

# “Carib Being Water”: On the Lyrical Intertextuality of the Sea-Space in Afro-Caribbean, Indo-Caribbean, and Afro-Central American Women Poets

---

PAOLA RAVASIO  
INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

*We do not immigrate, we rotate.*  
Eulalia Bernard (*Griot* 17)

Ἀρχὴν δὲ τῶν πάντων ὕδωρ ὑπεστήσατο  
*Water is the universal primary substance.*  
Thales of Miletus (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* I: 27)

## Abstract

The ensuing discussion focuses on mobility enabled by large bodies of water departing from the premise that *the sea is History*. The essay argues that the lyrical representation of the *sea-space* in Afro-Caribbean, Indo-Caribbean, and Afro-Central American poetry stands as an intertextual trope by which the “repeating island” can be traced along a palimpsestic overlapping of historical occurrences. Focusing on the correlation between mobility and power geometries in lyrical narratives concerning the middle passage, the *kala pani*, and the conformation of Afro-Central America, the repeating island is sketched along the mobile metaphors of *un/arrival*, *im/mortality*, *uprootings* and *transrootings*.

**Keywords:** repeating island, sea-space, power geometries, middle passage, *kala pani*, Afro-Central America

Departing from the premise that *the sea is History* (Walcott, *The Star-Apple Kingdom* 25-28), this essay focuses on mobility enabled by large bodies of water. The ensuing discussion is grounded upon the premise that the lyrical representation of the *sea-space* stands as a paradigm for tracing a network of languages, ethno-social cartographies, and historical parallelisms that flow from one history to the next, conjoining them furthermore into a palimpsestic overlapping of historical occurrences. The picture I want to draw here hinges on the intricate relationship that exists between the ocean and diverse stories of the past, which has been encoded in poetry in the form of *historical imagination*. Understood along these pages as a creative procedure regarding the narrativization of Other stories of the past in dialectical tension with the writing of History, my intention here is to tap into the correlation between mobility and power geometries in lyrical narratives concerning the middle passage, the *kala pani*, and the conformation of Afro-Central America in neocolonial times.<sup>1</sup> Along these pages, the poetization of the sea-space in circum-Caribbean poetry shall be approached as a historical imagination yielding liquid traces of history.

This essay is structured upon seven individual sections that deploy the intertextual nature of the sea-trope in Afro-, Indo-, and Central American Caribbean poetry written by women. The first two sections, “Navigating the Aquatic” and “Liquid Traces of History,” set the stage by introducing the theoretical guidelines from which the selected poetry shall be read. The point of departure is the metaphor of the “repeating island,” according to A. Benítez-Rojo, and the theoretical reflections on the re-writing of History from an underwater, submarine perspective, as advocated in the last quarter of the twentieth century by E.K. Brathwaite, W. Harris, H. Wilson, and E. Glissant. The article continues next with the lyrical analysis of the sea-space, which can be divided in three main segments. Here, mobile metaphors of oceanic voyaging in diverse regional types of Caribbean poetry are explored, all of which refer to the correlation of power geometries and mobility by way of the sea.

In the first part of the essay, the sea-trope and its manifestation as the “middle-passage womb” in the context of the transatlantic slave trade are approached in three Afro-Caribbean female poets. First, the correlation between power geometries and mobility as depicted in *Zong!* (2008) by Marlene NourbeSe Philip is closely read in “Water is of Want.” This reading is complemented next in the section entitled “Sea Water Have No Branch” with the exploration of aquatic metaphors in the anthology *I is a Long Memored Woman* (1982) by Guyanese poet Grace Nichols and the poem “Up and Down the Deck” (*Rotten Pomerack*, 1992) by Grenadian writer Merle Collins.

After exploring the paradoxical representation of the sea-space in Afro-Caribbean female poetry, the following segment, “Our Song is Liquid and Unspoken,” examines the portrayal of the sea-space and of the Indo-Caribbean labor diaspora in two Indo-Caribbean female poets. The focus of this section lies on the ocean-crossing by indentured workers as depicted by the *kala pani*-topos, the figure of the coolie, and the interconnection of land and sea in Indo-Caribbean historical imagination. The poem “Kala Pani Ink” (2010) by Trinidadian-born Joy Mahabir and “They Came in Ships” (1977) by Guyanese writer Mahadai Das constitute here the lyrical objects of study.

The third and last part of the article delineates the sea-topos in Central American Caribbean poetry. In the section entitled “Semen is Water,” the correlation between sea and land is once again explored, yet this time in an untitled poem by Shirley Campbell (*Naciendo* 1988) and in Eulalia Bernard’s short essay entitled “Meditation for a Reflection” (*Griot* 1997), both Afro-Costa Rican writers. “El mar fue el único testigo,” the last section, focuses on the representation of the sea in the anthology *Tumálali Nanigi* (1998) by Honduran Garifuna poet Xiomara Cacho Caballero. These closing segments thus bring to a full circle the intertextual exploration of the sea-

topos in circum-Caribbean poetry by illustrating oceanic displacement between the Caribbean archipelago and the Central American Caribbean coast on account of neocolonial enterprises.

The ensuing study of poetry written by a heterogeneous group of women between the 1970s and the first quarter of the twenty-first century aims to stress the links between Afro-, Indo-, and Afro-Central American and in so doing, illustrate the intertextual nature of the sea-topos in circum-Caribbean poetry, despite diverse regional geographies, particular historical backdrops, and plural languages. Regardless of their inherent differences, the mobile metaphors deployed around the sea-trope binds them together and highlights the many-sidedness of the circum-Caribbean region whose historical layers are interlaced by way of oceanic water.

### **Navigating the Aquatic: the Metaphor of the Repeating Island according to Benítez-Rojo**

The imagery of the sea-space stands as a “powerful imaginative geography” (Massey, “Imagining Globalization” 36) because its degree of openness is infinite and barrier-less.<sup>2</sup> Its frontiers are the shores of the lands it connects, its aquatic depths however bottomless and im/mortal. Of particular importance is the fact that the nature of water is at every single moment in perpetual movement. This defines, in turn, the metaphoric potential of the sea-space as conjoining endless places and epochs along a heterogeneous story of the past, which is why the ensuing discussion weaves itself furthermore around a core metaphor: that of the *repeating island* (Benítez-Rojo).

In his exploration of the sociocultural fluidity present at the Caribbean archipelago, Benítez-Rojo acknowledges “one can sense the features of an island that ‘repeats’ itself, unfolding and bifurcating until it reaches all the seas and the lands of the earth” (3). I would like to draw on this image and underscore the allusion to repetition, unfoldment, and bifurcation as the epistemological framework sustaining the exploration of the oceanic connections between Africa, India, the Caribbean archipelago, and Central America. I have chosen this metaphor because the image of reiteration allows us to go beyond one singular geography when approaching transoceanic networks at the Americas as well as a linear understanding of time: it permits us to think about transoceanic connections between various cultures, peoples, and histories from a *transhistorical* perspective. Above all, it abandons a rigid language of conceptual nature and adopts the image of *reiteration* as the epistemological tool that expands on the intersections conveyed by the sea-space, without restriction to individual or even continuous spatiotemporal dimensions. According to Benítez-Rojo, the repeating island has been crystalized by the economical discourses of the West (5-10), which, in turn, have determined the mobility of diverse groups of people from different continents to gather across the oceanic horizon – over, and over, and over again.

This exploration of the aquatic dimension as a space from which cyclical sociohistorical processes can be extracted reveals furthermore the Americas as a space of entanglements.<sup>3</sup> Africa, India, and the Americas are here understood as being “historically, culturally, politically, and economically entangled” (Raussert, “Introduction” 3) by way of overlying and intersecting layers of historical happenings. These layers are furthermore multiply interconnected and, most importantly, shaped by historical power relations (Kaltmeier, “General Introduction” 5). By approaching the lyrical sea-space and placing it in a relational framework with a series of historical imaginations derived from distinct factual backdrops, these historical power relations are brought to the fore as displaying altogether a fundamental correlation between mobility and power geometries. Such entanglements create, as a result, an intertextual historical imagination across Afro-Caribbean, Indo-Caribbean, and Afro-Central American poetry whose different mobile metaphors of historical movement do in fact overlap one another. Because of this, a hermeneutic of the sea-space evokes a non-Western conception of time from which linear models of historical progress can be contested, while its repetitive nature deploys the complex relationship between geography and history by way of *water*.

Echoing Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, the poems discussed here have been selected to “navigate repeating islands” (1) and therefore underscore the patterns of mobility that give content and meaning to the Benítez-Rojo’s metaphor. Instead of perceiving routes and roots as occurring across a flat and linear map, the ensuing reading practice reveals them as connected along what I would like to describe here as a *downward spiral*, that is, as sociohistorical realities that continuously expand and break off from each other into “processes, dynamics, and rhythms that show themselves within the marginal, the regional, the incoherent, the heterogeneous” (Benítez-Rojo 3), furthermore characterized by violence and oppression. What is at issue here, then, is to untangle the historical threads of the repeating island, which are interwoven and embedded – that is, *submerged, converged, condensed* – in the lyrical representation of the sea-space. It is my intention to trace the repeating island and connect its layers through an approach that gives notice of its parallelisms and points of intersection through an intertextuality regarding metaphors of *un/arrival, im/mortality, uprootings* and *transrootings*.<sup>4</sup>

### **Liquid Traces of History: Theoretical Reflections on Afro-Caribbean Rewriting of History**

In her examination of the post-colonial paradigm shift which “globalized” the history of modernity by decentering Europe and thus telling Other stories, moving towards its peripheries and focusing instead on the imposed violence exerted upon these areas, Doreen Massey (“Imagining Globalization”) outlines the intrinsic relationship that exists between power relations (both in the

social space as in the construction of knowledge) and time-space conceptualizations of modernity. She points out, moreover, how the narrativization of modernity “was a history told through the experience of exploration outward from Europe and of the discovery of lands and people other than Europe. It was a story told from the point of view of Europe as the protagonist” (29). Mary Louise Pratt referred to this in *Imperial Eyes* as “a European knowledge-building project” (37) whose discourses have displaced all Other narratives to a peripheral position. Because of this, Massey asserts that the narrativization of Modernity corresponds largely to “a story of Europe’s internal history” (“Imagining Globalization” 39). The sea-space has become a crucial topos for overturning this European knowledge-building project by telling Other stories from distinct geographies and perspectives. Making audible those voices that have been located outside of the official speaking-space of Modernity (31), the representation of the ocean has become a lyrical archive for stor(y)ing these as historical imaginations. In the first part of this expedition into times past, Afro-descendant historical imagination will be approached in the poets Marlene NourbaSe Philip, Merle Collins, and Grace Nichols.

