“YES! WE HAVE NO BANANAS”: CULTURAL IMAGININGS OF THE BANANA IN AMERICA, 1880-1945

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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My dissertation project explores the ways in which the banana exposes Americans' interconnected imaginings of exotic food, gender, and race. Since the late nineteenth century, The United Fruit Company's continuous supply of bananas to US retail markets has veiled the fruit's production history, and the company's marketing strategies and campaigns have turned the banana into an American staple food. By the time Josephine Baker and Carmen Miranda were using the banana as part of their stage and screen costumes between the 1920s and the 1940s, this imported fruit had come to represent foreignness, tropicality, and exoticism. Building upon foodways studies and affect studies, which trace how foodstuffs travel and embody memory and affect, I show how romantic imaginings of bananas have drawn attention away from the exploitative nature of a fruit trade that benefits from and reinforces the imbalanced power relationship between the US and Central America. In this project, I analyze the meaning interwoven into three forms of cultural production: banana cookbooks published by the United Fruit Company for middle-class American housewives; Claude McKay's dissent poetry; and the costumes and exotic transnational stage performances of Baker, Miranda, and also the United Fruit mascot, Miss Chiquita.

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To my father, who has encouraged me to be intellectual, brave, and empathetic.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In my dissertation project, "'Yes! We Have No Bananas': Cultural Imaginings of the Banana in America, 1880-1945," I explore the ways that references to bananas in American literature and cultural productions expose the interconnectivity of exotic food, gender, race, and national identity. Despite their popularity in the U.S., bananas are not a native fruit, and the American demand for bananas depends on a vigorous trade route from their native Central and South America. That they have become a staple of the American diet veils their production and trade history. Jamaican-born poet Claude McKay alludes to his history when writing about the memories elicited by the fruit he encounters in a New York City fruit stand. The speaker in his poem "The Tropics of New York" (1922) weeps because of the way a fruit stand in America's great metropolis silences the history of the banana trade from the West Indies to America. Until now, scholars have not fully explored how transnational exchanges have shaped the cultural and symbolic representations of the banana in America. By the time Josephine Baker and Carmen Miranda were incorporating bananas into their stage costumes between the 1920s and the 1940s, this imported fruit had come to represent foreignness, tropicality, and sexualized, seductive exoticism. Building upon foodways studies and affect studies, which together trace how foodstuffs travel and embody memory and affect, I contend that romantic imaginings and representations of bananas in cultural productions downplay the fruit's trade history and turn the fruit into an exoticized trope. I argue that such representations of bananas became intertwined with transnational exchanges of the banana as a commodity—exchanges that depended both on imbalanced power relations

between the US and Central America and on the exploitation of human labor. I analyze representations of the banana in three forms of early twentieth-century cultural production: banana cookbooks published by the United Fruit Company for middle-class American housewives; Claude McKay's Caribbean literature of dissent; and the costumes incorporating bananas worn by Josephine Baker and Carmen Miranda.

My dissertation asks several simple, but fundamental, questions: Why has the banana become so important in exploring the complexities of cultural imaginings in American history after 1880? If the banana in America can be peeled back to reveal imperialistic colonization of agribusiness since the late nineteenth century and to explore the human labor of neighbor countries, why cannot the avocado from Mexico, the papaya from Central America, or the pineapple from Hawaii do the same?

While the avocado, papaya, and pineapple all have been colored with racial and gendered fantasies and reveal the ways that regional politics have been intertwined with US imperialist myths, by these metrics, they pale in comparison to the banana. Since the late nineteenth century, expansive US imperialism, bolstered by the theory of modernity, has constructed the banana as a cultural artifact embodying racial and sexual fantasies about people of color. Furthermore, while other tropical fruits may travel similar commodification routes as the banana, they have not achieved the kind of popularity the banana has enjoyed in the US for almost a century-and-a-half. Indeed, compared to other foreign fruits, the banana might be the only tropical fruit that the US transnational enterprises dominate from production to promotion. Like the way US demand fueled the Caribbean sugar industry in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the American taste for banana has controlled the transnational banana business since 1880. The

overwhelming dominance of banana production in large-scale US enterprises represents the way that imperialism and colonialism over Central American and Caribbean countries continues. The fact that America does not officially own colonies in the way that the European empires did, helped shape the ideology of American exceptionalism, which touts the belief that America is different from those brutal imperialists. However, as many scholars have argued, the commercial stranglehold the United Fruit Company has held in Latin America is a form of US imperialism and colonialism.[1] While the US does not directly politically govern or occupy nations of Latin America, the commercial colonization is powerful. US colonialism helped propagate the belief that compared to the progressive, civilized, and masculine US, Latin America is less developed, primitive, and feminine. These binary oppositions fuel imperialist mythology, which, alongside transnational commerce, layered onto the banana a set of contradictory associations and images: popularity and exoticism, commodity and small farm produce, domestic housewife and erotic Latina performer. Situated within this complicated socio-economic entanglement, the banana as a cultural signifier epitomizes the economic exploitation, racial discrimination, and gender stereotypes that US imperialism applies to Latin America.

[1] See John Soluri, *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, & Environmental Change in Honduras & the United States* (U of Texas P, 2005), which probes how the United Fruit Company transformed the agriculture of Honduras to the banana plantation economy. See also *Banana Wars: Power, Production, and History in the Americas* (ed. Steve Striffler and Mark Moberg; Duke U P, 2003), for its analysis of how Latin America and the Caribbean have been shaped over time by capitalism, state power, and popular struggle.

The History of the Banana

A study of the rise of the banana empire established by the United Fruit Company not only explains how the banana was constructed as a seemingly indigenous American fruit but also exposes how the peoples and lands of Central America and the Caribbean were and are subject to colonial domination. The first banana plant was introduced to Santo Domingo in 1516. By the seventeenth century, it had become a popular subsistence crop in the tropical Americas, but even in the eighteenth century, most consumers in the US would have considered it to be an odd and exotic fruit. In the nineteenth century, however, the business of the banana trade prospered, and by the 1890s, US demand for bananas had greatly increased. In order to meet this demand, ship captain and businessman Lorenzo Dow Baker and his partner, Boston Fruit Company agent Andrew Preston, collaborated with pioneering industrialist Minor Cooper Keith, who in building a railroad in Costa Rica had turned to exporting Central American bananas to New Orleans and other Gulf ports in order to help fund his railroad. In 1899, Preston and Keith finalized an agreement to establish the United Fruit Company, whose main goal was to ship bananas from Central America and the Caribbean islands to the States.[2] By the end of nineteenth century, the banana business in the Americas had transformed into a monopoly. The United Fruit Company not only dominated the way in which bananas were traded in the US, but also systematically exploited the natural resources of Central America to facilitate US trade.

[2] In their book, *The United Fruit Company in Latin America* (Washington: National Planning Association, 1976), Stacy May and Galo Plaza contend that "the organization of the United Fruit Company marked beginning of a new era that converted the highly perishable tropical banana into an important item of world trade" (7).

In the early twentieth century, the trade of bananas from Central America to the United States thrived. In 1899, Preston dubbed the collection of banana-and-passenger transporting ships that traveled from the Tropics to the US United's "Great White Fleet." With the improvement of steamships, fruit companies were able to carry more bananas from Central America to US cities. Since bananas rotted easily during long sea voyages, shipping bananas in refrigerated steamships significantly reduced the loss caused by transportation damages while also securing an uninterrupted supply of bananas to US consumers. By 1920, the United Fruit Company had become one of the largest enterprises in America, and it controlled the transnational banana trade, refrigerated steamships, and the distribution and market of bananas.

