The global Pan-African consciousness of Africans in the Caribbean was forged in the belly of the slave ships. The bond was formed from their awareness of a common horrid circumstance, and the solidarity that must persist in order to bear and surpass their new situation. In foreign lands the communities of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Africans endured the horrors of slavery as one people (as Africans), but emerged as African Caribbean/Afro-Caribbean by the end of the nominal slavery system. Today, the Afro-Caribbean—similar to the majority of African descendants across the globe—continues to face the lasting political and socio-economic aftermaths of slavery and the various subsequent modes of lasting exploitations. For the purpose of conceptual clarification, it is important to briefly recollect the distinction between the principles and objectives of continental Pan-Africanism in relation to global Pan-Africanism. The continental Pan-African vista of the 1900s sought to politically unify Africa, after the European conquest and their arrogated division of Africa during the Berlin Conference. The random, yet authoritative, geographic split of African communities in 1884–1885, without regard to religion, existing socio-political structures and traditions, made way for a more exploitable Africa. This new level of destabilization of the continent, preceded by the consistent break down of their communities for nearly four hundred years—during the Transatlantic Slave Trade—all created lasting upheaval and conflicts within the continent and among Africans. Thus, continental Pan-Africanism’s foremost objective was to ideologically and politically re-unify the continent, for the psychological rehabilitation and material advancement of its inhabitants. Its proponents include Edward Wilmot Blyden (the known ideological father), Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Émery Lumumba, Ahmed Sékou Touré, and Modibo Keïta, to name a few. Global Pan-Africanism is the Pan-African perspective and way of life—among African descendants—that valorize Africa’s past. Global Pan-Africanism sought/seeks to preserve Africa’s cultural traditions (manifested through religion or systems of spirituality, the arts, particularly music, and philosophies of life: political and social); it affirms an African personality, that is the African descendants’ ways of conceiving and being in the world, based on both ancient traditions and historical realities of enslavement and continuing disenfranchisement; lastly, it recognizes the fundamental solidarity that must remain in practice between descendants of Africa—across the globe—for rehabilitation from their common inhumane historical circumstances, as well as
for preparation for an equitable future within the global world. This present essay focuses on the illustrations of Pan-African praxis in Afro-Caribbean Literature. The essay studies the migration and exchanges of ideas within the Caribbean and, inescapably, to and from the region. It is worth noting that within the framework of both post-Transatlantic Slave Trade and post Berlin Conference, the ideological predecessor of the 1900’s Pan-African movement is the Caribbean-born Edward Wilmot Blyden. In its essence, Garveyism—established by the Caribbean-born Marcus Mosiah Garvey Jr.—is an advanced formulation of Blyden’s ideals, postulated in the 1800s. Garvey’s Pan-African perspective—through Garveyism—is at once continental (with the focus on Africa) and global.

The historical Pan-African perspective in Caribbean literature

In 1983 Tony Martin published Literary Garveyism. Professor Martin’s compilation of Garveyist and Pan-African works includes not only African American artists who published in the Negro World, it also examines the works of African Caribbean-born artists such as Joel Augustus Rogers’ From Superman to Man (1917) and René Maran’s Batouala; Véritable Roman Nègre (1921) (Batouala; A True Negro Novel). Situated in Harlem, the publication organ of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, Negro World, championed Pan-Africanist ideology and way of life, as it disseminated the history and discussed the contemporary conditions of African descendants through essays, manifestoes, speeches, poetry, novels, and plays. As the locus of Black internationalism in North America, Harlem—with journals such as The Crisis and Negro World—nurtured the interrelations of the Afro-Caribbean and the Afro-Hispanic, along with the Afro-Americans and the Africans. It created a space for the development of Pan-African theories, life and works of art. Written by the Afro-Caribbean writer A.J. Rogers, From Superman to Man denounced the scathing racism maintained against African Americans—including the various African descendant ethnicities living in the United States. Through his protagonists’ conversations—the racist Southern politician and the educated African American Pullman porter—A.J. Rogers sought to contribute to the reparation of centuries-long defamation of African descendants. Maran’s Batouala is situated in Africa’s Ubangi-Shari region. As an Afro-Caribbean working for the French Colonial Service in Equatorial Africa, Maran’s novel unveils the destructive impact of colonialism. Cognizant of the dangerous and powerless position into which the majority of Africans and their descendants have been hemmed, Maran addressed his novel to the true French humanists and intellectuals, those not morally and intellectually bankrupt, so they may help influence social change. In his preface to the original 1921 publication Maran articulated the conviction of the colonists/enslavers to maintain the barbarity of the colonial system; Maran also avowed his own efforts to openly denounce their longstanding nefarious systemic behaviors. “I’m appealing to you,” he wrote, “in order to set to rights everything the administration designates under the euphemism ‘follies.’ The fight will be close. You are going to confront slave dealers. It will be harder to fight them than to fight windmills.” (“C’est à redresser tout ce que l’administration désigne sous l’euphémisme ‘errements’ que je vous convie. La lutte sera serrée. Vous allez affronter des négriers. Il vous sera plus dur de lutter contre eux que contre des moulins …”) By depicting the injustices and impacts of colonialism in Africa, and by simply saying “what is so,” Batouala, according to Donald E. Herdeck, “helped prepare the intellectual groundwork for the anti-colonial revolt which was to sweep the post-World War II world.”

