 2010. Cambridge UP, 200-222.
- . “Ideology and utopia: Karl Mannheim and Paul Ricoeur.” *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 263-273.
- . “The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited.” *Utopian Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1994, pp. 1-37
- Sartre, Jean-Paul and John MacCombie. “Black Orpheus.” *The Massachusetts Review*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1964, pp. 12-52.
- Scanlan, John, and Gilbert Loescher. “Human Rights, U.S. Foreign Policy, and Haitian Refugees.” *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1984, pp. 313-356.
- Schenck, Mary Jane. “Ceremonies of Reconciliation: Paule Marshall’s *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*.” *MELUS*, vol. 19, no. 4, 1994, pp. 49-60.
- Schwartz, A. B. Christa. “Transgressive Sexuality and the Literature of the Harlem Renaissance.” *The Cambridge Companion to the Harlem Renaissance*, edited by George Hutchinson. Cambridge UP, 2007, pp. 141-154.
- Šesnic, Jelena. *From Shadow to Presence Representations of Ethnicity in Contemporary American Literature*. Rodopi, 2007.
- Shakespeare, William. *Measure for Measure*. Cambridge UP, 1971.
- Sharpe, Jenny. “Is the United States Postcolonial?: Transnationalism, Immigration, and Race.” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1995, pp. 181-199.
- . “Postcolonial Studies in the House of US Multiculturalism.” *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, edited by Henry Schwartz and Sangeeta Ray. Blackwell, 2005, pp 112- 124.
- Sharpley-Whiting, Tracy Denean. *Negritude Women*. University of Minnesota Press, 2002.
- Sheller, Mimi. *Island Futures: Caribbean Survival in the Anthropocene*. Duke UP, 2020.
- Sherrard-Johnson, Cherene. “Insubordinate Islands and Coastal Chaos: Pauline Hopkins’ Literary Land/Seascapes.” In *Archipelagic American Studies*, edited by Brian Russell Roberts and Michelle Ann Stephens. Duke UP, 2017, pp. 232-258.

- Singal, Daniel Joseph. "Towards a Definition of American Modernism." *American Quarterly*, vol. 39, no. 1, 1987, pp. 7-26.
- Singh, Simboonath. "Resistance, Essentialism, and Empowerment in Black Nationalist Discourse in the African Diaspora: A Comparison of the Back to Africa, Black Power, and Rastafari Movements." *Journal of African American Studies*, 2004, vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 18-36.
- Skerrett Jr., Joseph T. "Paule Marshall and the Crisis of Middle Years: *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*." *Callaloo*, no. 18, 1983, pp. 68-73.
- Slater, David. "Theories of Development and Politics of the Post-Modern – Exploring a Border Zone." *Development and Change*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1992, 283-319.
- Sorinel, Cosma. "Immanuel Wallerstein's World System Theory." *Annals of Faculty of Economic*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2010, pp. 220-224.
- Sosa-Velasco, Alfredo J. "Gerald and Thomas: The Subtext within the Text in *Down these Mean Streets*." *Romance Notes*, vol. 49, no. 3, 2009, pp. 287-299.
- Spillers, Hortense J. "Chosen Place, Timeless People: Some Figurations on the New World." *Conjuring: Black Women, Fiction, and Literary Tradition*, edited by Marjorie Pryse and Hortense J. Spillers. Indiana UP, 1985, pp. 151-175.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Harvard UP, 1999.
- Stein, Mark. *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation*. The Ohio State UP, 2004.
- Stephens, Michelle Ann. *Black Empire: The Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United States, 1914-1962*. Duke UP, 2005.
- Stethurst, James. *The African American Roots of Modernism: From Reconstruction to the Harlem Renaissance*. The University of North Carolina Press, 2011.
- Stewart, Susan. "Scandals of the Ballad." *Representations*, vol. 32, 1990, pp. 134-156.
- Stoler, Laura Ann. *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in our Times*. Duke UP, 2016.
- Storhoff, Gary. "'Yesterday Comes like Today': Communitas in Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*." *MELUS*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1998, pp. 49-64.
- Tagirova-Daley, Tatiana A. *Claude McKay's Liberating Narrative: Russian and Anglophone Caribbean Literary Connections*. Peter Lang, 2012.
- Thiong'o, Ngũgĩ wa. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. East African Educational Publishers, 1981.
- Thomas, Piri. *Down these Mean Streets*. Vintage Books, 1997.