Alongside the growth of banana imports into the US market was a concomitant growth in Americans' banana consumption habits and a transformation of agricultural environments in banana-producing countries. Aided by its low retail price and ease of preparation, the banana grew in popularity among working-class Americans, and in order to meet the demand, the United Fruit Company encouraged peasants of the Caribbean and Central America to give up polycultural cultivation methods of planting coffee, vegetables, and banana crops together, and, instead, to switch to a monocultural cultivation of the Gros Michel Banana. The Gros Michel became the preferred variety because it is a tougher species whose skin can avoid bruising during long transportation journeys. The transnational route of the banana trade offers us a window through which to examine how Americans' consumption of bananas has contributed to the economic and agricultural exploitation of Central America and the Caribbean, and how the United Fruit Company reshaped the geopolitical relationship between the US and its neighbor

countries to the south. The United Fruit Company colonized the production of bananas of Central America and the Caribbean both through dominating the transportation and export routes and through control of plantation crops. In this imbalanced power structure, these less-developed, exploited countries sacrificed their own agricultural traditions, changed their labor practices and lost potential economic growth by becoming, simpler, an exporter of raw materials.[3] All of this inconvenient history of economic and agricultural exploitation disappears, however, when the golden banana sits on the American breakfast table, where it has become a staple of delicious nutrition. When, on the other hand the banana plays the role of exotic or erotic cultural artifact, it is drawing on and reinforcing racial and/or sexual stereotypes of Latin Americans.

The Multifaceted Representations of the Banana in American Literature

Though the banana became popular in American food culture and on the American dining table at the turn of the century, some white American writers still held hostility and prejudice toward this commodity. Edith Wharton's understanding of the banana remained limited, even biased. During her summer vacation in 1904, Wharton wrote the following in a letter to her friend Sara Norton:

> I have been spending my first night in an American "Summer hotel," & I despair at the Republic! Such dreariness, such whining sallow women, such utter absence

[3] Feminist political scholar Cynthia Enloe carefully combs the problems of labor and gender politics/exploitation that underlie the international banana trade. According to Enloe, the racial division of labor forces is common in the banana plantations of Central America and the Caribbean: white male workers earn more, while Latino and black male workers are paid less and are treated as stereotypically unskilled. The situations of women workers are even worse than their male counterparts: women are employed as seasonal workers, are paid poorly, and must juggle family care and work. On many banana plantations, prostitution is common. However, these miserable scenarios woven in the production chain of the banana are invisible to consumers. See Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1990: 124-50.

> of the amenities, such crass food, crass manners, crass landscape!! And, mind you, it is a new & fashionable hotel. What a horror it is for a whole nation to be developing without the sense of beauty, & eating bananas for breakfast.[4]

The mass culture that Wharton characterized as "crass" bourgeoned in the late nineteenth century. Wharton could not stand Americans' insensitive tastes in food, etiquette, and scenery. She pointed to the mass consumption of the banana as a case in point. Wharton equated banana eating with vulgarity, partly because of the association between the shape of the banana and the phallic symbol and partly because of how the banana symbolized mass consumerism. In his essay "Banana Cultures: Linking the Production and Consumption of Export Bananas, 1800-1908," John Soluri points out that though sugar, coffee, cocoa, and tea became the working class's daily diet in the late nineteenth century, "social elites continued to consume these products in exclusive social spaces and contexts" (61).[5] For upper-class people, Soluri points out, those tropical drinks and sweets retained their luxurious characteristics. However, Wharton was angered by the way everyone in the high-end hotel where she was staying ate the common and "tasteless" banana.

Like Wharton in her letter, the speaker of Wallace Stevens's poem "Floral Decoration for Bananas" (1923), betrays his upper-class, Anglo-centric disdain for the banana. As he says to his "nuncle," "These insolent, linear peels / And sullen, hurricane shapes / Won't do with your eglantine" (2-4). The eglantine—a type of sweetbriar flower ostensibly decorating the table—requires, he counters, "something serpentine" (5). With mild mock horror upon seeing the base banana in such a refined setting, he declares,

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[4] R.W.B. Lewis, & Nancy Lewis, eds, *The Letters of Edith Wharton* (New York: Scribner, 1999): 93.

[5] See Striffler and Moberg, *Banana Wars*, 61.

"Blunt yellow in such a room!" (5-6). Rather, the speaker counters, "You should have had plums tonight, / In an eighteenth-century dish" (7-8). Moreover, he adds, his nuncle would be wise to have prepared "pettifogging buds" "for the women of primrose and purl / Each one in her decent curl" (9-11). Plum in a traditional dish and women with proper attire and decoration bring refinement and elicit pleasant feelings. However, the speaker descries, with "bananas hacked and hunched," one has a table "set by an ogre" (13, 14). "Pile the bananas on planks" (17), he continues, "The women will be all shanks / And bangles and slatted eyes" (18-19). In stark contrast to the prim elegance of the plum is the raw, untamed eroticism of the banana, which recalls the sexuality of primitive women and prostitutes.[6] In the final stanza, the speaker's description of the banana in its tropical native setting is positively sensual and erotic:

> And deck the bananas in leaves
> Plucked from the Carib trees,
> Fibrous and dangling down,
> Oozing cantankerous gum
> Out of their purple maws,
> Darting out of their purple craws
> Their musky and tingling tongues. (20-26)

This final stanza animates the white colonialist fantasy of the Tropics. The "dangling" (22) banana "oozing . . . gum" (23) on the Caribbean trees depicts the tropics as a haven of hedonistic pleasure. The language here may be celebrating the naturalness of the banana's native home, but it also reinforces stereotypes of the sexuality of Caribbean

[6] See Fig. 2.8 for a lithograph depicting a woman of color who represents Latin America. The depiction of the primitive in this poem resembles that woman.

people. The banana could be read to personify the primitive native, who seems unable to enunciate words and ideas clearly, and who is reduced to a speaking organ imbued with unpleasant and strong smells. The speaking sounds vibrate in the stomach. Again, "maws" and "craws" (24, 25)—which refer to an animal's throat and stomach, respectively—rhyme together and emphasize the animal nature of native people. As latex flows on the bark of a rubber tree, the unclear, animal-like sounds "ooze" (23) from their mouths. The metaphor of tongue used in the last four lines exemplifies the rhetoric of modernity that designates the primitive as less intelligent, less civilized, and more imbued with animality. Unable to produce sounds exactly suggests an inability to develop knowledge.[7] This intelligent supremacy moves the primitive backwards in time; meanwhile, it consolidates the progressive position the colonizer holds.

Juxtaposing Steven's "Floral Decoration for Bananas" and McKay's "The Tropics of New York" exposes the contradictions my dissertation deals with: the banana for American consumers is a primitive symbol of eroticism and exoticism, but also an identity of cultural roots for the Caribbean. It is the imperialist myth of modernity that obscures the exploitative relations between the two ends and legitimates colonial conquests.

From the 1920s—when the two poems were written—to the late 1920s, the popularity of the banana as a mass consumer product in the U.S. grew, as attested by the final scene in William Faulkner's novel *As I Lay Dying* (1930). For the poor Bundren family, traveling from their rural hometown to the relative metropolis of Jefferson, Mississippi, to bury their matriarch, Jefferson offers them access to the inexpensive

[7] Miranda also encounters the blind prejudice of linking inadequate language ability with the racial other. Her Portuguese-accented English drew jeers from the US media.

banana unavailable in their hometown. In the final monologue of this Southern Gothic novel, narrated by the eldest son, Cash, the family is waiting for patriarch Anse to come back from an errand, and he does, followed by a woman. As Cash tells it, "And there we set watching them, with Dewey Dell's and Vardaman's mouth half open and half-et bananas in their hands" (260).[8] Anse returns sporting a pair of false teeth and a new wife carrying graphophones, but it is the fact that his youngest children are eating bananas that I wish to focus on. By the time the novel was written, the banana had become a common commodity for US consumers of all classes. Having journeyed to urban Jefferson, the Bundrens are able to sample this taste of the Tropics, thanks to an abundant supply of the crop and an efficient domestic railroad transportation system delivering bananas everywhere in the late 1920s (and even earlier). With large-scale mass production, even rural people could partake of tastes and pleasures that only the social élite had previously enjoyed. This iconic banana-eating scene is important for a second reason. Whether coincidentally or purposefully, when Dewey Dell and Vardaman are eating a banana as they watch the arrival of their new stepmother, it is as if by eating the banana they are cannibalizing her. The stepmother is being stripped by their eyes like the half-peeled banana while Cash compares her form to that of an animal—a duck. The connection between femininity and animality mediated through the tropical banana reinforces the long-held sexual and racial imaginings that exist in American culture.