In addition to the works of influential Caribbean artists, Negro World also featured Marcus Garvey’s own poems. In his poem The “Tragedy of White Injustice,” published in 1927,
Marcus Garvey identifies and analyzes many historical truths. Though Garvey did not view himself as a poet, he used poetry as another mode of expression. The following stanza addresses the reasons for the sabotage of the Black Star Line and the general wreckage of the Universal Negro Improvement Association’s program (U.N.I.A.). He explains:

The white man controls cable and wireless,  
Connections by ships with force and duress:  
He keeps black races of the world apart,  
So to his schemes they may not be smart:  
“There shall be no Black Star Line Ships,” he says,  
“For that will interfere with our crooked ways:  
I’ll disrupt their business and all their plans,  
So they might not connect with foreign lands.”

By pointing out the scheme to keep the “black races of the world apart,” Garvey reminds his readers that the uprooting, separation, and scattering of Africans and their descendants throughout foreign lands rendered them vulnerable to the terrorizing violence of the Europeans and, later, the Euro-descendant enslavers and colonists of the Americas. The primary Pan-African effort of Garveyism was the unification of African descendants, in vision, in objectives and program. Garvey recollects the Europeans’ and Euro-Americans’ staunch hindrances and sabotages to Black economic advancement, and the relentless political strategies to maintain Africans in Africa impoverished and in conflict, while maintaining the majority of African descendants in the Americas disenfranchised, distressed, and destitute. Thus, his “There shall be no Black Star Line Ships” alludes to the systemic restrictions placed on Black businesses, along with the impediments enforced against the success of Black communities and Black nations.

The literary magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races, also created a space to present or review literary works of African descendants within and outside of the United States of America. Founded by W.E.B. Du Bois in 1910, The Crisis educated its readers on major events and publications of the Black world. In September of 1922 Jessie Fauset wrote a review of René Maran’s Batouala as well as the review of the novel in its English translation—published by Seltzer Publishing Company. In November of 1922 Du Bois discussed the success of an Anthology on Haitian poetry that covered the time span of 1904 to 1920. Parenthetically, within the context of Caribbean literature it is fitting to underline Du Bois’ Caribbean heritage through his Franco-Haitian father. In the “Literature” section of “The Looking Glass” Du Bois wrote:

Louis Morpeau, member of the Society of French Men of Letters and of the Society of French Poets, writes us: The flattering reception which the great Paris newspapers and reviews continue to offer to the “Haitian Anthology of Contemporary Poets (1904–1920)” has induced the very important publishing house, J. Povolozky & Company, in Paris, to ask me to write a book for its Universal Collection of Anthologies, which would afford an account of Haitian poetry from its origins.

The literary time frame to which Du Bois referred, for the “Universal Collection of Anthologies,” marked the first stage of Haitian literature, slowly evolving in its characteristics of Caribbean literature; that is, depicting the landscape, the language and the preoccupations
of the people, of the nation and the region. By 1925, with the emergence of the Mouvement Indigéniste, Haiti entered its next phase of literary maturation into Haitian and, by extension, Caribbean literature. The Indigéniste Movement called to attention the value of African traditions within the nation’s mores, reflected in its literature. The Pan-African perspective became embedded in the literary works of many Indigéniste writers, amongst whom was the notable poet and activist Jacques Roumain.