In 1974, St. Lucian Nobel prize winner Derek Walcott affirmed that “history in the Caribbean is irrelevant” (“The Caribbean” 6). Walcott, who consistently engaged “the West Indian quarrel with history” (Baugh 60) across his literary and theoretical production, underscored instead that “the loss of history, the amnesia of the races” (Walcott, “The Caribbean” 6) is what defines it. The Guyanese writer Wilson E. Harris also referred to the complex subject of History in the Caribbean as a seeming “historylessness” (21). Like Walcott, Harris too advocated for the need of *imagination* to cure “the apparent void of history which haunts the black man” (21), a void corresponding mainly to the unacquaintance of African origins prior to the forced displacement of enslaved Africans, to which Walcott referred to quite articulately as “history as exile” (“The Muse” 21). Accordingly, Barbadian writer Edward Kamau Brathwaite emphasized the crucial role of exploring the maritime realm aesthetically – and philosophically, for that matter – to re/construct the subject of history at the Caribbean. For the author it is here, in the underwater dimension, that the fragmented archipelago born out of a mobile history brought about by modernity’s colonizing project becomes whole, for “the unity is submarine” (1).

Drawing on both authors, Martinican writer Édouard Glissant expanded also on the subject by stating that the Caribbean archipelago corresponds to a space inhabiting a “nonhistory” (Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 62) because the impossibility of return to the homeland led to the gradual erasure of African collective memories, yielding an “absolute unknown” (*Poetics of Relation* 8). The negative prefixes (*non-*, *un-*) mirror and simultaneously highlight the erasure of African collective memories due to “a discontinuous relation to its accumulation of experiences (what we

would call its culture)” (*Caribbean Discourse* 61), given that the Caribbean is in fact a “site of a history characterized by ruptures” (*Caribbean Discourse* 61) – its “black beginning” being the slave trade. Before this, there is a past that is unable to portray exact traces of African cultures because they have been drawn away by power geometries crystallized upon oceanic paths, lost in the blood trails left behind. Glissant, drawing on Brathwaite, also contended that the aquatic depths envisage the cross-cultural relationship that defines the region because the convergence of histories at the Caribbean, condensed underwater, have been transformed into submarine roots that branch out in all directions (*Caribbean Discourse* 66-67), thus deploying a historical beginning that emerges firstly from an underwater perspective. It comes to no surprise, then, that the epigraph to his book *Poetics of Relation* eloquently quotes both Walcott and Brathwaite as introductory statements.<sup>5</sup>

Philip, Collins, and Nichols alike all explore the depths of the bottomless ocean and the open ships that mobilized the beginnings of Afro history in the Americas to cure this sense of historylessness, nonhistory, and exile. Philip does this with her *litteral* poetics, Collins with children’s innocent games of death, and Nichols with regrown tongues that whisper stories of passing.

### **Water is of Want: *Zong!* by Marlene NourbeSe Philip**

The opening verses of *Zong!* by Marlene NourbeSe Philip mimic *literally* (from lat. *littera*) the flow of the ships sailing across the middle passage, while the subsequent verses explore and thus expose a “submarine poetics” in which the poet stages “confrontation on the level of language between the logic of the ocean’s surface and its poetic depths” (Siklosi 111). According to Siklosi, Philip’s particular storytelling verses “the voices of a resistant submarine unity” (111), which refuses to be drowned away into oblivion.

The title of Philip’s book refers to the 1871 Dutch slave ship named *Zong*, defined by Helena Woodard in her book *Slave Sites on Display* as the “site of perhaps the most horrific crime in recorded maritime history” (99). *Zong* became infamous because over one hundred enslaved people from Africa were thrown overboard by command of the ship merchant Luke Collingwood. Behind this unethical decision lay a series of motives. Firstly, a false route accounted for the need of rendering the ship lighter, for Collingwood realized he had mistakenly sailed past Jamaica after confusing it with the Hispaniola island. This navigation error proved to be in turn a defining threat to the crew, since potable water was not sufficient for all the people on board: “there was only enough water for four days, but ten to thirteen days would be required to regain Jamaica” (Oldham 299). Because of this, Collingwood decided to throw overboard a large number of enslaved people into the Caribbean Sea, aspiring to collect an insurance policy for the dead bodies as stipulated by

maritime insurance law of the time (Oldham; Webster). Accordingly, *Gregson vs. Gilbert* (1783) archives the court’s decision that the ship’s owners were to receive thirty pounds per drowned slave. In contraposition, even though it rained a few days later, meaning that enslaved victims drowned in vain, “no criminal prosecution would ever result from the *Zong* incident” (Webster 285).

Philip elaborates a historical imagination of this particular story of the past by making audible the “voicelessness” of those people whose traces became liquid, submarine history.<sup>6</sup> Attempting to tell the story of *Zong*, the souls sunken in oceanic water find in fact a broken voice in Philip’s disjointed complication of letters, words, and phrases. Yet, as the author herself explains, “the complete story does not exist” (196), partially condemned to a one-sided historicity by the legal document that archived the event and from where Philip found inspiration for her lyrical narrative (i.e., *Gregson vs. Gilbert* 1783). The fears and memories of the African victims are impossible to verify or validate. They constitute rather an unattainable factuality that is best grasped through the poet’s de/constructive storytelling. Thereby, *Zong*’s routes are drafted upon saltwater by way of words, letters, and sounds that complicate both a speedy-reading and a simple apprehension of the verse-story. As noted by Siklosi, “a fugue of submerged voices, sounds, silences, and stories surfaces in a visceral language of memory and affect” (111). By pushing the limits of language,<sup>7</sup> the poet brings to the surface the disorder and violence that the ocean represented in the colonial project of modernity, to which global mobility was central. This correlation stresses furthermore the fact that the aquatic dimension was essential to the slave trade—specifically, to the history of modernity.

Of special interest is the way the author decided to start her telling of bodies and of salt in the first chapter entitled “Os” (lat. for *bones*; 1). I stated above that Philip’s *Zong!* mimics *lit(t)erally* the flow of the transatlantic ships. This is accomplished by coupling the content with a corresponding graphical representation, specifically with four ‘w’s, which are separated with *spatial* attention. When approaching the page by a close-reading exercise, this graphic representation evokes in the readership the ocean’s body that rises and falls against the horizon. The reader’s eyes follow the individual, opening letters of *Zong!* in quiet anticipation, while these slowly re-create the swell of the ocean. In the first line, a movement of down and up is recreated with the lines of a ‘w’; down and up again with a second letter (“w w”); and up and down once more goes the sailing ship in the first three *literal* instances of “*Zong!* #1” (i.e., “w w w”; 3). With them, the murmurs silenced by the swallow of water come alive. Slowly first, then painfully. After a couple of stutters – which are simulated with the ‘w’s that couple gradually with ‘a’ and a loose ‘l’ in one moment, and then with ‘e r’ in another – broken words and fragmented affirmations come into being around the

announcement of “water.” Solitary ‘g’s come together, next, along an exposed page. These imitate the sounds of water-filled lungs, deploying thus Zong’s story from an underwater perspective. Through her ingenious imagery of saltwater as sustaining and surrounding the ship, as well as representing the macabre new “home” of the jettisoned human cargo that is the ocean, Philip goes on to deploy more segments of this historical imagination until implying at the end of the first passage how fresh potable water, not the ocean’s saline water, was “of want” (4).

Though the representation of water implies connectivity beyond numerous lands, epochs, and groups of people, in this *cadre maritime* the ocean is portrayed as none other than as a *space of unarrival* where Zong’s passengers and many other human beings found their untimely place of mooring. In his exploration of “The Open Boat” and its relationship to the consolidation of what he conceptualized as the “poetics of relation,” Glissant approaches the correlation between the sea and the slave ship through the metaphor of an abyss (*Poetics of Relation* 5-9). Thus, he describes the transatlantic voyage by way of the infinite depths of the sea, where many slaves like those aboard Zong were thrown overboard with balls and chains in order to sail faster. These depths he allegorizes furthermore as a *womb* because both the slave ship and the sea are “pregnant with as many dead as living under the sentence of death” (6). Drawing on Glissant, the idea of *unarrival* evokes here the experience of death and the impossibility of continuity as a vital entity due the tyrannical action of having been forcefully taken from Africa and shipped out to the Americas. Because of this, *movement* and *mobility* on account of the ocean do not imply the same thing.

While “movement” refers to displacement between two points and exists abstracted from political, social, or ethical content, “mobility,” stresses Cresswell (4-9), highlights instead how displacement from A to B – as for example the Dutch ship that sailed from the coast of Africa to Jamaica in August 1871 – takes place due to *forces* acting upon human and material entities which install movement within a meaningful reality – in this case, the transatlantic slave trade. These forces correspond fundamentally to what Doreen Massen has referred to as *power geometries*, which define the experience of displacement differentially due to unequal relationships of power. Massey explains how some social groups or individuals (as, for example, Collingwood) have power to initiate movement and thus be in charge of mobility, while others lie prostrate to these. Like the African enslaved people that were forcefully transported upon Zong and then thrown overboard, those oppressed are hence “effectively imprisoned by [mobility]” (“Power-Geometry” 61). As elucidated elsewhere by the author, there is no universal “self-evident right to global mobility” (“Imagining Globalization” 38). Rather, there are power-driven relations structuring and thus determining who is freer and more empowered to initiate flows of movement and who stands at the receiving end of these, subjugated by the former (“Power-Geometry” 61). Accordingly, the

content matter of *Zong!* delineates the correlation of mobility and power geometries by placing the body of saltwater as the linking element structuring their correlation. Under this light, the sea becomes a space cultivating power disparity and its poetization, the stor(y)ing of an Other historical movement.

Itself lacking a fixed abode or a firm materiality, the massive body of water that is the ocean and its seas stands as a space of liquid flows connecting terrestrial cartographies on the one hand, while enabling diverse constellations of mobilities on the other. In the historical imagination versified by *Zong!*, as of other circum-Caribbean poetry for that matter, mobile hierarchies can be extracted by approaching the representation of water as a flowing space where the intertwining of displacement and power is condensed in the form of Afro-, Indo-, and Caribbean-descendant historical imaginations. A close reading of Philip’s opening verses highlights in fact a constellation of differentiated mobilities, such as *enforced departure*, the transatlantic voyage as a *macabre passage*, and *sinking* underwater as collateral damage to modern globalized mobility. The sea-space withholds the experience of unarrival as a metaphor encapsulating the aforementioned power geometries, all necessarily traced by the open boat. Philip’s verse-story portrays moreover the factuality of an open, liquefied graveyard in which the sunken bodies dwell under the rocking ship’s movement, becoming im/mortal.