In analyzing the ways that references to and depictions of the banana in American texts have been intertwined with sexual fantasies, racial prejudices, and mass commodities, it is essential to turn to new, interdisciplinary methodology to disentangle

[8] William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, 1930 (New York: Modern Library, 2000).

colonial myth and the effects of US imperialism. In contrast to the ways scholars of modernism once explored cultural exchanges in transatlantic circuits, new modernist scholars argue that modernist literary scholarship, not limited by historical and cultural assumptions, can expand to a cross-continental and even a cross-hemispherical frame. Foodways studies, which traces the travel of foodstuffs, examines how food embodies memory and affectivities. Affect studies explicates how emotion, which moves the subject toward and away from the object, challenges the uneven power dynamic.

Methodology

Proposing new methodological directions for modernist scholarship, Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz advocate vertical, temporal, and spatial expansions to study literary modernisms.[9] Their call for a new modernist studies, which would value how modernisms of other countries interact with Anglo-American modernist practices and how eco-social forces constitute facets of modernisms, not only renews literary researchers' definition of modernism but also sheds light on how modernism could be studied from different disciplines and praxes. The new modernist studies echoes the transnational turn of modernism, reconsidering how spatial and geographical boundaries are redefined within a cross-national network, reevaluating the political and cultural discourses bursting from the encounters between the local and the global, and reexamining modernism within a larger scale— that is, within the dialogue between the colonial and the postcolonial, and in the negotiation between the global North and the global South. In other words, transnational modernism challenges the traditional

[9] Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz, "The New Modernist Studies," *PMLA* 123.3 (2008): 734-48.

modernist trajectory, which has been limited to a focus on national literary activities, and instead incorporates more literary productions that are less Eurocentric or outside of the Anglo-American field of scholarly discussions, thus adding more weight to investigations of how the local wrestles with the global, culturally and politically.

Some scholars have expanded hitherto restrictive areas of research in an effort to better interpret the transnational contexts. Brent Hayes Edwards's *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism*, for example, examines transnational modernism in the Harlem Renaissance, "accounting for the ways that expression was molded through attempts to appropriate and transform the discourses of internationalism" (3).[10] Edwards employs the term "diaspora," which simultaneously suggests linkage and separation, to explain the struggles, losses, and connections black people encountered in Harlem and France. The use of diaspora in Edward's argument for black internationalism, on the one hand, exposes the tensions and losses African Americans experience during the act of crossing borders; on the other hand, diaspora "articulates discourses of cultural and political linkage" to connect the gaps caused by uprooted journeys (13). The notion of diaspora, for Edwards, explains not only internal differences such as gender, class, race, and identity, but also external forces, like exile, migration, and the discrimination faced by those in African-American communities.

[10] For relevant scholarship about transnational modernism and modernity, see, in addition to Brent Hayes Edwards's *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2003), Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986); Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel, eds., *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2006); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993); Sieglinde Lemke, *Primitive Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism* (New York: Oxford UP, 1998); and Rebecca Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism beyond the Nation* (New York: Columbia UP, 2007).

Edwards's analysis of diaspora offers a framework to deal dynamically with the cultural and political differences that inevitably appear in transnational circuits.

If the concept of diaspora lets Anglo-American modernist scholars explore the ways in which gaps in transnational circuits could be theorized, then foodways studies provides a tangible method to make the differences visible and sensible. Food, a physical embodiment inscribed with memory, emotional attachments, nostalgia, cultural patterns and taboos, allows researchers to analyze how social heritage, ethnical/cultural identity, and group history are fashioned through deciphering food's multi-faceted significations. And through tracing how food is woven into social-cultural-economical-geographical contexts, foodways studies explores "why we eat, what we eat, and what it means," as Elizabeth Engelhardt summarizes it in *The Larder: Food Studies Methods from the American South* (1).[11] Namely, foodways studies serves as a map directing how scholars could interpret and analyze food with a critical lens. The narrator's eating of the baked yam in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) exemplifies the ways in which food encapsulates racial identity, group memory, and uprooted emotions.[12] When the narrator eats baked yams, a traditional southern dish, on a Harlem street, his hunger for food is satisfied, his senses for life are revived, and his recognition of his own Southern black identity is fortified. The baked yam embodies a duality: similar to the narrator's diasporic experiences, it is a food traveling from the South to the North; simultaneously, this Southern soul food, though uprooted, possesses healing power, both physically and spiritually, soothing the narrator's unspeakable sorrow and loss. Foodways studies offers

[11] John T. Edge, Elizabeth Engelhardt, and Ted Ownby, eds., *The Larder: Food Studies Methods from the American South* (Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 2012).

[12] Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Random House, 1952).

researchers a method for decoding the multi-layered significance that lies within the baked yam. These analytical foodways perspectives, I contend, illustrate the kind of work Mao and Walkowitz call for; by illuminating the journeys of the uprooted baked yam and the African-American experience it represents—both the diasporic suffering and the self-construction of African Americans—this type of scholarship embraces a wide, multi-spatial, and multi-cultural network.

A second methodological framework, affect studies, provides the theoretical language with which to explain the interlacing of the exotic, the erotic, the primitive, and the nostalgic in Americans' imaginings of bananas. Affect theory honors the power of emotion and challenges the Western dismissal of emotion as secondary, irrational, and feminine. As gleaned from an interview with Yubraj Aryal, Brian Massumi theorizes affect as an act of rewriting the logistics of capitalism, contending that affect "is directly relational, because it places affect in the space of relation: between affecting and being affected."[13] Massumi focuses on the process of two ends wrestling with each other. Through articulating the way affect reconstructs the relation between two ends and between thinking and feeling, Massumi claims that "the feeling of the transitional encounter is not 'raw' feeling," but, rather, an "enactive understanding: it is one with the action" (94). Massumi's thinking-feeling perspective emphasizes the agency emotion embodies. Sara Ahmed further theorizes the concept of emotion with agency, claiming that "emotions are, after all, moving, even if they do not simply move between us" (11).[14] As Ahmed continues, "The relationship between movement and attachment is instructive.

[13] Brian Massumi, "Ideology and Escape" in *Politics of Affect* (Cambridge: Polity P, 2015), 83-111.

[14] Sarah Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (London: Routledge, 2004).

What moves us, what makes us feel, is also that which holds us in place, or gives us a dwelling place" (11). By analyzing the two-way forces interacting with each other, Ahmed draws attention to the contradictory duality in emotion: emotion moves the subject to stay "with" the desired, while it moves the subject to stay "away from" the desired. The paradox of emotion articulated by affect studies helps me to clarify how the emotional complexities embedded in references to and depictions of the banana elicit and endorse racial and sexual fantasies, while, at the same time, providing a possibility of resistance to counter stereotypical representations.