In 1945 Jacques Roumain’s collection of poems *Bois d’Ébène* (*Ebony Wood*) was published posthumously—he died in 1944. In *Bois d’Ébène* Roumain traces and laments the conditions of the Africans who were coercively dispersed throughout the world. From “Mandingo Arada Bambara Ibo” to “Mandingo Bambara Ibo” to “Bambara Ibo,” progressively becoming one people in their historical circumstances. That Roumain enumerates the ethnicities without any commas further underlines the amalgamation of peoples, of cultures and histories. (When we reached the coast … there remained of us only Bambara Ibo),

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roumain’s direct stanzas read as such:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mandingues Arada Bambara Ibo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gémissant un chant qu’étranglaient les carcans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(et quand nous arrivâmes à la côte)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandingues Bambara Ibo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quand nous arrivâmes à la côte</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bambara Ibo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il ne restait de nous Bambara Ibo</td>
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<tr>
<td>qu’une poignée de grains épars</td>
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<tr>
<td>dans la nuit du semeur de mort)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ce même chant repris aujourd’hui au Congo</td>
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<tr>
<td>mais quand donc ô mon peuple</td>
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<tr>
<td>les hivées en flamme dispersant un orage</td>
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<tr>
<td>d’oiseaux de cendre</td>
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<tr>
<td>reconnaîtra-je la révolte de tes mains?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>et que j’écoutai aux Antilles</td>
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<tr>
<td>car ce chant négresse</td>
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<tr>
<td>qui t’enseigna négresse ce chant d’immense</td>
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<tr>
<td>peine</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mais je sais aussi un silence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un silence de vingt-cinq mille cadavres nègres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de vingt-cinq mille traverses de Bois-d’Ébène</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sur les rails du Congo-Océan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandingo Arada Bambara Ibo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wailing a song strangled by iron collars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(and when we reached the coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandingo Bambara Ibo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when we reached the coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bambara Ibo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>there remained of us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bambara Ibo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>only a fistful of scattered grains</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Pan-Africanism in Caribbean literature
in the hand of the sower of death
this same song taken up again today in the Congo
but when then O my people
winter’s winds in flames spreading a storm
of flying ashes
will I recognize the rebellion of your hands?
and that I heard in the Antilles
for this song, negress,
who taught you, negress, this song of boundless
affliction
negress of the islands negress of the plantations
this grieving moan

But I also know a silence
a silence of twenty-five thousand negro corpses
twenty-five thousand railroad ties of Ebony Wood
Under the iron rails of the Congo-Océan

In 1966 the Caribbean writer Aimé Césaire published Une Saison au Congo (A Season in Congo). The play depicts one of the greatest tragedies of the independence efforts in Africa, nearly one hundred years after foreign partition and direct colonization of the continent, and approximately five hundred years after the Transatlantic Slave Trade that depleted sub-Saharan Africa of significant human brain and power. Une Saison au Congo sought to address not only the political and material hindrances placed by European powers—Belgium (Congo-Kinshasa) and France (Congo-Brazzaville) in the case of the Congo—but it also unveils the mental disposition of the African masses and leaders, attempting to emerge out of unsuspecting enslavement, conquest, partition and colonization. With the role and character of Mobutu Sese Seko, Césaire reminds his audience and readers of the detrimental economic-political influence the colonists continue to hold on the greed of their African “collaborators.” Lumumba, who stood for the true freedom and advancement of the African people, was murdered. Mobutu, who collaborated with the Belgian colonial government to facilitate neo-colonialism, acceded to the presidency and remained in power for thirty-two years (1965 to 1997). Lumumba’s philosophies and methods, which called for unity, transcend the Congo to include the unity of the continent and, by extension, the African Diaspora. For Césaire, Lumumba represents a courageous and integral lesson in leadership. Within that framework the stage plays the poet published in the 1960s were conceived to further the progressive awakening of Africans and African descendants. In a 1969 interview Césaire explains his choice of prioritizing theatre during the 1960s. He reasons:

Le monde noir traverse une phase difficile. En particulier avec l’accès à l’indépendance des pays africains, nous sommes entrés dans le moment de la responsabilité. Les noirs désormais doivent faire leur histoire … On s’interroge soi-même, on essaye de comprendre; or, dans le siècle où nous sommes, la poésie est un langage qui nous paraît plus ou moins ésotérique. Il faut parler clair, parler net, pour faire passer le message. Et il me semble que le théâtre peut s’y prêter—et il s’en prête bien.12

The black world is going through a difficult phase. Particularly with the African countries’ attainment of independence, we entered the period of responsibility. Henceforth, blacks must make their history … We reflect and try to understand; now in this present
century, poetry is a language that seems more or less esoteric. One must speak clearly and concisely to convey the message. It seems that theatre can accomplish the task—and it accomplishes it well.\textsuperscript{13}