To be underscored, however, is how these disparaging im/mobilities appear uniquely in Philip’s appropriation of the archival memory of *Gregson vs. Gilbert*, where the duo routes~roots characterizing the Black Atlantic (Gilroy) is re-signified. On the one hand, Philip gives lyrical form to the power geometries of the transatlantic slave trade as those *homicidal sea-routes* – fluid, mobile, never still – charted by the *Zong* and *Collingwood*, while inferring concurrently the experience of *up-rooting*, that is, the despotic mobilization of Black people out of Africa. The sea becomes the space that enables and instrumentalizes this first constellation of mobilities as a dialectic of *uprootings*. On the other hand, by thematizing and underscoring “water / rains & / dead” (“*Zong!* #5”; 8) along her fragmented construction of *Zong*’s historical imagination, *wet roots* appear as the counterpart of such *uprootings*, which distend over and under the ship’s crests after the marine murder. The “perils of water” (9) recreate thus an imagery of *roots* that is indivisible of the memory of *aquatic fatality*. In so doing, death at sea is re-signified as *liquid rooting*, branching out in all directions and creating networks of connectivity between people of the old African land in new American cartographies through ghosts of time past, ever present in the interminable sea-waves and in the stories that tell of the salt-womb abyss. The historical imagination that Philip recreates is therefore in need of a poetic language that can display these marine routes and roots authentically. The short phrases and their spatial display play their part in presenting mobile, fluid,

and never static aquatic sounds. These liquid roots dispose of firm land and, thus, have no earthly branches nor firm roots distending underground.

**Sea Water Have No Branch: Collins’s “Up and Down the Deck” and Nichols’s *I is a Long Memoried Woman***

“Sea water, they always tell us / from experience / have no branch.” Thus begins “Up and Down the Deck” by Grenadian poet Merle Collins (lines 1-3). The poem is part of the collection entitled *Rotten Pomerack*, categorized by literary critic Carole Boyce Davis as an example of “uprising textualities” (111) by black Caribbean women writing in England. The author links the idea of “uprising” to a series of diverse textualities whose purpose is to destabilize the established knowledge, such as, for example, Western historical discourse. Much like Siklosi’s definition of Philip’s verses as a “submarine poetics,” Collins’s poetics is also underlined by Boyce as a creative expression that emerges “upward and outward from constricted and submerged spaces” (111). This “space” is, in fact, the particularity of such “uprising textualities,” which moreover address the voicelessness, or in Boyce’s words, “unheardness” (111) of those relegated voices, pushed to the margins by dominant discourses.

Like Philip’s submarine poetics, Collins, too, expands on a historical imagination from an underwater perspective. Yet, unlike *Zong!*, “Up and Down” suggests an idyllic landscape in which children are on a beached boat. Here, they play “sea-games / on the land / frightened by the sea / haunted by the land” (lines 4-7). They rock the boat as they play “Up and Down the Deck / Keep Moving / Up and Down the Deck / Keep Moving” (lines 16-19). The story unfolds along fourteen stanzas where every new episode portrays a different infantile amusement taking place during these sea-games. Finding a captain for the boat (line 12) or rushing to galley and to quarterdeck (lines 24-25), for example, reenact diversion “in a children’s game of life” (line 54). This game of life, however, is similar to *Zong!* given that in-between imageries of running up and down the boat as galley slaves or as the captain, the children “stop to decide if survival lies / on deck / or overboard” (lines 30-32). Though the children also stop to shout, dance, listen, and look in their joyful enjoyment, in between these euphoric moments of childhood innocence, the sea-games re-enact a historical memory by playfully imitating (from gr. *mimesis*) “a story spawned, perhaps, from yesterday / written on pages that do not fade with time” (lines 51-52). This historical imagination, placed at the margins of History, has to do primarily, like the opening pages of *Zong!*, with “death / remembered” (lines 43-44 and 55-56). It is, however, different in that the poetic sea-games perform and thus constitute a ludic enactment of a “postmemory” that has been inherited from those ancestors that survived to tell about the transoceanic displacement connecting Africa

to the Americas.<sup>8</sup> It is therefore the correlation between the sea/ship and power geometries of the African diaspora of colonial times which provides content and meaning to the children’s game of death remembered, highlighted with the reiteration of “so they tell us.” Even though the boat is beached on firm land and “no ship crossing the Atlantic now” (line 22), the infantile sea-games reenact this inherited postmemory exemplarily. The constellation of mobilities comprised by their ludic enjoyment refers once again to the transatlantic passage as an infinite womb abyss whose depths “speak our dying” (line 36).

Like *Zong!*, Collins’s poem too addresses “death remembered” by an underwater perspective, this time, however, by reiterating that “sea water have no branch.” The repetition of the opening verses in almost identical fashion (lines 1-3, 9-10, and 58-59) underscores the poem’s philosophical dimension by which Collins portrays the perspective of the submerged. “To have no branch” means principally the rupture of life since *branches* are but floating extensions and aerial reflections of underground *roots*. Together, they symbolize both *origins* and *lineage* as a web of kin. The visual metaphor of the family tree as versified by Toronto-based Jamaican poet Afua Cooper in *Memories Have Tongues* (1992) illuminates this. Cooper draws out her familial genealogy in a long prose poem entitled “Roots and Branches” (23-25), where she traces her familial origins in each new stanza with the life stories of her grandfather’s mother, her mother’s father, her grandma Rachel, her father’s maternal grandmother, and her grandfather. The correlation between the title and the content matter of Cooper’s text makes explicit the symbolic parallel between Collins’s sea-games and the disrupted web of kin they suggest. For “Up and Down the Deck” evokes how seawater has no terrestrial ground for earthly roots nor branches to distend upon (i.e., mothers, grandparents, and children), dislocating and shattering the descent of those who, like Zong’s slaves, did not survive the enslaved voyage. The sea-space comprises, instead, roots of water that, in their ever flowing, liquid nature, have become immortal through mnemonic sea-games, overriding mortality per se. Nevertheless, though the ocean also appears in the historical imagination of the playful infants as a site of unarrival, the children themselves stand paradoxically as contrary evidence to the poem’s leitmotiv. Their existence underscores instead survival, fertility, and generations born beyond the violent experience of uprooting and sinking souls, this time in the form of *transrootings*. By playing their games the children furthermore avoid forgetfulness, still being “frightened by the sea and haunted by the land” (lines 6-7). The sea is here represented as a space of *un/arrival*, comprising both liquid uprootings and generational transrootings.

Poet Grace Nichols, winner of the Commonwealth Poetry Prize of 1983 for her poetic anthology *I is a Long Remembered Woman*, versifies, like Philip and Collins, a historical imagination in which the sea-space becomes a place of im/mortality as well. She too displays the power

geometries that both Philip and Collins engage by way of the sea-space and makes use of the trope as a means of storytelling from an underwater perspective and through muted tongues. For author Magali Michael, *I is a Long Memored Woman* stands as a “means of narrativizing an often silenced history of the Atlantic slave trade and its effects” (210). The outcome is Nichols’s creative endeavor to “tell the story Other-wise” (210), as Michael so creatively termed it, for, as explained by the author, it reconfigures traditional historiographical discourse by using a poetic format (214).

In the first part of the anthology, Nichols sets the stage for the transatlantic crossing, which she terms “The Beginning” and across which she deploys a series of aquatic metaphors such as the rain, rivers and coral reefs (“Web of Kin”), the ocean foam and the sea breeze (“Eulogy”), the fire-lashing sea and the maritime womb (“One Continent to Another”). These, in turn, are coupled with symbols of voicelessness such as unsung praises and unheard voices (“We The Women”), dead tongues, whispers, and voices (“Eulogy”). Through this conjunction, Nichols portrays the “Black Beginning” (“One Continent to Another” line 22) of Afro-descendant collective memory as being born out of the mobile globalized slave economy, which she locates at the “middle passage womb” (1).

Just as the children playing up and down the deck, Nichols poetizes too in “Eulogy” “the leaping suicide” (line 17) of those “plunging wildly to the waters / of [their] fate” (lines 43-44). On the other hand, much like the regurgitating water-filled lungs represented in *Zong!*, Nichols’s poem recreates the sounds of voicelessness caught between enforced departure, enslaved displacement, and drowning underwater. While these mobilities are evoked in *Zong!* by marine murder and are brought about by amusing games in “Up and Down the Deck,” Nichols places emphasis on the sea breeze that brings about muted voices as a way of evoking unarrival. As a result, an irrevocable bond is installed between the sea-space and dead whispers, darting voices, and cold and still tongues. As the title indicates, the poem praises and remembers the lives of “. . . the souls / caught in the Middle Passage / limbo” (lines 9-11) and seeks to eulogize the nameless with a “dance of mourning” (lines 36, 40, and 49).

In other words, “Eulogy” panegyricizes flows of death that have become one and the same with the oceanic water by way of unequal power geometries dictating such im/mobile constellations. The sea-space is represented again as an aquatic graveyard which in its fluid, mobile, and never static essence exists in perpetual regeneration. Here, the dead dwell undead. Those “dead ones / who are not dead” (lines 12-13), poetizes the lyrical I, are heard in the “ruptured tones of nostalgia / voices pushed in by the sea breeze” (lines 2-3) that reach her ears, “darting like pains in my head” (line 4). In other words, the “stifled outcries” (Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* 9) that have been muted underwater find their voice in the whispers and cold tongues that are brought about

by the movement of the open sea and by the sound of its crests smashing against and under the sailing boats. It is not gratuitous that Nichols ends her compilation with a short, five-line versification of an “Epilogue,” poeticizing:

I have crossed an ocean  
I have lost my tongue  
from the root of the old  
one  
a new one has sprung. (lines 1-5)

### **Our Story Is Liquid and Unspoken: the Indo-Caribbean Diaspora in Joy Mahabir’s and Mahadai Das’s Poetry**

In *Diasporic (Dis)Locations: Indo-Caribbean Women Writers Negotiate the Kala Pani*, author Brinda Mehta states that “Indo-Caribbean women writers from Guyana and Trinidad have been subjected to a particular literary and cultural eclipsing by their black counterparts” (1). Narrativization of the transoceanic sea journey in Afro-Caribbean poetry has overshadowed the representation of the Indo-Caribbean diaspora in studies concerning neo/colonial and postcolonial experiences of transoceanic mobility, relegating their voices thus to a marginal silence. This is why the following pages shall focus on the representation of the sea-space in Indo-Caribbean poetry by Joy Mahabir and Mahadai Das so as to thread a second lace of the repeating island and bring to the fore yet an Other historical imagination.<sup>9</sup>

Unlike the “black beginning” of Caribbean nonhistory and the Middle Passage womb, Indo-Caribbean history locks into the repeating island dynamics because of the abolition of slavery and when, due to the need of low-cost workers that could continue to carry out the work done beforehand by enslaved Africans in the sugar plantations, British forces decided to mobilize people from India to the Americas as indentured contract laborers from 1838 until its abolishment in 1917. As stated by Joy Mahabir and Mariam Pirbhai, the transoceanic journey by Indian, mostly Hindu, indentured workers was a “momentous catalyst for migration which . . . *remapped* colonial and post-colonial cartographies” (1; emphasis added) of the Americas.

Although indentureship of Indians is analogous to the enslavement of Africans, it is by no means equal to it. While modern world capitalism evolved on account of the triangular trade between Europe, Africa, and the Americas, constituted upon the unfree and forced labor of Africans throughout a prolonged time period, nineteenth-century indentureship took place in a much shorter time scale and meant above all a transformation in the form of labor, as in the sourcing of the labor supply (Cohen 64). Once the slave trade was abolished, laborers were

massively mobilized from India to the Caribbean plantations by colonial powers as wage workers. Lommarsh Roopnarine states that in those eighty years in which the Indian labor diaspora took place, about five hundred thousand indentured Indians were brought to the Caribbean by French, British, Dutch, and Danish governments, most of which found accommodation in British Guyana and Trinidad (*Indian Indenture* 5-7).