Organization

While this introduction provides the historical context of the banana, the first chapter, "'Yes! 100 Ways to Enjoy Bananas': The Commodification of Banana in Print and the Formation of American Womanhood," explores the ways in which bananas were introduced into Americans' diet, eating culture, and daily life at the turn of the twentieth century with the rise of consumption culture and nutrition discourses. For most North Americans in the 1880s, the banana was a foreign and luxury fruit, but by the end of the nineteenth century, it had become a popular staple, due to a consistent, year-round supply. At the turn of the century, more cookbooks were published to educate Americans on how to cook the banana for their daily meals. In her manual *Fruits and How to Use Them* (1889), Hester M. Poole praises the banana as "the most important of all fruits" (51) and shares recipes for banana-based desserts.[15] In 1904, the United Fruit Company published *A Short History of the Banana and a Few Recipes for Its Use* (hereafter, *SHB*) "in order

[15] Hester M. Poole, *Fruits and How to Use Them: A Practical Manual for Housekeepers* (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1889).

to expand the use and consumption of the fruit" (Jenkins 106).[16] In the following decade, the *Ladies Home Journal* published the essay "A Cheap Food We Overlook," which argued that low-price bananas "have three times the protein of apples, more fats and a third more carbohydrates," and outrank "the potato in energy-giving qualities" (52). These cooking records, I argue, show that banana consumption gradually emerged and became popular in Americans' eating culture, and that the ways in which the bananas were prepared corresponded to the growing interest in home economics and nutritional education. The banana cookbooks and recipes offered meal providers—primarily housewives—the knowledge to prepare the fruit based on its nutritional properties. In other words, through food-related marketing strategies, the banana became a prevalent commodity in Americans' daily diets.

The commercial tactics used to promote the banana via food advertisements and books offer a lens through which to see and analyze how marketing strategies coupled gender and class with banana consumption and preparation. The cover to the 1925 cookbook *Yes! 100 Ways to Enjoy Bananas* (hereafter, *100 Ways*) depicts a housewife cutting a banana beside her baby in a high chair, who is eating his yellow fruit. The mother on the cover represents the American mother in her role of meal provider and monitor of her child's health and nutrition. The cookbook, which was designed to teach consumers how to enjoy bananas, implicitly endowed its women-readers with two identities: as traditional housewife, with new knowledge about this increasingly popular fruit; and as consumer, encouraged and inspired to purchase more bananas. The

[16] Virginia Scott Jenkins, *The American History* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution P, 2000).

marketing of the banana served as a linchpin to construct these various female identities, from homemaker to consumer.

Banana consumption also transformed the diet culture of the working class. At the turn of the twentieth century, the time for urban wageworkers to prepare meals was relatively limited. Since the banana was cheap, nutritious, easy to prepare, and needed no extra preservation procedures, such as canning or drying, the banana was a great food choice for working-class women to save their cooking time, to nurture their families, and to meet the needs of an increasingly fast-paced society. A study of banana images in cookbooks, recipes, and magazines elucidates how the banana was transformed from a luxury, exotic good to an American food staple. This transformation process occurred alongside the construction of American consumer identity and discourse about the New Woman in America, and at the intersection of class divisions.

As the banana became domesticated in America, its production history was erased from view. A promotional campaign that touted the banana's tastiness, portability, and health values turned the banana into a chic commodity while hiding the unequal economic-colonial relations between the US and Central America, the dominance of mono-agricultural plantations, the transportation network that profited off the trade, and the exploitations of labor, race, and gender. Indeed, the more that banana consumption increased in America, the more invisible the exploitation of Central American people to US consumers.

The second chapter of this dissertation, "Claude McKay and the Poetry of Jamaican Identity: Tourism, Caribbean Diasporic Writing, and Resistance" investigates those exploitative practices behind the banana trade that are invisible to American

consumers and the American tourist visiting the Caribbean. If my first chapter is full of the sweet smells of the banana, then this chapter is imbued with the putrid smells of sweat and death. In his biographical prose poem about Minor Keith, "Emperor of the Caribbean," in his novel *The 42nd Parallel* (1930), John dos Passos excoriates the industrialist Keith for the way his industrial enterprises affected the people he employed and the land they worked.[17] Dos Passos's sketch of this businessman who recruited hundreds of low-wage workers to build a railroad in the Caribbean, makes the point that while most of those workers died, "Minor Keith didn't die"; to recoup his railroad investment, Keith directed workers to plant bananas that he could transport, and while all of those workers died of in tropical epidemics, Keith was able to create "the beginning of the Caribbean fruittrade" (191). This Caribbean fruittrade helped to create Caribbean tourism, which further exploited the Caribbean, which was touted as the Eden of recreations. Ships traveling on the Atlantic do not only transport bananas to the US but also convey tourists between North America and the Caribbean.

For many US tourists at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Caribbean would be synonymous with joy, sunshine, and tropical paradise. In his "The Tropics in New York" and in his dialect poems, McKay challenged these stereotypes and hinted at the exploitative reality that Caribbean people experienced under US imperialism. A United Fruit Company passenger-cargo ship ferried McKay, a Jamaican writer, to America in 1912. His "The Tropics in New York" depicts the entanglement between the foodways of tropical fruits and the speaker's diasporic experiences, revealing how much the transnational journey estranged both the speaker and the fruit. Both suffer from a

[17] John dos Passos, *The 42nd Parallel*, 1930 (Boston: Mariner, 2000).

crisis of displaced identity as globality transforms and complicates their notion of home. McKay's poetry highlights the dialectical and unsettled struggles of inhabiting two worlds. Drawing on the network of transnational modernism, this chapter considers non-North American literary productions as an indispensable part of American literature and explores how this transnational writer questions the imbalanced relation of geopolitics between the US and its neighbors.

The third and final chapter of this dissertation, "'Banana Is My Business': From Josephine Baker's Banana Skirt to Miss Chiquita's Tutti Frutti Hat," argues that the banana costumes worn by Josephine Baker, Carmen Miranda, and Miss Chiquita interrogated racial and gender characterizations. Bananas infuse a touch of the exotic in these costumes. However, Baker's and Miranda's stage performances and Miss Chiquita's jingle song challenged European and American audience's understanding of the divide between the elite self and the tropical other. Being a transnationally known performer in Harlem and Paris, Baker successfully appropriated her banana skirt costume, the symbol of an exotic commodity, as a tactic to counter the colonial myth of primitivism. The tropicality of the banana in Baker's dance, on the one hand, perpetuates colonialist stereotypes of black female sexuality that were popular in the Parisian consciousness of the time; on the other hand, it destabilizes the rigid opposition between the primitive and the civilized. As a black woman costumed with a banana belt—seen as the erotic and the exotic—Baker is reinforcing imperial myths, but, through her dynamic dancing movements, she also subverts this exploited and unbalanced relationship between the spectator and the object of the gaze. Miranda's baiana outfit, which included the edible, fruit-laden turban she wore, lifted from the iconic basket of fruit that Afro-

Brazilian female street vendors carried on their heads, certainly had racial undertones. In *The Gang's All Here* (1943), surrounded by a banana jungle, wearing a banana hat, and swinging to samba rhythms, Miranda sang "The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat" in her Portuguese-accented English. In it, she seamlessly links her sensual female body with hot, tropical Latin America, representing a tropical "other," ready for an American audience to consume. As John Soluri states, this combination could be viewed as self-parody, dissolving "the sexual tension and remove the possibility that either Miranda or the banana would threaten the moral standards of the era."[18]. I further argue that Miranda's look revealed the double bind registered by the banana: the more the banana is neutralized as a common American commodity, the more its exotic characteristics are accentuated. What's more, Miranda's performance responded to the "Good Neighbor Policy" promoted by Franklin D. Roosevelt, in which the US established harmonic relationships with Latin America during World War II.[19] In her performances, Miranda acted as a mediator between Brazilian tropicality and mainstream US culture, implying that the American government employed a more cooperative approach to build up its connections with Latin America. Knowing these complexities, Miranda's Broadway and Hollywood performances interrogated the way that the otherness of the banana sent sexual, racial, and geographical messages.

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[18] John Soluri, "Banana Cultures: Linking the Production and Consumption of Export Bananas, 1800-1980" in *Banana Wars: Power, Production and History in the Americas*, ed. Steve Striffler and Mark Moberg (Durham: Duke UP, 2003): 48-79, 63.