To that end Césaire’s plays are purposively didactic. The eminent poet opts for clear, concise, and transparent language to convey the pressing image and message. As examined in \textit{Literary and Sociopolitical Writings of the Black Diaspora}, theatre, for Césaire, operates “as a mirror from which black folk can see themselves through the representation of their ancestors and contemporaries. It is the donner-à-voir.” Consequently, “the characters in question are alive; spectators hear their voices and observe their actions. Thus, the problems posed are seen in actuality and, as a result, the sensibility of each spectator becomes more acute. It is the donner-à-penser.”\textsuperscript{14} In creating moments where the audience can see (donner-à-voir) and reflect (donner-à-penser), Césaire contributes to the Pan-African program of historical dialogues and cultural exchanges among people of African descent. It is worth noting that Césaire’s \textit{Une Saison au Congo} was translated into English and performed by Anglophone actors, as most of his works are also translated into other languages. In 1963 Césaire published \textit{La Tragédie du Roi Christophe} (The Tragedy of King Christophe). Similar to the portrayal of Patrice Lumumba in relation to the African struggles of the late 1950s and 1960s, King Christophe of Haiti came to embody the challenges of a Black leader working to form a newly self-liberated people into a respected nation, while the rest of the Africans in the Americas remained enslaved. “The whole world is watching us, citizens,” conveys the fictional King Christophe—as did the factual King Christophe. “[And] the nations think that black men lack dignity! A king, a court, a kingdom, that’s what we’ve got to show them if we want to be respected.”\textsuperscript{15} (“Le monde entier nous regarde, citoyens, et les peuples pensent que les hommes noirs manquent de dignité! Un roi, une cour, un royaume, voilà, si nous voulons être respectés, ce que nous devrions leur montrer.”)\textsuperscript{16} Transcending Haiti, Césaire’s play lays bare the African diaspora’s efforts to re-build its various post-slavery and neo-colonial communities, in the midst of innumerable hindrances. In insisting on recognition from the world, King Christophe illustrates the endeavor to re-establish the Africans in their proper place within the human race; moreover, it exemplifies the distressed—and quasi-insurmountable—predicament of the founding leaders, in a world where Africans and their descendants had been rendered economically and politically powerless.

As exemplified in his writings and political decisions, Césaire’s concept of Négritude is a “concrete rather than an abstract coming to consciousness.”\textsuperscript{17} Négritude writings were preceded—and influenced, to some extent—by bilingual literary journals that made possible the publications of both Francophone and Anglophone writers and artists; those publications, in their original languages and in translation, significantly cross-informed intellectuals of the Black world. The \textit{Revue du monde noir}, created by Francophone Caribbean intellectuals Dr. Léo Sajous and Paulette Nardal, operated from 1931 to 1932; \textit{Légitime Défense}, created by Caribbean intellectuals René Ménil, Jules Marcel Monnerot, Etienne and Thélus Léro, functioned throughout 1932; and \textit{L’Étudiant Noir}, was launched by Aimé Césaire, Léopold Senghor and Léon Damas in 1934. Those journals founded by Caribbean writers—at the exception of the Senegalese Léopold Senghor—forged a vital dialogical space for Black writers living in France and throughout the African Diaspora; they established a space for the dissemination and development of Pan-African ideology. The term Négritude appeared for the first time in 1939 with the publication of \textit{Cahier d’un Retour au Pays Natal} (Notebook of a Return to the Native Land). While \textit{Cahier} remains, arguably, an esoteric piece whose language—at times paradoxical, incongruous, sarcastic, and metonymic—is complex to
apprehend or decipher, it is where Césaire depicts the multi-lingual and multi-ethnic Afri-cans rising up in the slave ship, in spite of the violent presence of armed enslavers. *Cahier* announces not only physical freedom but also psychological revolution. Describing the spirit of mutiny, Césaire writes:

Le négrier craque de toute part … Son ventre se convulse et résonne … L’affreux ténia de sa cargaison ronge les boyaux fétides de l’étrange nourrisson des mers!

And the negro crowd is up
the negro crown seated
unexpectedly standing
standing up in the hold

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_Cultural Pan-Africanism in Caribbean literature_

The writings of the Afro-Cuban poet, Nicolás Guillén, contribute to the cultural Pan-African approach of Caribbean writers. The cultural dimension of Guillén’s race and social consciousness grew out the Black international movements of the early 1900s, which were all grounded in Pan-African principles: the international Garveyist Movement, the New Negro Renaissance Movement of African descendants in North America, and the Indigéniste Movement in Haiti. Guillén’s friendship and collaboration with Langston Hughes of the United States and Jacques Roumain of Haiti nurtured his poetic Pan-African allegiance and his illustration of Pan-African practice in Hispanic Caribbean life and literature. Though Guillén’s official poetic publication started in 1919, in the journal *Camagüey Gráfico*, it is with the publication of his article “Camino de Harlem,” followed by his poem *Motivos de son*, that the aesthetics of Black consciousness took form. His works, from the 1930s onward, address the mental disposition and material condition of African descendants in the Caribbean and Latin America. In his “Negro Bembón” (Thick-lipped Negro), published in *Motivos de son* (Motifs of son), Guillén questions:

¿Por qué te pone tan bravo,
cuando te dicen negro bembón,
si tiene la boca senta,
.negro bembón?20

Why do you get so upset,
when they call you thick-lipped negro
if your mouth is so sweet
thick-lipped negro?21

The repetition of “negro bembón” throughout Guillén’s poem relays the process of self-reclamation and affirmation taking place within the African Diaspora, particularly with the
awakening to the “Black is beautiful” reality. “Negro bembón” is “the reiteration of the growing expression of self-esteem and the acceptance of the total Negro,” that; is the total Negro being with his/her multi-dimensional cultures. In his poem “Vine en un barco Negrero” (“I came on a slave ship”) published in 1964 Guillén traces the transport of the enslaved Africans to Cuba, their toil and the eventual formation of their Afro-Cuban identity.

Vino en un barco negrero.
Me trajeron.
Caña y látigo el ingenio.
Sol de hierro.
Sudor como caramelo.
Pie en el sepo.

O’Donnell, Su puño seco.
Cuero y cuero.
Los alguaciles y el miedo.
Cuero y cuero.
De sangre y tinta mi cuerpo.
Cuero y cuero. I came on a slave ship.
They brought me.
Cane, lash, and plantation.
A sun of steel.
Sweat like a caramel.
Foot in the stocks.

O’Donnell. His dry fist.
Lash and more lash.
The constables and the fear.
Lash and more lash.
My body blood and ink.
Lash and more lash.

The rhythmic utterances of items associated with the slavery system, as well as the iteration and reiteration of each detail, exhibit the traumatic arrival and experiences of the Africans on foreign land, and their unnerving encounter with the environment and unfamiliar languages. For communication and survival the Africans assembled words from their new common experiences and interactions. The line “[The] constables and the fear” exposes the Africans’ terrorizing realities with the fiendish field enslavers whose “lash and more lash [ ... ] body in blood and ink” were merciless and unending.

In the poem “Twine,” published in his collection Ancestors, the Anglophone Afro-Caribbean poet Kamau Brathwaite presents the overworked and physically deteriorating Afro-Caribbean who in old age does not have access to financial compensation, after decades of excessive work for mere subsistence. Out of the shackles of the legalized slavery system, the majority of African descendants of the Caribbean continued (continue) to endure various forms of de facto physical and economic slavery. The poem is the voice of the subject’s lamenting wife, expressed in the common language of the people that Brathwaite termed

when de duss in dat warehouse yard brek up e lung
get on bad in e chess. cough wrackle e up like a steel
donkey. most kill e. yu hear. before e did passen good forty
e nevva know what name pension nor compensation
for all dem mornins dat i hads was to get up be
-fore six to mek tea. slice bread. & scrape & butter de crakle
ttrash. windmill. crack. bubble a vat in de factry
load pun me head. load in de cart. de mill spinnin spinnin spinn
syrup. liquor. blood a de fiel

Brathwaite’s reference to “a steel donkey” best illustrates the predicament of the masses within the entrenched colonial—neo-colonial—system. The analogy of the masses of rural African descendants as, at once, working farm animal and machine/tools of production imbues Afro-Caribbean literature as well as the literature of African Americans. With deteriorating health, as a consequence of the “warehouse yard brek up e lung,” the worker has no access to medical assistance nor can he retire from the hazardous work. The items simply listed—“syrup. liquor. blood a de fields. flood a de ages”—are factual representations of exploitation. Similar to Guillén’s poem, the brief enumerations help the author depict the subjects’ physical and psychological exhaustion. The ways in which Afro-Caribbean authors employ language in literature unveil the diasporic experiences of the masses, beyond national barriers. Brathwaite’s collection, Ancestors, includes poems written in old English, contemporary Standard British English, Caribbean-British English, and Nation Language (the language of the people closest to the Africans’ adaptation of and to the new languages of their new world). In the poem “Twine” Brathwaite gives voice to those who do not have access to education and to Standard English. He gives voice to those who are kept hemmed within the same impoverished condition their ancestors endured. Nation language maintains the structure the Africans—now Afro-Caribbean—first constructed in the new world. In History of the Voice Brathwaite explains:

Nation language is the language which is influenced very strongly by the African model, the African aspect of our New World/Caribbean heritage. English it may be in terms of some of its lexical features. But in the contours, its rhythm and timbre, its sound explosions, it is not English, even though the words, as you hear them may be English to a greater or lesser degree.