Unlike enslaved Africans, the labor conditions of Indian indentured workers stipulated a five-year contract for working in the sugar plantations. In turn, they received a daily wage for their physical effort, were accommodated in free housing facilities, provided with food, and a fully or partially paid return ticket back home was also offered once their indenture period was completed (Cohen 64). Roopnarine affirms that 175,000 workers went back once their contracts expired, a considerable number of them returning a second and even third time, while 350,000 stayed overseas (“Indian Migration” 174). These labor conditions, along with the possibility of rooting in new territories as land-owning settlers (Roopnarine, *Indian Indenture* 9), constituted thus the experience of Indian indentureship as rather dissimilar to the African slave trade. However, notwithstanding the obvious divergences in time, space, and form, both the African slave trade and the Indian labor diaspora share the coupling of power geometries and mobility upon the sea-space as their defining aspects. The sea-journey of the Indian labor diaspora constitutes, as a result, another historical layer of the repeating island, this time in the form of a *Coolie Odyssey* (1988), as appropriately given poetic form by David Dabydeen. While the former finds its historical imagination in the Middle Passage narratives, the latter crystallizes its representation in the form of the *kala pani*.

“Tongues stolen on the kala pani / Our story is liquid and unspoken” – this is how Joy Mahabir starts her poem “Kala Pani Ink” (lines 1-2). A metaphor used by Indo-Caribbean writers to refer to the crossing of “the treacherous waters of the Atlantic” (Mehta, *Diasporic [Dis]Locations* 4), the *kala pani* corresponds to a literary topos in Indo-Caribbean women poets as a way of chronicling and re-imagining the crossing of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans by indentured workers, expressed furthermore from a female-centered perspective that claims *herstory* (Bragard; Mahabir and Pirbhai; Mehta, “*Indianités francophones*”). The *kala pani* refers to a Hindu taboo that warns of the dangers of contamination when distancing themselves from the Ganges’s waters (Bragard 73), which would in turn compromise Hindu quintessence (Mehta, “*Indianités francophones*” 1). This mobile metaphor highlights above all the loss of ties to Indian culture on account of oceanic displacement – very much like Afro-descendant nonhistory –, given that traversing the *kala pani* signified lastly the “absence of ancestral roots” (2).

As defined by Véronique Bragard, the experience of indentured displacement constitutes in fact a “Second Middle Passage” (71) whose story of the past is evoked by the poetization of the *kala pani* and the reference to the coolie. In this case, the term *coolie* denotes the descendants of those indentured Indian peasant workers who originally departed from East India and traversed the oceanic waters until finally arriving in Guyana, Trinidad, Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Mauritius to substitute the African enslaved people in the plantocracy. As illuminated by Khal Torabully, who coined the term *coolitude*,

The term coolie like that of negro, has been used in the past, and continues even today to be used as an insult to the descendants of the overseas indentured laborers.

. . . The coolie was essentially the one who replaced the slave in the plantocratic society. (Carter and Torabully 144)

Müller and Abel (223) elaborate on the subject and explain that the coolie concept is not circumscribed to a geographical nor to an ethnic particularity, but instead highlights the legal and economic circumstances in which contracted laborers from India, as well as from China, Europe, and Africa arrived at the Caribbean shores after the abolishment of slavery. Consequently, the *coolie* represents a metaphor of historical intersecting movements of transoceanic labor migration (222). In Indo-Caribbean poetry it stands, moreover, as a figure granting a space for memory and acknowledgement due to the positive reappropriation of the word by writers, poets, and intellectuals alike. Its symbolic power overturns and thus “re-voices” its historical negative connotation (see Carter and Torabully 117-42). In fact, the first to overturn the pejorative use of “coolie” by appropriating it and redefining it from a gendered perspective was activist Rajkumari Singh with her 1973 essay “I Am a Coolie,” “which celebrate[s] the contribution of Indian women to Guyanese history, culture and economy” (Gramaglia and Jackson 123). For Bragard, both these terms, *kala pani* and *coolie*, embody “a whole past” and both connote “silence, degradation but also strength and plurality” (41). Furthermore, like in the Afro-Caribbean poets discussed previously, the *kala pani* and coolie narratives also utilize the sea and the ship as “metaphors for historical erasure,” asserts Bragard (59), who underscores additionally that these narratives also “confront the accounts of western historical discourse and its many omissions” (66-67).

It is, then, no wonder that the last verses of Mahabir’s “Kala Pali Ink” read “And the *kala pani* waters turn to ink / Immersing us in poetry” (lines 15-16). Water represents here not only the site of thievery and silence, but a healing space as well from where voicelessness, that is, the liquid, unheard history, can be reversed. Despite the fact that the tongues of those eulogized by Nichols have become cold and still as they submerged with their chains underwater, these tongues

overturn voicelessness in the nostalgic tunes that the sea breeze whispers and in the growing of new tongues upon the root of muted ones. The sunken slaves of Zong are also not voiceless, whose drowning sounds are mimicked *literally* on the page by Philip. It is also noteworthy that the sea-games played up and down the deck are set against the background scenery of the beach’s “changing waves” (Collins line 65) and against the “sea’s thundering whisper” (line 64). Likewise, the sea-space in “Kala Pani Ink” has granted those stolen, benumbed coolie tongues a space *for* audibility. Specifically, for women writers who utilize the *topos* to invert the relegated position Indo-Caribbean women have inhabited as a result of male-centered narratives (Mahabir and Purbhai 4). As asserted by Mehta, the *kala pani* is also a discourse of rupture in which Indo-Caribbean women writers find “creative (self-)assertions in literary production” by which a “culturally specific woman-centred Indo-Caribbean experience” can be claimed (*Diasporic [Dis]Locations* 4). “We cry our cry of poetry,” asserts Glissant (*Poetics of Relation* 9), and in *kala pani* narratives too, this cry arises from the womb of those dark oceanic waters only to become whole in the *kala pani ink*.

The interconnections between land and sea are crucial to *kala pani* narratives (Mahabir, “The *Kala Pani* Imaginary” 144). The Indo-Caribbean sea-space *topos*, affirms Bragard, is in fact “intrinsically connected to the hardworking conditions of indentureship” (74). The system was supported by ordinances and laws whose purpose was to make indentured Indians comply, serve, and surrender to the colonial codes of plantation logic on firm land (Roopnarine, “Indian Migration” 174). This labor system thus alludes to the repeating island in the sense that the *kala pani* narratives refer altogether to “another premeditated form of economic servitude [which] ironically coincided with the end of African slavery” (Mehta, “*Indianités francophones*” 1). It necessarily differentiates itself from it, however, because the diasporic crossings of indentured Indian workers occurred “voluntarily,” unlike the *uprooted*<sup>40</sup> Africans who were forced into exile and slavery. Nonetheless, this “voluntary” aspect of transoceanic displacement must be declared as deceiving, given that people who signed such labor contracts did so lured by foreign powers who seduced them with the (false) promise of upward mobility. Indian contract laborers thus “saw indentureship as a way of escaping harsh economic conditions and hunger” in their own country, imagining the possibility of “an easier life in new lands” (Ramnarine 137). Moreover, as explained by Roopnarine, the contracts were drafted and protected under one-sided terms benefiting above all the planters who sought to supplement no-cost slave work with very cheap wage labor so as not to lose any profit. Like the planters of the sugar plantations sustained by African enslaved people, these also “had the upper hand” opposite their subalterns (*Indian Indenture* 10). It has even been affirmed that some, not having signed any contracts, were kidnapped from their land and forcefully brought to the Americas (Ramnarine 137; Roopnarine, *Indian Indenture* 27). Here too,

European powers were in the position to initiate movement, while indentured Indians laid prostrate to their premises and conditions. This, for example, is re-presented across “Kala Pani Ink,” where Mahabir introduces images of “pain and poverty” (line 4), of “young Indians being lynched daily” (line 7), and of “despair” (line 10) in the plantocracy of indentureship.

Mahadai Das’s 1977 notorious poem “They Came in Ships” reconstructs such an elaborate and complex historical imagination by displaying the transoceanic coolie voyage with specific allusions of factual kind. By using historical sources and referring to concrete people and events, Das poetizes the travel and arrival of Indian indentured labor to Caribbean lands together with political and social struggles lived in Guyana both before and after the arrival of Indian coolies. She furthermore elaborates this historical backdrop with mythical, emotional, and symbolic elements of such a historical memory (see Bragard 72-74). The poem is thus tributary of its time, in that it calls for the acknowledgement of the Guyanese Indo-Caribbean community by drawing on the past, pondering about the present, and looking into the future of this minority of migrant origin. Das was, in fact, a literary and political activist in Guyana, by which she aimed to make visible the contributions of Indo-Guyanese artists (Mahabir, “The *Kala Pani* Imaginary” 142).

While the opening lines announce the means of transportation and the site of crossing (“They came in ships. / From far across the seas” [lines 1-2]), next, Das denounces the power geometries drafted upon the sea-space by referring to the “Human victims of Her Majesty’s victory” (line 9). It is until the twenty-fourth line of the poem that the reader finds the “dark waters” of the *kala pani*, which are crossed by those who “came with dreams of milk and honey riches” (line 15), “fleeing famine / and death” (lines 16-17), and “with hope in their heart” (line 27). Given that the *kala pani* historical imagination goes beyond the ocean to evoke the interdependence of the land and the sea, the transoceanic voyage is next completed on firm land with the story of unarrival. Not in the form of liquid death as in Afro-Caribbean poetry discussed previously, but as the unfulfilled dreams that Mahabir also highlights as the unequal dimensions of those one-sided labor contracts. Much like “Kala Pani Ink,” Das’s lyrical I witnesses, too, the transoceanic travelers “dying at the street-corners / Alone and hungry, they died / Starving for the want of a crumb of British bread” (lines 30-32). As a result, we “hear” once and again the “voices crying in the wind” (line 61), “the whimpering of the coolies” (line 70), and “the cry of the coolies” (line 73). Emphasized by images that extend beyond the aquatic dimension, though necessarily comprised by the topos of the *kala pani*, it is on continental land that unequal power dynamics dictating mass mobility of Indians to the Americas, specifically to Guyana, crystallize in Das’s appropriation of the Indo-coolie historical imagination.