[19] For more on Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Good Neighbor Policy, and Miranda, see Ana M. López, Ana M, "Are All Latins From Manhattan?: Hollywood, Ethnography and Cultural Colonialism" in *Films and Nationalism*, ed. Alan Williams (Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2002): 195-216.

On the heels of Miranda's success, the United Fruit Company designed a cartoon-like woman character, "Miss Chiquita," to market bananas. Miss Chiquita's "tutti-frutti" hat was based on Miranda's turban; her winking eyes, sweet smile, gestures, embroidered blouse, long skirt, and singing styles all recalled Miranda. Miss Chiquita's style crystallized the association between tropical femininity and the banana, and with her, the United Fruit Company had found an effective way to promote the fruit with exoticism.

The exoticism and racial implications embedded within the banana link Baker's costume in Paris, Miranda's baiana outfit in Rio and Hollywood, and Miss Chiquita's comic image in America. Situating the two female performers and Miss Chiquita within a transatlantic and inter-hemispherical context, this chapter conceptualizes how and why the imaginings of exoticism of the banana wielded influence transnationally.

Final Remarks

Although the methodological trajectories of transnational modernism and foodways studies provide broader and interdisciplinary perspectives for American modernist scholarship, critical focuses on transnational and intra-hemispherical dialogues are still quite few in American modernist studies. Anglo-American modernist scholars mostly center on the transatlantic exchanges between Britain and America, as well as between Europe and America, whereas recent foodways researchers pay more attention to the topics of African-American and Southern American food cultures. Analyzing how the banana is associated with different cultural representations and cross-national circulations, my dissertation proposes that the scope of transnational modernism can be extended to a cross-continental, cross-hemispherical frame, not limited by the Anglo-American-Franco

circuit, and that contemporary foodways studies can be applied to other literary fields, whose languages and traditions are not neatly included in American studies.

The banana, as a transnational commodity, sits at the intersection of cultural, economic, geopolitical, racial, and gender dialogues. With the aid of the theoretical framework of transnational modernism, foodways studies, and affect studies, my dissertation employs interdisciplinary approaches to read history, print culture, literature, and stage representations of bananas in order to dissect the banana's multiple significations in American culture, to explain the dynamic ways in which the banana is represented as the indigenous, the exotic, and the common, and to explore the possibilities of transnational, inter-hemispheric exchanges with American modernist studies. I hope that my analysis of different cultural representations of the banana and the expansions of theoretical trajectories, which not only cross disciplinary boundaries but also hybridize them, offer innovative perspectives while developing a critical route to connect American modernist studies and other forms of cultural productions.

CHAPTER II

"YES! 100 WAYS TO ENJOY BANANAS": THE COMMODIFICATION OF BANANAS IN PRINT AND THE FORMATION OF AMERICAN WOMANHOOD

This chapter explores how bananas were introduced into Americans' eating culture and daily life through cookbooks. These cookbooks were published during the rise of a consumer-centric society, amid increasing discourse about nutrition at the turn of the twentieth century. These cooking records, I argue, document the construction of mass banana consumption and suggest how bananas became popular in the American diet. The ways bananas were prepared reveal the interest in home economics and nutritional education prominent in middle-class cookbooks of the 1920s. The five banana cookbooks I consider—*A Short History of the Banana and a Few Recipes for Its Use* (1904), *Yes! 100 Ways to Enjoy Bananas* (1925), *From the Tropics to Your Table: Eighty-Three Tested Banana Recipes* (1926), *The Food Value of the Banana* (1928), and *Yes! Home Made Banana Recipes* (1929)—offered meal providers—primarily housewives—the knowledge and confidence to prepare banana-based dishes.[1] The publication of these cookbooks and targeted food advertisements helped to fashion the banana as a staple commodity. The photographs and the illustrations in the cookbooks depicted women as traditional, middle-class homemakers, confident in their cooking skills, and these representations encouraged women in their role as consumers to purchase more bananas. For working-class women, the banana had a particular appeal; it was a nutritious food

[1] *A Short History of the Banana and a Few Recipes for Its Use* (Boston: United Fruit Company, 1904); *Yes! 100 Ways to Enjoy Bananas* (New Orleans: Bauerlein, Inc., 1925); Camille Den Dooven and Elizabeth MacDonald, *From the Tropics to Your Table: Eighty-Three Tested Banana Recipes* (New York: Fruit Dispatch Co., 1926); *The Food Value of the Banana* (Boston: United Fruit Co., 1928); and *Yes! Home Made Banana Recipes* (New York: Di Giorgio Fruit Corporation, 1929).

choice for the family, saved cooking time, and met the needs of a fast-paced work environment. By investigating banana representations in cookbooks, I contend that the transformation of bananas from the exotic to the common intersects with the construction of American consumer identity, images of the New Woman, and class divisions at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The story of the banana in the United States is a Cinderella tale. During the colonial period, the banana was seen as an odd and exotic fruit. In the 1870s and 1880s, bananas were a high-end luxury and could only be found on hotel menus during the holidays or on special occasions in the fall and winter. In the 1890s, however, as the United Fruit Company built a railroad system in Central America, and as steamship lines were operating between the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea, and as refrigeration railcars were traveling across the US, bananas were transformed from a special-occasion, elite, perishable fruit to a year-round and inexpensive commodity sold across the US. The banana trade prospered, and the demand for bananas increased. By the end of the nineteenth century, the United Fruit Company had gained a monopoly on the banana market and dominated the way that bananas were traded in the US and systematically exploited the natural resources of Central America to meet demand.

The Witness of American Foodways

As bananas became one of the most popular fruits in American grocery stores and at fruit stands at the end of nineteenth century, how were they promoted to American consumers? Cookbooks—which included information about food history, regional cuisines, germ discoveries, home economics, and new methods of cooking—became an

ideal vehicle to market bananas to American families. In her recent history of cookbooks, *Food on the Page: Cookbooks and American Culture*, historian Megan J. Elias traces the history of the American cookbook to show how, since the nineteenth century, they have defined American foodways, have integrated regional culinary culture into the national character, and have constructed female readership.[2] The term "foodways," according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (hereafter, *OED*), is defined as "the traditional customs or habits of a group of people concerning food and eating." That is, foodways are constructed by heritage, social habits, and the locality of food cultures. Cookbooks, which record how foodstuff is prepared in different places and eras, shoulder the responsibility of upholding ordinary conventions and representing how social phenomena rewrite culinary knowledge. In her study, Elias has found that community cookbooks, Southern cookbooks, progressive cookbooks, and cooperative cookbooks demonstrate how American foodways change in response to local cultures, regional consciousness, the rise of both scientific discourse and of home economics, and the wave of consumerism. Moreover, the construction of female readership and the redefinition of female home cooks are intertwined with the history of American cookbooks. For the purposes of my research, I have found that exploring the significance of cookbooks in American culture has helped explain why the banana ascended from its identity as an exotic fruit from the Tropics to become one of the staple fruits in the United States the twentieth century.

[2] Megan J. Elias, *Food on the Page: Cookbooks and American Culture* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2017).

Cookbooks as Tools for Promoting Social Bonding

Between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, community cookbooks compiled by middle-class women, often in in small cities, collected recipes popular in local communities. Independent scholar Virginia Jenkins contends that these communal cooking records register that the banana was one of the most common fruits for dessert and must have been ubiquitous in American daily life (Jenkins 103-4).[3] These community cookbooks were usually organized according to the order of a meal—from soup and vegetable, to main course, to dessert—and also included a chapter of "breakfast and luncheon dishes" (Elias 18). The titles of these community cookbooks named the local communities they represented. The 1894 cookbook *How We Cook in Los Angeles* (hereafter, *CLA*), published by the Ladies' Social Circle of Simpson M. E. Church, for instance, employs the first-person plural pronoun "we" to denote that the cookbook's readers, editors, and publishers might know each other, and it names "Los Angeles" as the city of circulation. By sharing individual or "family secret" recipes in print, female meal preparers earned a space in a public arena (Elias 18). Participating in this way, a woman could stake out a place or gain notoriety in her local community. The preface of *How We Cook in Los Angeles* touts the reputation of its contributors: "A reference to the list of contributors we feel is a guarantee of the worth and popularity of this book" (9). Beyond any individual motivations to participate, there is the fact that when women of the same community follow the same recipes, they gain a sense of solidarity, a feeling that they have become a group living together and helping each other.