Moreover, the use of nation languages—Creole, Patois, etc.—in literature makes possible African diasporic cultural, spiritual, and emotional insights that European languages cannot convey. George Lamming’s In The Castle of My Skin is an exemplary novel that illustrates the complexity of language within Caribbean culture. The novel develops through the journey of the protagonists’ childhood (G. or Gaston, Boy Blue, and Trumper). It investigates their understanding and interpretations of the community, and the development of their geographical and historical consciousness, into adulthood. Language is presented as a cultural tension and challenge, as the boys question their level of mastery of Standard English, and the difficulty to translate their quotidian experiences into adequate English expressions that capture their total reality. In the foreword to In The Castle of My Skin Sandra Pouchet
Paquet notes that the perceived conflict, in values, between the formal language of the educated colonial and the intuitive, creative, and secret language of the boys emphasizes the text’s concern with language as a cultural agency with foundational values and a rich oral tradition. In spite of the protagonists’ constricted and imbalanced relationship with the various modes of languages in their community, the author succeeded in creating a novel that seamlessly connects languages and experiences. An example of the value attributed to the voice of the masses is exemplified in an exchange between neighbors: the Fosters and the mother of a murdered son.

“What happen to you?” Miss Foster asked.
“My heart break,” she said, “me heart break, break, break.” The tears flowed and she retched.
“What happen?” Mr. Foster asked.
“My heart break,” she said, “my heart break, ’cause my boy dead.”
“Who?” Mr. Foster asked.
“Po King,” Miss Foster said, “It is Po King who is her son.”

“With a bullet,” she said, “the gun went to ‘is heart.” The woman started to cry……
“They shoot ’im,” she said; “they shoot ’im like he was a bird.”
“Who?” Mr. Foster insisted.
“The police,” she said. “Some say ’twas the white inspector, an’ others wus the ordinary police, but he dead.”
“Where wus he?” Mr. Foster asked.
“In the tree,” he said. “When the law declare they all run here, there an’ everywhere, an’ poor Po run up the tree. The police see him where he go, an’ they aim all together at the top at the tree. An’ they got ’im. My poor Po fall down like a bird.”

“The perceived conflict in values” that Lamming portrays through the three boys stems from class relation in the Caribbean, where the European languages have been associated with education and high social status, wealth, and power, while the nation languages created in the Caribbean have been associated with illiteracy, lower social and economic status. Thus, from the early 1900s onward Afro-Caribbean writers have used writings—literary, historical, and theoretical—to re-establish the value of African traditions and the mores of Afro-Caribbean culture, including the perseveration of its oral tradition transmitted through nation languages. In Caribbean Discourse (originally published as Le Discours Antillais, in 1981) Édouard Glissant makes an observation within the context of Martinique that can be pondered within the context of the greater Caribbean—taking into consideration particular national politics. He examines:

The dilemma is really that we note the absence of both a responsible use of the two languages and a collective exercise in self-expression … We know ultimately, that at that time the ambiguity of the relationship of French and Creole would disappear and that each Martinican would have access to the sociocultural means of using French without a sense of alienation, of speaking Creole without feeling confined to its limitations.

In Gouverneurs de la Rosée (Masters of the Dew) the Indigéniste writer, Jacques Roumain, effectually created a novel written in a Standard French that also portrays and incorporates
the particular linguistic culture of the nation of Haiti; *Gouverneurs* also integrates unaltered Creole expressions as the only applicable language to transmit the organic experiences of the people. Moreover, it is through the language of the people that the author is able to access and illustrate the African descendants’ system of divine and spiritual beliefs. In chapter IV of the novel Délira organized a Vodun ceremony for the return of her son Manuel, the protagonist, who had been living in Cuba for the past fifteen years—in quest of a better living condition abroad. The mother explains to her son:


It’s he, Papa Legba, who showed you the way home. Clairemise saw him in her dream, Atibon-Legba, Master of the Crossroads. We must thank him. I’ve already invited the family and the neighbors. Tomorrow you’ll go to town to buy five gallons of white rum and two bottles of brown rum.