- Tiffin, Helen. "‘Man Fitting the Landscape’: Nature, Culture, and Colonialism." *Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture*, edited by Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, Renée K. Gosson, and George B. Handley. University of Virginia Press, 2005, pp. 199-212.
- Tillery, Tyrone. *Claude McKay: A Black Poet’s Struggle for Identity*. U of Massachusetts P, 1992.
- Torres-Saillant, Silvio. *An Intellectual History of the Caribbean*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2006.
- Trask, Huanani-Kay. *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawaii (Revised Edition)*. U of Hawaii P, 1999.
- Trewela, Paul. "George Padmore: A Critique. Pan Africanism or Marxism?" *Searchlight South Africa*, vol.1, no. 1, 1988, pp. 42-63.
- Trotter, David. "Claude McKay’s Conjure Tale." *Critical Quarterly*, vol. 60, no. 3, 2018, pp. 122-130.
- Turits, Richard Lee. "A World Destroyed, A Nation Imposed: The 1937 Haitian Massacre in the Dominican Republic." *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 82, no. 3, 2002, pp. 589-635.
- Van Mol, Kay R. "Primitivism and Intellect in Toomer’s *Cane* and McKay’s *Banana Bottom*: The Need for an Integrated Black Consciousness." *Negro American Literature Forum*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1976, pp. 48-52.
- Van Nyhuis, Alison. "Caribbean Literature, North American Migration, and the American Dream." *ATENEA*, vol. xxxii, 2012, 59-71.
- Vermeulen, Pieter. *Literature and the Anthropocene*. Routledge, 2020.
- Vieira, Fátima. "The Concept of Utopia." *The Cambridge Companion of Utopian Literature*, edited by Gregory Claeys. Cambridge UP, 2010, pp. 3-27.
- Vitier, Cintio. Presentación. *Nuestra América: Edición Crítica* by José Martí, Centro de Estudios Martianos y Universidad de Guadalajara, 2002, pp. 11.
- Walcott, Derek. "The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?" *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, vol. 1, no. 16, 1974, pp. 3- 13.
- . *The Poetry of Derek Walcott: 1948-2013*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014.
- . *What the Twilight Says*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998.
- Wald, Priscilla. "Immigration and Assimilation in Nineteenth-Century US Women’s Writing." In *The Cambridge Companion to Nineteenth-Century American Women’s Writing*, edited by Dale M. Bauer and Philip Gould. Cambridge UP, 2001, pp. 176-201.

- Wallerstein, Immanuel. "Feudalism, Capitalism, and the World-System in the Perspective of Latin America and the Caribbean: Comments of Sterns Critical Texts." *The American Historical Review*, vol. 93, no. 4, 1988, pp. 873-885.
- . "The Caribbean and the World-System." *Caribbean Dialogue*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2002, pp. 15-30.
- . "The 'Crisis of the Seventeenth Century'." *New Left Review*, no. 110, 1978. <https://newleftreview.org/issues/i110/articles/immanuel-wallerstein-the-crisis-of-the-seventeenth-century>. Accessed July 2019.
- . "The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 16, no. 4, 1974, pp. 387-415.
- . *The Modern World System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*. Academic Press, 1974.
- . *The Modern World System II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600-1750*. U of California P, 2011.
- . *The Modern World System III: The Second Era of Great Expansion of the Capitalist World-Economy: 1730s-1840s*. U of California P, 2011.
- . *Utopistics: or Historical Choices of the Twenty-First Century*. The New Press, 1998.
- . *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*. Duke UP, 2004.
- Walsh, Catherine. "'Other' Knowledges, 'Other' Critiques: Reflections on the Politics and Practices of Philosophy and Decoloniality in the 'Other' America." *TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2012, pp. 12-27.
- Warren, Karen J. "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism." *Environmental Ethics*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1990, pp. 125-146.
- Watts, Michael. "'A New Deal in Emotions:' Theory and Practice and the Crisis of Development." *Power of Development*, edited by Jonathan Crush. Routledge, 1995, pp. 43-60.
- Wegner, Phillip E. *Imaginary Communities: Utopia, the Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity*. U of California P, 2002.
- Williams, Eric. *Capitalism and Slavery*. The U of North Carolina P, 1944.
- Williams, Jericho. "Of Vanity, Fake News, and Flair: Naturalism's International Entrance into Harlem in Claude McKay's *Amiable with Big Teeth*." *The New Centennial Review*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2020, pp. 103-126.

- Wing, Betsy. Translator's Introduction. *Poetics of Relation* by Édouard Glissant, The U of Michigan P, 1997, pp. xi-xx.
- Wintz, Cary D. and Finkelman, Paul. *Encyclopaedia of the Harlem Renaissance*. New York and London: Routledge, 2004.
- Woolf, Virginia. *Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown*. Hogarth Press, 1924.
- Wynter, Sylvia. "Beyond the Word of Man: Glissant and the New Discourse of the Antilles." *World Literature Today*, vol. 63, no. 4, 1989, pp. 637-648.
- Zamalin, Alex. *Black Utopia: The History of an Idea from Black Nationalism to Afrofuturism*. Columbia UP, 2019.
- Ziarek, Krzysztof. *The Historicity of Experience: Modernity, the Avant-Garde, and the Event*. Northwestern UP, 2001.
- Zipp, Georg. "Selling Poverty: Junot Díaz's and Edwidge Danticat's Assessments of Picturesque Stereotypes of Poverty in the Caribbean." *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, vol. 63, no. 2, 2015, pp. 229-246.