[3] Virginia Scott Jenkins argues that the banana became an accessible ingredient in cookbooks in the 1890s, the decade when *How We Cook in Los Angeles* was published. See her book *Bananas: The American History* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution P, 2000).

How We Cook in Los Angeles reads like an encyclopedia, containing advertisements, personal writing about banquet etiquette, and recipes ranging from appetizers and entrées to dessert, including dishes from France, Germany, and Spain. The long subtitle, "A Practical Cook-Book Containing Six Hundred or More Recipes Selected and Tested by Over Two Hundred Well Known Hostesses, including a French, German, and Spanish Department with Menus, Suggestions for Artistic Table Decorations, and Souvenirs," underscores the depth of this thick cookbook and the authority it claims. Famous "hostesses," not common women or servants, have endorsed hundreds of collective recipes. The cosmopolitan style of incorporating European cooking, the focus on dining environment, and the emphasis on middle-class female authorship suggest that this cookbook was mainly published for bourgeois housewives who wished to transform their dinner tables into something elegant. Moreover, advertisements for cooking tools and groceries reinforce the feeling of extravagance that permeates this cookbook: for the first ten pages, advertisements fill the left-hand pages, while the list of contributors fill the right-hand ones. This design implies that the contributors endorse the products. At the end of the cookbook, local grocery advertisements are paired with an index of recipes, again reminding readers where to buy the goods they need. The placement of marketing reflects the rise of consumerism in the US that started in the late nineteenth century. During this time, housewives' kitchen roles grew, no longer merely meal providers but also, now, invested with agency to choose what they could use and cook in their food preparation. Advertisements in a community cookbook justified these purchases; the sale of home goods rose in the name of cooking and family.

Even though *How We Cook in Los Angeles* used this new promotional strategy, it still maintained ties with the culinary traditions of genteel culture. This cookbook contains a number of short essays on various topics by members of the Ladies' Circle, and the second essay, titled "Old Time Hospitality," by Jessie Benton Fremont, recalls the author's lessons in hospitality, meal-time etiquette, and the gentility of formal cooking that she gleaned from her childhood near Washington, D.C. and in St. Louis, and New York. Her goal was to "show the family atmosphere that made dinners a charming time of social exchange of one's best, and not exclusively a function of necessity, or for empty show" (*CLA* 28). Since one of the goals of this community cookbook was to motivate the female reader to create a better home dining space, linking dinner with hospitality and decorum would endow the daily cooking routine with social value, giving housewives a sense of self-achievement: their kitchen work was a linchpin connecting family needs with hospitality. Fremont's affective tone in remembering the genteel culture of her childhood—for example, the formal courses and delicate decorations of her family's banquets—evoke the imagery of plantation life. A second essay in the cookbook, "Table Decorations," is really a compilation of letters sent by Mrs. Anna Bancroft, a member of the Ladies' Circle who had been living in Chicago and participating in the social circles there. In the first letter, she describes her observations of the light, informal, floral table decorations that graced the table of a breakfast to which she had been invited: "The breakfast room was the perfection of brightness," allowing "the sun to pour through a lattice-work of green vines so cleverly woven back and forth that Nature seemed the handmaiden." (*CLA* 39). Bancroft employs a didactic tone to observe that a large, sunlit dining room, which allows guests to connect with nature, proves to be indispensable for

showing hospitality and taste. In this well-crafted space, nature becomes "the handmaiden," suggesting that hosts and guests like the freshness and vitality nature brings to a banquet. The legacy of etiquette guides the female reader to decorate her dining room, which becomes her performance stage, with extravagance. The word "handmaiden" ironically exposes the invisible servant labor ignored in this picturesque scenario. The interior and the table decoration Mrs. Bancroft describes in her letter would require the help of handmaid—or servants—to be replicated. However, nature, renamed as handmaid, appropriates these humans' labors and is personified to provide hospitable service for the participants. The rhetorical nuance that compares nature to a handmaid's work obscures the importance of human labor, romanticizing the satisfaction the leisure class enjoys, and consolidating the middle-class culture these community cookbooks endorse.

In the recipe section of the book, there are a large number of recipes from French, German, Spanish, and Russian cuisines that register a trend at the time in foreign cooking. Though the recipes are arranged systematically as a formal banquet starting from salad and soup to entrée and dessert, they still represent national culinary characteristics. For example, Spanish recipes include various meat options and jambalaya, and rice dishes. For example, there is a recipe for "Rice à la Valencia" (*CLA* 275) and one for "Spanish Rice," the latter of which directs that you serve the rice under a layer of spicy cow tongue sauce from Mexico called "Pipián de Lengua"[4] (*CLA* 275). The recipe for Louisiana "Jambalaya" has flavor from both Spanish and French cuisine. This variety of international flavors in a Los Angeles cookbook illustrates the fact that the city is a hub

[4] In The Cuisines of Mexico, "pipián" is a "name given to a sauce of ground nuts or seeds and spices" (*CLA* 372).

where multiple cultures merge, where the Mexican "Pipián de Lengua" spices up a regional variation of Spanish rice, and where "Jambalaya" reflects the cultural diversities of the American South. The menu of "Afternoon Coffee" in the German section also represents the coexistence of the foreign and the domestic (*CLA* 282). While rye bread and preserved fruit are a nod to Americans' pairing of sweetened fruits with bread in the 1890s, German pastries, such as "Leb Kuchen" (which should be Lebkuchen, meaning ginger bread), "Apfel Kuchen" (apple cake), "Pfeffer Nusse" (which should be Pfeffernusse, meaning spicy cookies), "Blitz Kuchen" (lightning cookies), and "Zimmet Sterne" (cinnamon stars) demonstrate their own national traits through German vocabulary (*CLA* 282). While these German sweets are grouped together as choices for afternoon coffee, the subtle nuances in these pastries are overlooked. Lebkuchen, Pfeffer Nusse, Blitz Kuchen, and Zimmet Sterne are German desserts traditionally enjoyed in December. They are usually made with a variety of spices and coated with a heavy layer of powdered sugar. When they were brought to the US by immigrants, these festival treats became four-season general cookies. The signifier of American daily life—a cookie—paired with the signifier of German spelling at first makes a foreign and unfamiliar impression on the reader; then, it domesticates these European Christmas cookies into the everyday American routine. The cosmopolitan inclusion of European cuisines demonstrates that, while a community cookbook emphasizes the local culinary traditions, it still has a vision to integrate novelty—that is, something that is not the norm in American foodways.