With Roumain’s ingenious descriptions his readers are present in Fonds-rouge (the village); the voices are audible, and the images are palpable. The Vodun ceremony highlights the villagers’ connection to the ancestral African land, to which they refer as Guinée. It is during the ceremonies that they acknowledge and manifest their respect for the olds of Guinea (“les vieux de Guinée”). “Dancing this same Yanvalou, their fathers had implored the fetishes of Whydah. Now in these days of distress, they remembered it with a fidelity that brought back from the night of time the dark powers of the old Dahomey gods.” In a world of few to no recourse a retreat to their mores becomes spiritual nourishment with which to cope. Roumain presents the inhabitants’ system of beliefs within their various cultural references and frameworks. The characters’ references to various African ethnicities and regions effectively underline the praxis of cultural Pan-Africanism in the Caribbean. Their multi-ethnic frameworks further demonstrate the syncretism of African legacies into Afro-Caribbean cultures.

Equally significant is Roumain’s attention to the position and condition of the black women, the Negresses. The development of the novel unveils their particular circumstances not only in Haiti but throughout the African Diaspora. Akin to Afro-Caribbean writers such as Jamaica Kincaid, Edwidge Danticat, Myriam Warner-Vieyra, Maryse Condé and Suzanne Césaire (to name a few), Roumain’s work depicts the strength and vulnerability of the Black woman who contemporarily endures the impact of the slavery system: extreme poverty, minimal access to education, overworked and overburdened with family and community responsibilities. Describing an ordinary instance of Délira’s day the narrator observes:

Délira, elle, lavait les plats. Et elle chantait, c’était une chanson semblable à la vie, je veux dire qu’elle était triste: elle n’en connaissait pas d’autres. Elle ne chantait pas fort et c’était une chanson sans mots, à bouche fermée et qui restait dans la gorge comme un gémissement, et pourtant son cœur était apaisé depuis qu’elle avait causé avec manuel, mais il ne savait d’autre langage que cette plainte douloureuse, alors que voulez-vous, elle chantait à la manière des nègresse; c’est l’existence qui leur a appris, aux nègresse, à chanter comme on étoffe un sanglot et c’est une chanson qui finit toujours par un recommencement
As for Délira, she was washing dishes, and she was singing. It was a song similar to life—it was sad. She wasn’t singing aloud and it was a song without words, sung with closed lips. It stayed in her throat like a moan, yet her heart was eased since her chat with Manuel. Nevertheless, it knew no language other than this sorrowful plaint. She sang after the fashion of black women. Life has taught black women to sing as though they are choking back a sob, and it’s a song that ends always with a beginning because it’s in the image of misery. And does the circle of misery ever end?36

Roumain’s illustration of the circularity of misery foreshadows the state of African descendants’ masses, globally, well into the twenty-first century. Published immediately before the fifth Pan-African Congress of 1945 Gouverneurs de la Rosée is the quintessential Afro-Caribbean Pan-African novel. It evidences the hopes and the struggles of African descendants, with particular attention to foreign appropriation of their land, and the depletion of the Black woman’s energy, as the most exploited workforce, or work-tool. With Mister Wilson as the archetype, Roumain illustrates the injustices of foreign appropriation of Haiti’s national lands. Mister Wilson, similar to other whites in Haiti, owns vast lands and water; they own the factories and their surroundings. The inhabitants are only workers “who cut the cane for so much and so much. They’ve got nothing but the strength of their arms, not a handful of soil, not a drop of water—except their own sweat. They all work for Mr. Wilson …”37 (… “pour couper la canne à tant et tant. Ils n’ont rien que le courage de leurs bras, pas une poignée de terre, pas une goutte d’eau, sinon leur propre sueur. Et tous travaillent pour Mister Wilson …”)

Ultimately, Manuel succeeded in bringing water to the village to end the drought and help the villagers to a life of, at least, subsistence. In Gouverneurs water is illustrated as the representation of life, as all the organisms presented need water to exist. In spite of the life-altering good deed, Manuel was murdered as a direct result of his efforts to stop the decade-long conflict between family members of the village. Symbolically, Manuel’s death is significant in relation to the African and African descendant leaders who had died or would later die as a result of their respective commitment to unification, justice, and advancement. Such leaders have also become the exemplary subjects of Afro-Caribbean literary works, for generational lessons of principled and incorruptible leadership; among whom: are Toussaint Louverture, Patrice Lumumba, and King Christophe. Manuel represents and foreshadows (in the case of later leaders such as Lumumba and Malcolm X) the Black leaders who in spite of international and internal hindrances sacrificed their lives for the purpose of re-establishing the value and the rights of African descendants. With the death of the leader, however, there is hope. In Gouverneurs de la Rosée the child Manuel conceived with Anaïse (a member of the opposing side of the conflict) symbolizes the future and possible unity within the community. Similarly, in Césaire’s La Tragédie du Roi Christophe and Une Saison au Congo the death of King Christophe and Patrice Lumumba is presented as giving renewed life to the African struggle, if the lessons are grasped by succeeding leaders and the people. The association of death, rebirth, and continuity is a fundamental belief in the African’s and African descendant’s conception of life and existence. Within the context of rebirth and continuity, it is pertinent to recollect and conclude with two affirmations from two foundational Pan-African leaders: Toussaint Louverture who opened the way to physical liberation for all of Africa’s descendants, and Marcus Mosiah Garvey who opened the way to psychological liberation for all of Africa’s descendants. In 1802 Louverture asserted: “By overthrowing me,
they only cut down the tree of Liberty of blacks; it will re-grow through the roots, for they are profound and numerous.” In 1925 Mosiah Garvey asserted