Though Indian women travelled as independent laborers with certain economic autonomy (Mahabir, “The *Kala Pani* Imaginary” 148), the numerous mentions of the coolie women in “They Came in Ships” – like the “dancing girls” (line 19), the “stolen wives” (line 22), or the grandmother who worked in the field (line 49) – stand in Das’s poem as the representation of another one of the oppressed victims of the Crown, together with child labor (line 51). Not only this, but the “blood spilled” (line 58) by the “one-third quota / Coolie woman” (lines 56-57) becomes a strong representation of a diverse kind of unarrival. Unlike Collins’s children playing sea-games, Das’s strong metaphor of feminicide reenacts the calculated mobility of women so as to serve as reproducing machines, only to be sacrificed when the quota was over exceeded (cf. Bragard 75). Despite the sea opening paths into the land, where those who survived lastly *arrived*, this violent experience of unarrival makes evident how the *kala pani topos* is indivisible of the painstaking conditions of Indian indentureship. No wonder then, that the lyrical I affirms that “On the platter of plantocracy / They were offered instead disease and death” (lines 28-29). This, in turn, explains why dreams of socioeconomic betterment correlate to mass importation of Indians to the Caribbean and the Americas, as Das refers to it in the last line of her poem, telling of an “endless reality, in chains” (line 91).

### **Semen is Water: Afro-Costa Rican Poets Shirley Campbell Barr and Eulalia Bernard**

As discussed in the previous section, *kala pani* narratives correspond largely to a historical imagination that portrays above all British power geometries after slavery became illicit, overlapping the Middle Passage womb metaphor while simultaneously complementing it. Both lyrical narratives give salient form to plural transoceanic connections between Africa, India, and the Americas and these narratives weave together the threads of heterogeneous and kaleidoscopic versions of the repeating island along the categories of mobility and power. As seen with these mobile metaphors of oceanic voyaging, the sea-space corresponds to an intertextual trope that hints at im/mortality both on the land and in the ocean. Afro-Central American poets also engage the sea-space in this manner and in so doing their poetry outlines yet another layer of the repeating island. Necessarily conjoined to the historical memory of the transatlantic passage due to their African heritage, their poetry goes beyond it by also engaging Other im/mobile constellations that deploy the downward spiral of western neo/colonialism in Central America, one referring to Garifuna historical memory, the other to the Caribbean labor diaspora in the Central American isthmus. These correspond to a third and fourth interlacing of the repeating island’s historical imaginations.

Born in 1965 and raised in San José, the capital of Costa Rica, Shirley Campbell Barr is a fourth generation Costa Rican of Caribbean origin and one of the most celebrated new-generation poets of the country (Mosby 168). Campbell’s life is shaped by the mestizo culture of the capital, rather than by the Caribbean sociocultural heritage of Limón, the Costa Rican Caribbean province where Afro-Caribbeans settled at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She writes solely in Spanish and her poetry is fundamental to the literary canon of both Costa Rica and Afro-Central America, given that she addresses subjects like forced exile, racism and marginalization, and the interlocking of motherhood-womanhood-blackness in her poetry (see Ravasio, *Black Costa Rica* 127-80). Together with other black female writers of the region, Campbell is a crucial figure in the consolidation of an Afro-Latin American literary historiography (De Costa-Williams, “Afro-Hispanic Writers”). Her work speaks a strong feminist worldview as a black, female daughter of the diaspora, by which she dismantles patriarchal stereotypes and racist prejudices of Western society and culture (Solano and Ramírez 157). Moreover, her long, free-versed poems of meta-historical nature tackle the epistemological violence of historical silence and erasure of black cultures in Western knowledge production, as it can be consistently read across her published oeuvre (see Ravasio, *Black Costa Rica* 146-64). Her poetry constitutes, hence, an important literary combat that raises historical consciousness concerning the African and Caribbean diasporas in the Americas.

In a poem with no title pertaining to her first poetic anthology *Naciendo*, Shirley Campbell poetizes traces of Caribbean mobility in Central America with a simile of sea-back turtles that come out of their aquatic home to deploy their being on continental land: “Era como las tortugas / que salen desde su verdad / como la de los hombres / como el océano ...” (lines 1-4). The allegory comes to a full circle by turning to the ocean’s swell, which is compared to the sea-turtles that come back year after year to nest at the same shore. The sea-space is engaged by Campbell in its correlation with sea-turtles as a metaphor for mobility. For, like the turtles, the ocean’s drops of water also *flow*, *pour*, and *discharge* their essence in the form of drops that wet the sandy shores: “como el océano / a derramar sus entrañas / como gotas en la arena / como en otro pueblo / a desovar los hijos” (lines 5-8).

It must be mentioned that Campbell does not necessarily refer here to *transatlantic* mobility, but most likely to oceanic displacement between the Caribbean archipelago and the Central America Caribbean coasts on account of neocolonial economies. The power geometries implied here – embedded in the metaphor of *transrooting* (“desovar huevos”) – refer this time to U.S. presence in the isthmus, which led to a Caribbean labor diaspora to resettle at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Central America. The building of the railroad to the Atlantic

in Costa Rica by Minor Keith (1872-1890), the construction of the Panama Canal under President Roosevelt (1904-1914), and the neocolonial plantocracy of the United Fruit Company’s twentieth-century banana enclaves mobilized in fact thousands of Caribbean men and women to the Central American region as cheap-migrant labor for U.S. transnational affairs at the turn of the centuries, creating, as a result, new generations of Afro-Central Americans (Olien qtd. in Herzfeld 17). Hence “Afro-Central Americans” does not refer here to those descendants of the slave trade in the Central American isthmus, but to the subsequent generations of Afro-Caribbeans born in Central America because of the Caribbean labor diaspora.

Unlike the middle passage narrative, yet similar to the *kala pani* topos, Campbell’s trifold coupling of the sea-turtles~ocean~humans brings to the fore complementary and analogous imageries of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. This time on account of “shifting world economic conditions [which] allowed imperial powers to redirect workers to sites where *labor demands* were greatest” (Butler 201, emphasis added). In this sense, the repeating island extends to the Central American isthmus. Like the *kala pani* narratives, the poetization of the Caribbean labor diaspora in Costa Rica refers to those wage workers that mobilized their bodies in search of better life conditions, *transrooting* to new sites. Unlike the sea-turtles, though, which come back to nest at the same shore because they have internalized the trace of their oceanic wandering, these oceanic drops of water are in turn allegorized as the trail of blood that has been lost in the new towns and lives that Caribbean wageworkers have given birth to in new land. Campbell delivers a strong image of no-return by portraying the sea-space as a site of im/mortality due to the untraceable trajectory of wet blood, whereby ancient traces vanish, and new ones are born (“sin regreso / sin rastro de sangre humedecida”; lines 13-14).

Although Afro-Central American lyrical voices represent the outcome of yet another historical movement giving salient form to the repeating island, one whose historical specificity marks a difference regarding the transatlantic passage in time and space, a collective historical memory of the former is not excluded from the latter. Afro-Costa Rican poet and activist Eulalia Bernard Little also engages the sea-space as a site of im/mortality, comprising both the remembrance of the transatlantic passage *and* of Caribbean displacement in Central America. Yet she goes beyond the desire of return to the imaginary homeland and instead looks into the future by underscoring, as quoted in the epigraph, that black people “do not immigrate, we rotate” (*Griot* 17). A precursor of Campbell, Bernard was born in the Costa Rican Caribbean province of Limón in 1935 and passed away in San José in July 2021. Her parents emigrated from Jamaica and resettled in Costa Rica as labor migrants, where Bernard grew up in constant movement between the capital and the Caribbean province (DeCosta-Willis, *Daughters* 117-18). As a young woman, Bernard

studied abroad in England and the USA, then lived as a cultural attaché in Jamaica, but always came back to settle and be active in her homeland Costa Rica (see Muñoz, “Hold” 6-8). Her importance as a black writer is of fundamental importance in the region, given that she is the first black woman to publish and gain international recognition not only in Costa Rica, but in Latin America as well (Ravasio, “Routes” 116). Thus, Bernard stands as a forerunner of Afra-Latin American poetry and of black female political thought in Central America (Meza 123; Muñoz, “Diálogos”; see Ravasio, *Black Costa Rica* 182-228 and “Negritud”).

Proclaimed as the Griot of the Americas in 1996 by the American African Caribbean Council (Mosby 109), Eulalia Bernard holds a particular place in circum-Caribbean cultural production. As she herself states, “[a]ll my life I have been fighting and writing about the importance of our African heritage. I am one of the first female poets in Latin America to do this” (qtd. in Jackson 122). She is particularly important to Latin American literary historiography because she has done this as an Afra-Central American, that is, as a black Spanish-speaking Central American woman (cf. De Costa-Willis, “Afra-Hispanic Writers” 204), proclaiming furthermore belongingness to the broader Black circum-Atlantic from a region whose story of blackness is constituted by a different spatio-temporal backdrop, not through colonial *mestizaje*, but as a descendant of Caribbean migrant wage workers that settled in Central America at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Her poetry, as that of Campbell, constitutes, thus, another stor(y)ing layer of the repeating island, one which bridges Africa with Central America by way of the Caribbean archipelago.

In a series of interviews with Shirley Jackson, who compiled them into one short dialogue in Miriam De Costa-Willis’s *Daughters of the Diaspora* (122-28), Jackson asks Bernard what water means for her and what relationship does it hold with her ancestors. Bernard answers “[w]ater is life, and life is wisdom.” She goes on to affirm that “I am here because of water” (qtd. in Jackson 123). Her answer, “*I am here because of water,*” refers simultaneously to her origins as a descendant of the “Middle Passage womb” as to the “sea-turtles” allegorized by Campbell. In other words, Bernard engages the subject of Afro-descendant historical memory as a “double Creolized” Afro-Central American (Mosby 118); that is, as a Costa Rican-born Caribbean descendant whose cultural heritage is traversed by her experiences as a black woman growing up in a Spanish-speaking mestizo nation yet expressed most strongly as a daughter of the African diaspora. The title of the poetic anthology published by the Costa Rican Seventh Day Adventist Youth Society – *Griot* – eloquently corroborates the recognition of the poet’s vindication of black culture in Costa Rica and in the world as an Afro-descendant (Ravasio, *Black Costa Rica* 186).

*Griot* contains not only poems in various languages, but also a short essay written by Bernard that she entitled “Meditation for Reflection. Experience of a Griot” (*Griot* 16-17). The

Meditation was composed for a reading at the International Conference on Africa and the Diaspora in Washington D.C. in 1997 (Jackson 126). This is the essay Jackson engages when she poses Bernard the above quoted question, wishing to understand why the Afra-Costa Rican had written “[w]e use our water to clean and transport us to our gods” in her prose reflection (*Griot* 17). In the essay, Bernard refers to the four elements of nature – fire, wind, water, and earth – so as to speak of black emancipation in the Americas. She couples fire to revolt, using Haiti and maroon Jamaica as examples of how “[f]ire is the answer” (16) to the devastating evil rooted in American soil (i.e., slavery) – very much like Nichols explores images of nature to express revolt in the closing segment of *I is a Long Remembered Woman*. Likewise, Bernard refers to water as the home for those who chose the “leaping suicide” that Nichols poeticizes, and that Collins’s children reenact when they “stop to decide if survival lies on deck or overboard.” After affirming the Garinagu people escaped tyranny through *air* and *wind*, Bernard affirms “[o]thers yet chose to wash out of the evil, go under water and sail to freedom” (*Griot* 17). The underwater metaphor is yet again traceable, this time in Afra-Central American poetry.