The focus of my study, of course, is bananas, and, as an imported fruit, the banana also goes through the process of domestication in community cookbooks. Different from

the inclusion of a geographic name in a Spanish or a German dessert word, the banana stands as the banana itself in *How We Cook in Los Angeles*. These recipes in this cookbook do not use exotic attributes to describe the banana nor give it a foreign spelling. The banana, like fruits native to North America, is treated as a typical example of American produce that is consumed daily. Sliced bananas, oranges, strawberries, and pineapple comprise a "Fruit Salad," and the different flavors of each fruit add layers of taste to this refreshing and light dish (*CLA* 73). The freshness of the banana is emphasized in the cake section; a "Banana Cake" features layers of sliced bananas mixed with sweetened whipped cream, alternating with two layers of sponge cake. The author of the recipe notes that the cake should be eaten "fresh" (*CLA* 199)—no doubt because bananas turn brown quickly after being exposed to air. Only when bananas became common in this period could housewives slice fresh bananas instead of using dried banana slices as a substitute. Thus, the banana had become easily accessible in the late nineteenth century. The banana was not only used in baking or in salads; it could also be fried with sweet butter (*CLA* 235). Cooking bananas perhaps originated in Central America, since Claude McKay's poem "King Banana" (1912) celebrates in wonderful Jamaican rhyme the banana roasted and toasted:

> Green Mancha mek fe naygur man
>
> Wha sweet so when it roas'?
>
> Some boil it in a big black pan
>
> It sweeter in a toas' (1-4)

McKay's poem criticizes the white colonizers' tendency to only eat bananas raw and their ignorance of Caribbean banana foodways, which appreciates the sweeter flavor of

fried bananas. Though "King Banana" is a poem protesting the colonization of the plantation economy, it also records the native cooking culture that this community cookbook collects. The food culture McKay describes in his native Caribbean—and the food culture of his adopted United States—both have fascinating stories to tell about the use of the banana, to which the banana cookbooks that circulated primarily among middle-class American housewives at the turn of the twentieth century can attest.

Cookbooks Reconstruct History and Space

Cookbooks do not simply forge local solidarity and relationships; they also recount regional history and reconstruct the memory of space. Books in the subgenre of banana recipe books published in the early twentieth century follow a similar pattern. The first chapter is an introduction to the foreign tropical fruit, recounting basic banana knowledge, the history of plantations in Central America, the popularity of the United Fruit Company, and the cross-national transportation of the banana to the US. Black-and-white photographs of banana trees in a plantation, local farmers, and loaded cargo ships bring the reader a firsthand understanding of how the banana was grown and traded. The story of the banana and the geo-cultural particularities of Central America and the Caribbean are condensed within this prologue. In these banana cookbooks, the facts the writers select, the photographs recording the locals' lives, and the transportation process transform the banana from a mere commodity to a powerful food imbued with the power to shape the American diet and exuding exoticism of the Other. These choices also inform American readers' realization of a foreign space where peasants work in colossal banana plantations and carry bunches of bananas onto cargo ships. Through words and

images that substantiated banana history, life in Central America, and geography unfamiliar to early twentieth-century Americans, banana cookbooks overlooked the economic dominance of transnational commercial enterprises, like the United Fruit Company, which controlled banana production in Central America and generated enormous profits through the sale of bananas in the US.

Reconstructing history and memory of space through the recipe narrative continues to be a common characteristic in American cooking. The study of Southern cookbooks remains at the core of examining the ways that Southern particularities were translated into everyday practices. Southern cooking became a trend after the Civil War. Antebellum Southern cookbooks offer an understanding of regionalism and weave the historical past within the narrative of recipes, attempting to reincarnate the former South. As Elias argues,

> Southern cookbook writers presented the region as a temporal space—the past—as well as geographical location. These writers may have expected their recipes to be used, but they also offered them up as history—mementos of a glorious time that had passed. To eat the food of the South, these books suggested, was to relive Southern history without the distasteful parts. (25)

Southern cookbooks, for Elias, are not simply collections of recipes, but, rather, records of the characteristics of locality and space. They play the role of storyteller, narrating what people of the South experienced. However, while reading Southern cookbooks, readers and meal providers did not necessarily go over the unpleasant history of what happened before the Civil War. Indeed, these regional cookbooks shielded readers from this traumatic national memory and instead provided flavorful dishes to reanimate the

former glory of the South. Banana cookbooks—while not exactly the same as Southern cookbooks—shoulder the responsibility of introducing the production history of bananas to the reader.

The preface to Marion Cabell Tyree's 1878 *Housekeeping in Old Virginia* recounts the glory of the English motherland and how that legacy of luxurious hospitality could shape the ideal American home: "Virginia, or the Old Dominion, as her children delight to call her, . . . became noted among the colonies for the princely hospitality of her people and for the beauty and richness of their living."[5] Portraying Virginia, the state named in honor of Elizabeth I, the Virgin Queen, of England, as a representation of a female monarch restated the relationship of colonial subjugation between Britain and America. Though the US had been independent for over one hundred years when this cookbook was published, Tyree's text claims a glorious inheritance for Virginia from the mother country, asserting that the settlers in Virginia had a sophisticated aesthetic and a noble etiquette of hosting. Though this newborn country experienced a bloody war with Great Britain, these housewives, "not to be outdone either in services or patriotism, set about at once the inauguration of a plan of rigid retrenchment and reform in the domestic economy, while at the same time exhibiting to their sisters a noble example of devotion and self-sacrifice" (*HOV* viii). Tyree was justly proud of what the housewives did during the American Revolutionary War: these patriotic women, who did not forget their obligation to support the nation, demonstrated their creativity by fulfilling their household duties in the face of economic gloom. While their husbands were on the battlefield to fight for American independence, these hostesses were doing the

[5] Mabel Cabell Tyree, *Housekeeping in Old Virginia* (Louisville: John P. Morton & Co., 1878): viii; hereafter, *HOV*.

"husbandry" of resource management to carefully calculate needed money and supplies. They played dual roles—supporting their homes and families and performing public service.

The ability to maintain a level of beauty and elegance despite stringent economic conditions after 1776 became a skill that these Southern hostesses strove for: "They introduced in their homes that new style of living in which, . . . retaining only its inexpensive graces, they succeeded in perfecting that system which, surviving to this day, has ever been noted for its beautiful and elegant simplicity" (*HOV* viii). Although their lives were not extravagant, these capable women could develop an elegant, beautiful lifestyle from simple means. Elegance replaced extravagance and endowed this new economic mode, a substitute for a profligate life, an aesthetic of simplicity. The Preface to the book praises this system, "which combines the thrifty frugality of New England with the less rigid style of Carolina," and which has been admired from all over the Union "as the very perfection of domestic art" (*HOV* viii). The northern Puritan model mixed with Southern flexibility to create an innovative art of housekeeping that was inspirational and filled with simplicity and elegance that let Southern women believe embodied the perceived glory of the pre-Civil War South. Tyree's romantic tone, worshipful towards elegance and perfection and praising Southern generosity, reflected her wish to endorse Southerners' values and tastes. The genteel Southern culture and its approach to domestic management, made the South a leading force for home cooking.

However, the aesthetics of elegance and beauty in housekeeping ignored the labor exploitation that made this system of home economics possible. Even though this manual book promoted creative domestic economy and celebrated Virginian homes, this quasi

middle-class standard was still rooted in labor division: that is, a hostess was responsible for design, while (black) servants practiced the daily chores.

The illustration in Fig. 1.1 appears between the title page of *Housekeeping in Old Virginia* and the table of contents. In this location, unmoored to any text in the book, this black-and-white illustration is seemingly irrelevant to artistic housekeeping, but in fact exposes what was invisible in the ideal Southern American home.