If I die in Atlanta my work shall then only begin, but I shall live, in the physical or spiritual to see the day of Africa’s glory ... with God’s grace, I shall come and bring with me countless millions of black slaves who have died in America and the West Indies and the millions in Africa to aid you in the fight for Liberty, Freedom and Life.40

Conclusion
The literary works of Afro-Caribbean writers, living in the Caribbean region or abroad, continue to champion the sociopolitical objectives of Pan-Africanism, as they continue to 1) assert the significance of Afro-Diasporic cultures, and 2) advocate the socioeconomic and human rights of African descendants. Language plays a pivotal role in their literary works; for, the effective use of European languages and the nation languages of the people is a crucial tool to give voice to the inhabitants of the region and their descendants abroad. Pan-African proponents sought to bring attention to the contemporary suffering of predominantly black nations and communities, from the long-standing effects of slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism and disenfranchisement. The Caribbean novelists and poets illustrate the ways in which the historical ills continue to affect the region: land, and humans. The land, in symbolism with womanhood, revolts “if you mistreat her …,” as Roumain’s protagonist reminds us, “We betray the soil and receive [its] punishment: drought and poverty and desolation.”41 (“[La] terre est comme une bonne femme, à force de la maltraiter, elle se révolte ... c’est le nègre qui abandonne la terre et il reçoit sa punition: la sécheresse, la misère et la désolation.”)42 Lastly, in Aimé Césaire: A Voice for History, the former president of Bénin, Nicéphore Soglo ended with a conviction—within the context of Africa—that many Afro-Caribbean writers have made the efforts to address in their respective works. Soglo maintained that “there will not be a renaissance in Africa without the renaissance of the woman … without the respect that we owe our mothers, our sisters and our daughters … that is fundamental.”43 (“Il n’y aura pas de renaissance en Afrique sans la renaissance de la femme ... sans le respect que nous devons à nos mères, nos sœurs et à nos filles ... c’est capital.”)44 Moreover, in addition to the respect are the opportunities to education and socioeconomic advancement that are due to the Afro-Caribbean girls and women.

Notes
1 Kersuze Simeon-Jones, Literary and Sociopolitical Writings of the Black Diaspora in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Boulder: Lexington Books, 2010), chapter 3 and chapter 9.
2 My translation of title.
4 René Maran, Batouala; Véritable Roman Nègre (Paris: Albin Michel, Editeur, 1921), 15.
5 Maran, Batouala, 5.
7 Jessie Fauset, “‘Batouala’ is Translated,” The Crisis 24, no. 5 (September 1922): 218–19.
9 Translation and transposition mine.
11 Ibid., 75.
12 Aimé Césaire, A Voice for History, (San Francisco: California Newsreel, 1994).
13 Translation mine.
14 Simeon-Jones, Literary and Sociopolitical Writings, 140.
15 Translation mine.
19 Translation mine.
21 Translation mine.
22 Simeon-Jones, Literary and Sociopolitical Writings, 168.
24 Ibid., 186.
28 Ibid., 197–98.
30 Roumain completed Gouverneurs de la Rosée in 1943. It was originally published in 1944, after Jacques Roumain’s death.
31 Jacques Roumain, Gouverneurs de la Rosée (Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de l’État, 1944), 58.
33 Ibid., 67.
34 Roumain, Gouverneurs, 60.
35 Ibid., 97.
36 Roumain, Masters, 102.
37 Ibid., 50.
38 Roumain, Gouverneurs, 42.
39 Simeon-Jones, Literary and Sociopolitical Writings, 33.
40 Ibid., 45.
41 Roumain, Masters, 45.
42 Roumain, Gouverneurs, 37.
43 Translation mine.
44 Césaire, A Voice for History.

Bibliography