The sea-space is represented here above all as a site of historical im/mortality because in death lies freedom, and in freedom continuation through the memory of voluntary death. It is not gratuitous that in the poem “Anguish” (first recorded in the vinyl *Negritud* in 1976, later published in 1991) Bernard describes “the depths of the sea” as a place of purification and of transcendence withholding the “incognito of her existence” (*My Black King*).<sup>11</sup> Nor is it coincidence that, by way of simile with the black dock workers of Limón, the sea is described by her as “strong, *fertile* and *free*” (“Dock Workers,” *My Black King*, emphasis added). Simultaneously comprising sovereignty and mortality as the liquified graveyard of *uprootings* on the one hand, the sea-space in Bernard also projects new beginnings, strong branches, and fertile roots in firm land. It is, in fact, the dialectic relationship between the open sea and its terrestrial counterpart where “one vast beginning,” Glissant states, “is marked by these balls and chains *gone green*” (*Poetics of Relation* 6, emphasis added); that is, as those *uprootings* that survived the liquid womb abyss and instead found continuation in the children who play sea-games on the green land, and in the hatched eggs of those oceanic turtles that Campbell poeticizes. It makes thus sense why Bernard creates an allegorical relationship between seawater and *semen* when answering Jackson’s curious enquiry, one that complements to a full extent the middle passage *womb* metaphor and that extends on the sea-space as a site yielding the constant regeneration of life and death. That is, of im/mortality. “Water is life, and life is wisdom. The griot, who cannot come without water, is also wisdom. I am here because of water. I pray over water. Semen is water” (qtd. in Jackson 123).

**El mar fue el único testigo: Honduran Garifuna Poet Xiomara Cacho Caballero**

While Bernard and Campbell relate to Afro-descendant historical memory as Central American women of Caribbean descent, Xiomara Cacho Caballero instead poeticizes the transatlantic passage and posterior mobility across Central America as a Honduran belonging to the ethnic group of African descent Garifuna. Cacho was born in Punta Gorda, Roatán (Honduras) in 1968 and is the first Garifuna woman to publish in her country as well as the first black woman to write prose and poetry in Honduras (Meza 163). Furthermore, her poetry is, like Bernard’s, multilingual. In her 1998 anthology *Tumálali Nanigi. La voz del corazón. The Voice of the Heart*, Cacho creates an intratextual narrative along a fluid multilingualism. Her compilation develops a total of twenty-four poems (divided in groups of eight) in Garifuna, English, and Spanish. As Meza (163) points out, not all poems are found in all languages, which means that the compilation is not a literal translation of one poem in one language to the next, but instead a complex multilingual intratextual creation of Garifuna cultural and historical meaning. In words of literary critic Helen Umaña (739), Cacho’s anthology represents a groundbreaking publication because, for the first time in Honduran lyrical historiography, a Garifuna woman uses poetry as a means of cultural integration.

In *Tumálali Nanigi*, the sea-space is also portrayed by Cacho as the site where power geometries determined the mobile history of the Garinagu people. Though the localized specificity of the Garinagu’s historical movements differentiates itself from those descendants of the African slave trade, as well as from the Caribbean and Indian labor diaspora, it is precisely because of the differences that the repeating island can be perceived as a symphonic movement of repetition and reiteration along difference – the sea-space being the linking element. In this sense, Cacho’s historical imagination refers to the seventeenth-century shipwrecked maroon slaves that, after surviving the ocean, co-existed in St. Vincent with the autochthonous Caribs. Later, having supported the French against the British in the fight over the island, the descendants of the maroon slaves were deported by the British to the Honduran island of Roatán on April 11, 1797 (González 39). This mobile story became nonetheless once again re-routed throughout the nineteenth century with later dispersal of the Garinagu people across Belize, Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua (51-73) and, since the 1950s, to the U.S. in search of better life opportunities (Greene 198). Drawing on Afua Cooper’s eloquent title, memories do, in fact, have tongues and Cacho’s multilingual poetry tells of how “Garifuna existence is about routes and roots” (Prescod 15). The sea-space provides testimony thereof.

Like Philip, Collins, and Nichols, the Garifuna poet also gives lyrical presence to *el mar* by describing it as the space of unarrival and of muteness. The correlation of mobility and power geometries is made palpable by way of water in Cacho’s poem entitled “Ancestros.” The sea is

evoked in the opening lines as the only witness of death remembered: “¿Cuántos de ellos murieron? / El mar fue el único testigo / De aquellos que vinieron / A abrir camino a la América” (lines 1-4). The versification of terrestrial transrootings on account of power-driven aquatic uprootings between Africa, the Caribbean, and Central America is here emphasized with the image of ‘opening paths’ (“abrir camino”). The lyrical I stresses, furthermore, the unequal dimensions of transoceanic and regional Caribbean mobility in each stanza by repeating that many died due to anguish (“angustias”), pain (“dolor”), and hopelessness (“desesperanza”).<sup>12</sup> They all are consequences brought about by the dehumanization (“deshumanización”) intrinsic to the practices of enforced repatriation lived by the Garinagu. Yet, Cacho expands on this historical movement of the middle passage womb by tying it to the more present experience of “rotation” (*sensu* Bernard), that is, of migration from Central America to the U.S. Complementarily, the poet portrays Garifuna mobility in the poem entitled “Relying” as “blocked by domination” (line 2) where “enclave work” (line 6) “ships” them out “to the USA” (line 9). The sea-space in “Ancestros” thus comprises the idea of enforced mobility as the necessary condition for the Garinagu people’s subsequent experience of ‘rotation’ as portrayed in “Relying”, where mobility continues to be a condition drawn out by uneven dimensions of supremacy and dependency, determining those “endless realities in chains” that Das underscores in “They Came in Ships.”

Death remembered is furthermore coupled in “Ancestros” with screams (“gritos”), howling (“alaridos”), and songs (“cantos”) and, like Campbell, Cacho too evokes tunes sung in remembrance of the blood trails lost upon the paths of the ocean: “Cuántos cantos sobre ese movimiento; / Cuántos cantos por la sangre” (lines 7-8). Even though those muffled tongues and dead voices have remained unheard (“pero ninguno fue escuchado”), Cacho rescues those silenced voices in the poem “Tambor.” Here, she affirms these voices are heard loud and strong, immortal, in the drums that the children beat: “¡Cómo tocan el tambor los niños de mi pueblo! / Conservan lo de sus ancestros, / Hablan de su identidad” (lines 13-15).

Like the sea-space, the poetic representation of the instrument of drums constitutes another intertextual trope of Garifuna historical and cultural memory, overstepping geographical and national boundaries. Similarly to Cacho, for example, Nicaraguan Garifuna Isabel Estrada Colindres’s poem “Yesterday” thematizes drums at the heart of Garifuna cultural heritage. She poetizes how “Garifuna, garifuna, garifuna / yesterday, today, forever / our voice will shout all over” and that it is in the “sound of my father drum / drum, drum, drum / the sound of my grandfather drum” (qtd. in Meza 120-21). It is in their beating where the stifled murmurs become audible.

Likewise, just like Cacho and Estrada turn “tambores” and “drums” into an allegory of Garifuna voices heard over the ocean’s swell, “Drums of My Fathers” by Belizean Garifuna Roy Cayetano “tells the story of the Garifuna and the Caribbean man” (Cayetano, “Introduction” ii). The poem is comprised in *Chüliiba Das. It’s about Time*, a Garifuna-English compilation of poems edited by Belizeans Marcela Lewis, Fabian Cayetano, and Roy Cayetano, published in 1977. These printed multilingual poems were first performed orally in Garifuna, then transcribed, and finally translated “line by line” by Roy Cayetano (Cayetano, “Introduction” i). In his introduction to the compilation, the author explains that some of the anthology’s poems “have been recited at national Miss Garifuna contests.” His own piece, “Drums of my Fathers,” he goes on to state, “was also read by me at the two contests” (ii). In this monumental piece, Cayetano underscores how his spirit and voice “will not be quieted / will not be muffled” (lines 73-74), for he is “the hollowed / hallowed / haloed trunk” (lines 75-77) bringing together Africa, the Amazon, and the Orinoco (line 80 and 83). The use of the image of a circle of light (*halo*) represents the im/mortality of those

dragged across the Atlantic

and dumped on the golden studs and shores

OF THE CARIB-BEING WATERS. (lines 85-88)

Cayetano’s play of words, who have furthermore given title to this paper, evokes creatively the role that the sea-space had in the consolidation of the Garinagu people as maroon Afro-*Carib* descendants, who despite having disappeared as a group due to neo/colonial forces, have extended their *beings* as Garinagu in Belize, Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua – lands connected by the Caribbean Sea. Once again, the sea-space comprises a site of im/mortality, in which the quintessence of Garifuna historical imagination is allegorized as that of *Carib/being water*.

### **Conclusion: The Swell of the Sea**

The swell of the sea, as portrayed in diverse poetry from the circum-Caribbean region, has been closely read across these pages. In so doing, the lyrical representations of the sea-space have been subjected to a hermeneutical reading that has explored not only the mobile metaphors portrayed by means of the sea-trope but, most importantly, their historical dimension as well. Consequently, *verse narratives* that deploy diverse historical imaginations can be read across the heterogenous manifestations of the sea-trope in the chosen Afro-, Indo-, and Central American Caribbean poetry. Be it in lyrical imageries pertaining to the slave trade or to the subsequent Indian and Caribbean labor diasporas, the sea-trope represents the recognizable link that stresses the intersections between middle passage-, kala pani-, and neocolonial-verse narratives. Together they

give salient form to the “repeating island” through mobile metaphors of uprooting, transrooting, and un/arrival.

As the present paper has shown, these lyrical narratives are moreover of intertextual nature, for the study of the sea-trope has brought to the surface a common, shared submarine perspective which illustrates the ocean as a space where the dead dwell undead and where survival has been possible despite the aquatic graveyard. On the one hand, Afro-Caribbean mobile metaphors of enforced departure, transoceanic enslaved displacement, and sinking underwater were found in NourbeSe, Collins, and Nichols alike. Transoceanic displacement in the form of the *kala pani* and the coolie voyage, on the other, together with imageries of upward immobility upon arrival on land speak, too, of deterritorialization and reterritorialization in Indo-Caribbean historical imagination – as portrayed in Mahabir’s and Das’s poems. These historical mobilities are furthermore conveyed as well between the Caribbean islands and the Central American isthmus by the mobile image of sea-turtles in Campbell, of semen in Bernard, and of rotation and the instrument of drums in Cacho. The sea-trope, hence, becomes a means for tracing the *uprootings* and *transrootings* that the geography of water has facilitated between Africa, India, the Caribbean islands, and the Americas across time. Its correlation to the land is furthermore of utmost importance, for it is here where the experience of *un/arrival* and of *im/mortality* are crystallized. New questions arise here necessarily, for if the land is but an extension of the sea, how does the “repeating island” unfold from the bathed ocean shores into the mainland? Which means of transportations complement the ship upon firm ground? Which are its mobile metaphors? How are the mobile metaphors upon dry land similar or dissimilar to those disclosed here and why? An approach to the literary portrayal of the *train* represents breaking ground for the study of the “repeating island” and the fundamental correlation of the sea and land in historical movement (see Ravasio, *This Train* and “Rail Intertextuality”).

It must also not be left unsaid that the sea-trope scrutinized here has summoned above all “death remembered” from an underwater perspective, be it through infantile sea-games, remembrance of leaping suicide and of the treacherous black waters, or as sinking balls and chains and lost blood trails. This, in turn, has proven to be a lyrical strategy. By coupling death remembered with stifled murmurs, sea whispers, drowning cries, and muteness, these women poets have made use of the sea-trope as a means for overturning the voicelessness of Other histories at the circum-Caribbean. The underwater perspective re-signifies the sea as a literary space for confronting historical violence, both physical and epistemological. It is, thus, transformed into a space for healing through writing. It is not gratuitous that the present study has focused above all on representations of brutality, agony, and pain as counterparts of the sea-trope, given the

historical injustices that the sea-space withholds in its depths. Yet, what other mobile metaphors are connected to the sea-trope in circum-Caribbean poetry that may expand on the discourse of justice from a point of view that draws not only from oppression and experiences of abuse and inequality, but instead from joy, bliss, and gratification? What counter-movements intersect at the sea-trope in other types of writing in the circum-Caribbean and how would they complement the metaphors of uprooting, transrooting, un/arrival, and im/mortality from a perspective of reconciliation and understanding? Can discursive amends, however, be mobilized without lyrical portrayals of violence?

In conclusion, a close reading of the narrativization of mobility portrayed upon and across the sea-space in circum-Caribbean poetry makes evident the exacerbated inequality that characterized global colonial and neocolonial practices of mobility between the above-mentioned continents – linked and superposed by way of the salt water. By extracting an intertextuality of mobile metaphors, the repeating island has been traced across historical imaginations that overlap each other and create a kaleidoscopic image of historical movement at the circum-Caribbean. In the lyrical portrayal of the middle passage, the *kala pani*, and the routes and roots of Central Americans of Caribbean origin, the poetization of the sea-space recreates liquid traces of history by introducing heterogeneity and circularity into the imagery of historical progress, reconstituting what Walter Benjamin criticized as “homogeneous, empty time” (261). The lyrical sea-space outlines instead the struggles and power geometries which have determined and continue to regulate the structural and recurrent patterns that give striking form to the shores of the Americas, bathed by the ocean’s infiniteness.

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> The lyrical semiotics of saltwater are approached here from the perspective of Mobility Studies because it underscores how past, present, and future realities exist above all as intersecting networks that have been determined by various and diverse types of movement – be it of people, ideas, or of objects (see Sheller and Urry; Urry).

<sup>2</sup> The concepts of *openness* and *barrier-less* named here are an appropriation of Doreen Massey’s elucidation of the history of modernity as re-framed by post-colonial studies and the spatialization of globalization (“Imagining Globalization”). Massey pleads for imagining globalization not from a temporal viewpoint, but by focusing on space, too, so as to globalize *and* spatialize the story of modernity conjointly. Though Massey does not engage the sea-space specifically in her argument, certain affirmations become highly relevant to the ensuing analysis, which I appropriate in my discussion.

<sup>3</sup> The interdisciplinary project “The Americas as a Space of Entanglements,” funded by the German Ministry of Education and Research, was carried out by the Center for InterAmerican Studies at Bielefeld University (2013-2019; visit [www.uni-bielefeld.de/\(en\)/cias/entangled\\_americas/ueber-uns.html](http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/(en)/cias/entangled_americas/ueber-uns.html)). Various publications on the entanglement of the Americas link the project to the development of the emerging field of Inter-American Studies, whose objective is to create a horizontal model of dialogue between Latin American, Caribbean, American, and Canadian Studies. The present essay aligns itself with this perspective. For further reading, see the Routledge Handbook Series edited by the Center for InterAmerican Studies (Kaltmeier et al., *The Routledge Handbook to the History and Society*; Kaltmeier et al., *The Routledge Handbook to the Political Economy and Governance*; Raussert et al., *The Routledge Companion to Culture and Media*). For further information on Inter-American Studies, see Raussert, *The Routledge Companion to Inter-American Studies*; Raussert et al., *Key Tropes*, and Graham and Raussert.

<sup>4</sup> In my exploration of literary trainscapes (*This Train*), I focused on mobile metaphors depicted by train-caused mobility in twentieth-century literature from the Americas to extract a dialectic of im/mobilities that portrayed the (fictional and factual) correlation of spatial mobility and social immobility. Metaphors of *unarrival* were here first approached by me as unfulfilled dreams of socioeconomic betterment. The discussion of the sea-space as a site of unarrival differs, however, to these findings in that the historical imagination being interpreted in this article refers to other historical backdrops as those studied in *This Train*, which are furthermore propelled by the ship rather than by the train. Nonetheless, it must be noted that a parallel exists between both systems of mobility and that both, in fact, give salient form to the repeating island in a complementary manner.

<sup>5</sup> That is, “Sea is History” and “The unity is sub-marine” (Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*).

<sup>6</sup> I am drawing here on Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido who define “voicelessness” as the historical absence of women’s voice in critical dialogues concerning slavery, history, and colonialism, among other subjects. The concept of voicelessness refers not only to invisibility and exclusion, but mainly to the fact that women’s articulations on such subjects have remained “unheard” (1). It thus highlights the effect of having a voice and uttering meaningful speech, yet its audibility has been placed at the margins. I appropriate here the concept when referring to the unheard voices of the transatlantic African victims, which have become in the last decades part of the critical dialogues concerning modernity.

<sup>7</sup> This is a recurring literary strategy in Philip, who, in *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks*, addresses poetically how “the question of language is the answer to power” (see 43-50). See also “Discourse on the Logic of Language” (29-34).

<sup>8</sup> Developed by Marianne Hirsch, the concept of postmemory corresponds to a traumatic historical memory that has been transmitted by the victims to their posterior generations in such an intense manner that, although it antecedes them, it has become part of their own individual historical memory. Storytelling is central to its transmission, which occurs along two complementary levels. While a “familial transmission” comprises the tellings passed on from the victims directly to their offspring, the “affiliative transmission” expands beyond the second generation and instead includes a broader horizontal network (114-15). Though Hirsch explores the postmemory of the Holocaust, she also asserts that other contexts of traumatic historical events yield this type of memory among their descendants (108). The Middle Passage constitutes one of these exemplary cases.

<sup>9</sup> Mahadai Das, born in British Guyana in 1954, is a fundamental writer of the Indo-Caribbean literary tradition (Mahabir and Pirbhai 7). For further readings on her life, death, and her revolutionary Indo-Caribbean feminist aesthetics, see Mehta, “*Diasporic (Dis)Locations*” (1-27). Joy Mahabir is Associate Professor in the Department of English at Suffolk County Community College, and her co-edited volume *Critical Perspectives on Indo-Caribbean Women’s Literature* marks a landmark regarding the overturning of Indo-Caribbean women writers’ voicelessness.

<sup>10</sup> Derived from “uprooted”, the term *uprooted* is written here with *-ou-* instead of *-oo-* with the purpose of emphasizing the routes of displacement.

<sup>11</sup> Bernard’s first cultural product was a vinyl entitled *Negritud*, recorded in 1976. Comprising her own declamations, the record also includes a series of musical pieces that create meaning transmedially along her linguistic repertoire of Spanish, English, and Limon Creole (the language of Costa Rican-born Caribbean descendants in Costa Rica). “Anguish” was recorded first in this album and then published in her 1991 compilation *My Black King*. For groundbreaking studies on *Negritud*, see Ravasio (“*Negritud*”; “Routes”) and Muñoz (“Una poética-política”).

<sup>12</sup> Given that the poem is distributed on the page along two columns after the first two stanzas, it is not possible to quote the verses according to lines or stanzas.

---

**Works Cited**

- Baugh, Edward. “The West Indian Writer and his Quarrel with History (1976).” *Small Axe*, vol. 38, July 2012, pp. 60-74.
- Benítez-Rojo, Antonio. *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*. Translated by James Maraniss, Duke UP, 1996.
- Benjamin, Walter. “Theses on the Philosophy of History.” *Illuminations*, edited and with an introduction by Hannah Arendt. Translated by Harry Zohn, 5th ed., Schocken Books, 1978, pp. 253-64.
- Bernard Little, Eulalia. *Griot*. Seventh Day Adventist Youth Society, 1997.
- . *My Black King. A Collection of Poetry*. World Peace University, 1991.
- Butler, Kim. “Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse.” *Diaspora*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2001, pp. 189-219.
- Boyce Davies, Carole and Elaine Savory Fido. “Introduction.” *Out of the Kumbula*, edited by Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido, Africa World Press, 1990, pp. 1-24.
- Boyce Davies, Carole. “Black British Women Writing the Anti-Imperialist Critique.” *Writing New Identities: Gender, Nation, and Immigration in Contemporary Europe*, edited by Gisela Brinker-Gabler and Sidonie Smith, U of Minnesota Press, 1997, pp 100-17.
- Bragard, Véronique. *Transoceanic Dialogues. Coolitude in Caribbean and Indian Ocean Literatures*. Peter Lang, 2008.
- Brathwaite, Edward Kamau. “Caribbean Man in Space and Time.” *Savacou*, no. 11-12, 1975, pp. 1-11.
- Cacho Caballero, Xiomara. “Tambor.” *Tumálali Nanigi. La voz del corazón. The Voice of the Heart*. Grupo Editorial Graficentro, 1998, p. 3.
- . “Relying.” *Tumálali Nanigi. La voz del corazón. The Voice of the Heart*. Grupo Editorial Graficentro, 1998, p. 11.
- . “Ancestros.” *Tumálali Nanigi. La voz del corazón. The Voice of the Heart*. Grupo Editorial Graficentro, 1998, p. 12.
- Campbell Barr, Shirley. “Era como las tortugas”. *Naciendo*. S. Campbell, 1988, p. 28.
- Carter, Marina and Khal Torabully. *Coolitude: An Anthology of the Indian Labour Diaspora*. Anthem Press, 2002.
- Cayetano, Roy. “Introduction.” *Chuluba Dan / It’s About Time*, edited by Marcella Lewis, et al, Publisher not identified, 1977, pp i-ii.
- . “Drums of my Fathers.” *Chuluba Dan / It’s About Time*, edited by Marcella Lewis, et al, Publisher not identified, 1977, pp 22-25.
- Cohen, Robin. *Global Diasporas. An Introduction*, 2nd ed., Routledge, 2008. Print.
- Collins, Merle. “Up and Down the Deck.” *Rotten Pomerack*. Virago Press, 1992, pp. 7-9.
- Cooper, Afua. *Memories Have Tongues*. Black Women and Women of Colour Press, 1992.
- Cresswell, Tim. *On The Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World*. Routledge, 2006.
- Dabydeen, David. *Coolie Odyssey*. Hasib Publishing Limited and Dangaroo Press, 1988.
- Das, Mahadai. “They Came in Ships.” *A Leaf in His Ear. Collected Poems*. Peepal Tree, 2010, pp. 25-27.
- De Costa-Willis, Miriam. “Afra-Hispanic Writers and Feminist Discourse.” *NWSA Journal*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1993, pp. 204-17.
- DeLoughrey, Elizabeth M. *Routes and Roots. Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures*. U of Hawaii P, 2007.
- Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Verso, 2002.
- González, Nancie L., *Soujourners of the Caribbean. Ethnogenesis and Ethnohistory of the Garifuna*. U of Illinois P, 1988.
- Glissant, Édouard. *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*. Translated by Michael Dash, UP of Virginia,

- 1999.
- . *Poetics of Relation*. Translated by Betsy Wing, U of Michigan P, 2010.
- Gramaglia, Letizia and Joseph Jackson. “The broad Breast of the Land: Indo-Caribbean Feminism and Mahadai Das.” *Critical Perspectives of on Indo-Caribbean Women’s Literature*, edited by Joy Mahabir and Marian Pirbhai, Routledge, 2013, pp. 121-37.
- Greene, Oliver Jr. “Music behind the mask: men, social commentary and identity in *Wanáragua* (John Canoe).” *The Garifuna: A Nation Across Borders. Essays in Social Anthropology*, edited by Joseph O. Palacio, Cubola Productions, 2006, pp. 196-229.
- Graham, Maryemma and Wilfried Raussert, editors. *Mobile and Entangled America(s)*. Routledge, 2016.
- Harris, Wilson. “History, Fable and Myth in the Caribbean and Guianas (1970).” *Caribbean Quarterly*, vol. 54, no. 1-2, 2008, pp. 5-37, doi: 10.1080/00086495.2008.11672333.
- Herzfeld, Anita. “Vida o muerte del criollo limonense.” *Revista de Filología y Lingüística de la Universidad de Costa Rica*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1978, 17-24, doi: 10.15517/rfl.v4i2.15933.
- Hirsch, Marianne. “The Generation of Postmemory.” *Poetics Today*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2008, pp. 103-28, doi: 10.1215/03335372-2007-019.
- Jackson, Shirley. “‘Our Weapon is Strong Language.’ A Conversation with Eulalia Bernard.” *Daughters of the Diaspora*, edited by Miriam De Costa-Willis, Ian Randle Publishers 2003, pp. 122-28.
- Kaltmeier, Olaf. “General Introduction to the Routledge Handbook to the History and Society of the Americas.” *The Routledge Handbook to the History and Society of the Americas*, edited by Olaf Kaltmeier, et al, Routledge, 2019, pp. 1-12.
- Kaltmeier, Olaf, et al, editors. *The Routledge Handbook to the History and Society of the Americas*. Routledge, 2019.
- . *The Routledge Handbook to the Political Economy and Governance of the Americas*. Routledge, 2020.
- Laertius, Diogenes. *Lives of Eminent Philosophers I. Book 1-5*. Translated by Robert Drew Hicks, 2nd. ed., Harvard UP, 1972.
- Mahabir, Joy. “Kala Pani Ink.” *Anturium: A Caribbean Studies Journal*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2010, p. 19, doi: 10.33596/anth.152.
- . “The *Kala Pani* Imaginary. A Survey of Indo-Caribbean Women’s Poetry.” *Critical Perspectives of on Indo-Caribbean Women’s Literature*, edited by Joy Mahabir and Mariam Pirbhai, Routledge, 2013, pp. 141-61.
- Mahabir, Joy, and Mariam Pirbhai. “Introduction: Tracing an emerging Tradition.” *Critical Perspectives of on Indo-Caribbean Women’s Literature*, edited by Joy Mahabir and Mariam Pirbhai, Routledge, 2013, pp. 1-21.
- Massey, Doreen. “Power-Geometry and a progressive Sense of Place.” *Mapping the Futures. Local Cultures, Global Change*, edited by Jon Bird, et al, Routledge, 1993, pp. 59-69.
- . “Imagining Globalization: Power-Geometries of Time-Space.” *Global futures. Migration, Environment and Globalization*, edited by Avtar Brah, et al, Palgrave Macmillan, 1999, pp. 27-44.
- Mehta, Brinda J. *Diasporic (Dis)Locations: Indo-Caribbean Women Writers Negotiate the Kala Pani*. U of the West Indies P, 2004.
- . “*Indianités francophones*: Kala Pani Narratives.” *L’Ésprit Créateur*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2010, pp. 1-11, doi: 10.1353/esp.0.0229.
- Meza, Consuelo. “Memoria, identidad y utopía en la poesía de las escritoras afrocentroamericanas: relatos de vida.” *Mujeres en las literaturas indígenas y afrodescendientes en América Central*, edited by Consuelo Meza Márquez and Magda Zavala González, Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes, 2015, pp. 119-85.
- Michael, Magali Cornier. “Telling history other-wise: Grace Nichols’ *I Is a Long Memored Woman*.” *Reclaiming home, remembering motherhood, rewriting history: African American and Afro-Caribbean women’s literature in the twentieth century*, edited by Verena Theile and Marie Drews, Cambridge

- 
- Scholars Publishing, 2009, pp 212-34.
- Mosby, Dorothy. *Place, Language, and Identity in Afro-Costa Rican Literature*. U of Missouri P, 2003.
- Müller, Gesine and Johanna Abel. “Cultural Forms of Representation of ‘Coolies’: Khal Torabully and his Concept of Coolitude.” *Bonded Labour. Global and Comparative Perspectives (18<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Century)*, edited by Sabine Damir-Geilsdorf, et al, transcript Verlag, 2016, pp. 219-28, doi:10.14361/9783839437339-010.
- Muñoz, Marianela. “Diálogos de Eulalia: la forja de una intelectual negra en Centroamérica.” *Poligramas*, n. 51, 2020, pp. 12-36, doi: 10.25100/poligramas.v0i51.10895.
- . “‘Hold the stars’: trayectoria y legado político de Eulalia Bernard Little.” *Temas de nuestra América. Revista de Estudios Latinoamericanos*, vol. 38, no. 71, 2022, p. 1-17, doi:10.15359/tdna.38-71.4.
- . “Una poética-política de la negritud en Costa Rica: el caso de Eulalia Bernard.” *Congreso. La creación artística en la década de 1970*, edited by Maria José Monge Picado, Fundación Museos Banco Central de Costa Rica, 2019, pp. 153-58.
- Nichols, Grace. *I is a Long Memored Woman*. 4th ed., Karnak House, 1990.
- . “One Continent to Another.” *I is a Long Memored Woman*. 4th ed., Karnak House, 1990, pp. 5-9.
- . “Eulogy.” *I is a Long Memored Woman*. 4th ed., Karnak House, 1990, pp. 16-7.
- . “Epilogue.” *I is a Long Memored Woman*. 4th ed., Karnak House, 1990, p. 87.
- Oldham, James. “Insurance Litigation Involving *Zong* and Other British Slave Ships, 1780-1807.” *The Journal of Legal History*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2007, pp. 299-318, doi: 10.1080/01440360701698437.
- Philip, Marlene NourbeSe. *Zong! As Told to the Author by Setaey Adumu Boateng*. Wesleyan UP, 2008.
- . *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks*. Wesleyan UP, 2013.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. Routledge, 1997.
- Prescod, Paula. “On Routes and Roots: Movement and Rootedness in Garifuna Culture.” *Mobile and Entangled America(s)*, edited by Maryemma Graham and Wilfried Raussert, Routledge, 2016, pp. 13-23.
- Ramnarine, Tina Karina. “‘Indian’ Music in the Diaspora: Case Studies of ‘Chutney’ in Trinidad and in London.” *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1996, pp. 133-53, doi:10.1080/09681229608567251.
- Ravasio, Paola. *Black Costa Rica: Pluricultural Belonging in Afro-Costa Rican Poetry*. Würzburg UP, 2020, doi: 10.25972/WUP-978-3-95826-141-9.
- . “Negritud de Eulalia Bernard.” *Caribbean Worlds – Mundos Caribeños – Mondes Caribéens*, edited by Gabriele Knauer and Ineke Phaf-Rheinberger, Iberoamericana / Vervuert, 2020, pp. 347-69.
- . “Rail Intertextuality: A Time-Travel Escapade upon the Iron Rails of the Americas.” *Forum for Inter-American Research (fiar)*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2021, pp. 10-24, interamerica.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/ravasio.pdf.
- . “The Routes of Soundpoems: Nation Language in Central America.” *Cultural Mobilities Between Africa and the Caribbean*, edited by Birgit Englert, Barbara Gföllner, Sigrid Thomsen, Routledge, 2021, pp. 114-32, doi: 10.4324/9781003152248.
- . *This Train is Not Bound to Glory: A Study of Literary Trainscapes*. Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier / U of New Orleans P, 2021.
- Raussert, Wilfried. “Introduction.” *The Routledge Companion to Inter-American Studies*, edited by Wilfried Raussert, Routledge, 2017, pp. 1-12.
- , editor. *The Routledge Companion to Inter-American Studies*. Routledge, 2017.
- Raussert, Wilfried, et al, editors. *Key Tropes in Inter-American Studies. Perspectives from the forum for inter-american research (fiar)*. Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier / Bilingual Press, 2015.
- . *The Routledge Companion to Culture and Media of the Americas*. Routledge, 2019.
- Roopnarine, Lommarsh. “Indian migration during indentured servitude in British Guiana and

- Trinidad, 1850-1920.” *Labor History*, vol. 52, no. 2, 2011, pp. 173-91, doi:10.1080/0023656X.2011.571473.
- . *Indian Indenture in the Danish West Indies, 1863-1873*. Palgrave McMillan, 2016.
- Sheller, Mimi, and John Urry. “The New Mobilities Paradigm.” *Environment and Planning A*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2006, pp. 207-26, doi: 10.1068/a37268.
- Siklosi, Kate. “‘the absolute / of water’: The Submarine Poetic of M. NourbeSe Philip’s *Zong!*” *Canadian Literature*, no. 228-229, 2016, p. 111, doi: 10.14288/cl.v0i228-9.187574.
- Umaña, Helen. *La palabra iluminada. El discurso poético en Honduras*. Letra Negra, 2006.
- Urry, John. *Sociology Beyond Societies. Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century*. Routledge 2000.
- Walcott, Derek. “The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?” *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1974, pp. 3-13.
- . “The Muse of History.” *Is Massa Day Dead? Black Moods in the Caribbean*, edited and with an introduction by Orde Coombs, Anchor Books, 1974, pp. 1-27.
- . *The Star-Apple Kingdom*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979.
- Webster, Jane. “The *Zong* in the Context of the Eighteenth-Century Slave Trade.” *The Journal of Legal History*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2007, pp. 285-98, doi: 10.1080/01440360701698403.
- Woodard, Helena. *Slave Sites on Display. Reflecting Slavery’s Legacy through Contemporary ‘Flash’ Moments*. UP of Mississippi, 2019.