Figure 1.1 Illustration from Tyree, *Housekeeping in Old Virginia*

In this picture, a smiling young African-American female servant is doing her kitchen work. She wears a turban and an apron, her sleeves are rolled to the upper arms, and she is preparing poultry for a meal.[6] Since the time of slavery, such representations were quite popular in American culture: African American women were in charge of kitchen work in the plantations and cooked meals for their owners and families. These women withstood high heat in the kitchens and managed the inconvenience of fetching clean water, depicted in the illustration in a wooden bucket. Chicken recipes in cookbooks did not acknowledge these demanding preparations. In *Housekeeping of Old Virginia*, it is recommended that "chicken should never be cooked the same day it is killed. Wash well with cold water, then pour boiling water over it and into the cavity" (*HOV* 184). These instructions keep the focus on how chicken rather than on those who are preparing it. The emphasis on perfection and artistry encouraged the readers, most of whom were white middle-class or lower middle-class hostesses, to construct a gorgeous domestic palace and forget that servant labor made this model home possible. The lure of an ideal home covered up readers' consciousness of class, racial differences, and labor divisions. In the mid-nineteenth century, even a white lower-class family was able to hire (usually African-American) servants for helping with household chores. The servants carried out most of the domestic duties and undertook the repetitive kitchen work. The servants' labor, however, was often regarded as unimportant; their presence was forgotten in a white family. The illustration of an African-American smiling female servant in the kitchen demonstrates how the idea of white supremacy helped construct a kitchen myth

[6] This bird is possibly a chicken, as chicken has been associated with African-American diet culture and culinary skills since the era of slavery. The book cover of *Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs* shows a similar image as this illustration; see Psyche A. Williams-Forson, *Building Houses out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food, & Power* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2006).

in which white women of different classes believed they could have a perfect domestic space without doing routine work. When the following page claims that this cookbook contains "contributions from two hundred and fifty ladies in Virginia and her sister states distinguished for their skill in the culinary art and other branches of domestic economy" (*HOV* 4), again, the black labor of hard culinary work, which was the bedrock of the perfection of home economics, is excluded from the domain of the art of housekeeping.

Similar to the way that Southern cookbooks recount American history and the tension between the North and the South, banana cookbooks also reconstructed the socio-economic relationships between Central America and the US by tracing the history of bananas. *A Short History of the Banana and a Few Recipes for Its Use*, published by the United Fruit Company in 1904, employs the strategy of storytelling to introduce the foreign fruit to Americans and to implicitly legitimize its commercial expansion in Latin America. The first part of this banana cookbook succinctly conveys the popularity of the banana in Central America. The postcard-type illustration in Fig. 1.2 uses a wide

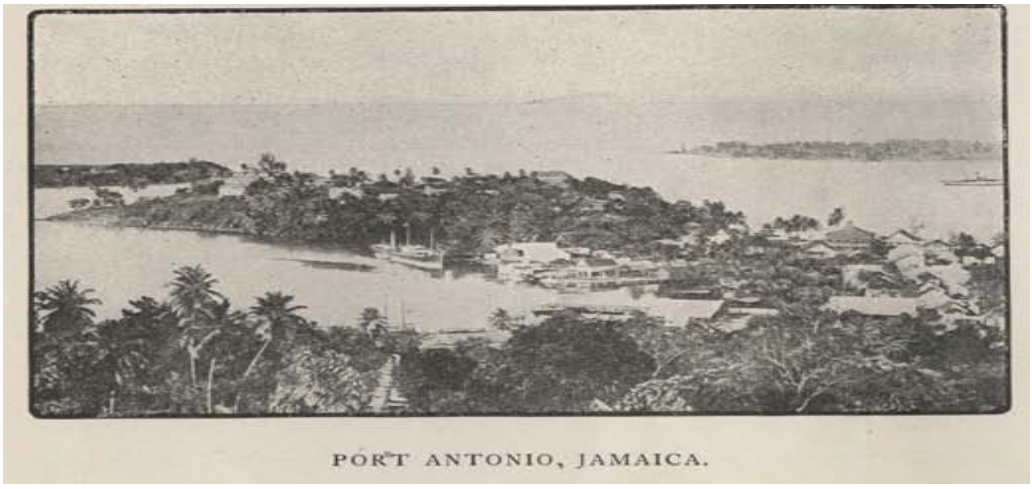


Figure 1.2 Black-and-white illustration of Port Antonio, Jamaica, from *A Short History of the Banana and a Few Recipes for Its Use* (Boston: United Fruit Company, 1904)

lens to show a panoramic of Port Antonio, Jamaica, with its picturesque palm trees, endless ocean, modern buildings, and ships at port in this beautiful tropical setting that convey to readers that this place is worth visiting.[7] However, the text paired with this photograph explains how the banana grows and how the Jamaican peasants transport bunches of bananas from plantations to ports:

> It is a common sight in Jamaica to see a string of a dozen or more women each with a large bunch of bananas on her head, and these they will carry for several miles without stopping. The Jamaica negroes are educated from childhood to carry everything on their head. . . . When a Jamaica belle goes to a social function she carries her shoes on her head, and puts them on her feet when she gets there. Everything from a postage stamp to a Saratoga trunk is carried in this way. (*SHB* 4–5)

Indeed, Jamaican people used to carry items on their heads, and it was a convenient way for them to transport goods, since the infrastructure remained undeveloped at the turn of the century. The casual tone ("It is a common sight. . . ") reinforces the popularity and naturalness of carrying items on the head. The third person point-of-view seemingly describes Jamaican life with objectivity; nevertheless, this narrator has a Eurocentric perspective and views the colonized as the Other. From the narrator's perspective, Jamaican women were objects to be observed, and their carrying objects on the head offered a spectacle to behold. It seems oxymoronic that a "belle" would be carrying objects on her head long distances, but only from a Eurocentric position in the colonized

[7] Since the late nineteenth century, travel pamphlets and guidebooks have often used picturesque photographs of the Jamaican landscape to promote Caribbean tourism. This aspect of the Caribbean travel industry will be further discussed in the next chapter.

is the exotic who performs an unfamiliar "dance" in front of the colonizer (observer). In her book chapter "Defining the Primitive/Reimagining Modernity," Marianna Torgovnick suggests that, although anthropologists such as Bronislaw Malinowski and Claude Lévi-Strauss try to twist the concepts Europeans have toward tribal people and the primitive cultures through their field research, they do not care about the diversities and differences embedded within the notion of the primitive and still regard the primitive as singularity, an entity perpetuating the dichotomy of subject and object.[8] Torgovnick indicates that Malinowski cunningly uses the subject position "we" when representing the sexual life of "savages." "We" is used to refer to the empowered subject with knowledge—European, white elite or the middle class—to achieve his goal of "exposing a shared illusion: the illusion of a representative primitive 'them' as opposed to a monolithic, unified, powerful 'us'" (4). In the field research of modern anthropologists, the primitive is confined to an object associated with jungle, desire, the exotic, the unknown, and the lack of civilization. Torgovnick's critique of twentieth-century anthropology exposes the false presupposition of the primitive that the United Fruit Company used to depict the everyday life of the local peasants in Jamaica.

The discrepancy between the scenery presented in the photograph and the head-carrying described in the passage demonstrates a double strategy devised by the United Fruit Company to reconstruct the history of the banana in the West Indies: this picture shows nothing about Jamaican everyday labor but does depict a scenic view of landscape and seascape. Moreover, what is not transparent in the photograph of Port Antonio is the fact that the modern construction captured in it was actually designed to aid the banana

[8] See the chapter "Defining the Primitive/Reimagining Modernity" in Marianna Torgovnick's *Gone Primitive, Savage Intellects, Modern Lives* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990).

export business to the US. In reality, women would not have been carrying bananas on their heads unless "various ways by railroads, river, or canals" (*SHB* 4) were unavailable to transport the fruit. The Jamaican labor absent from the photograph becomes an imaginary spectacle for the reader, who fantasizes about what quotidian head-carrying must look (and feel) like. Though the picture and narration are used to describe something about Caribbean space and history, neither of them exposes the fact that the United Fruit Company had monopolized the economy and local labor of banana production. Therefore, the United Fruit Company justified the business profits it maximized from the banana plantations by using a quasi-authentic photograph and easygoing narration to trace the history of the banana trade.

The prospect of selling cheap bananas in the US justified—from the perspective of the United Fruit Company—the expansion of its octopus-like enterprise across Central America and the Caribbean. According to the *Short History of the Banana*, the United Fruit Company was proud to have "a fleet of about eighty steamers constantly bringing bananas from various points in the tropics to the different parts of the United States," through which the company and its business partners "have conferred a lasting benefit on the United States by supplying it with an appetizing, nutritious fruit at very low prices" (*SHB* 9). This self-righteous propaganda not only elevated the banana as an ideal fruit choice for American customers in terms of taste, nutrition, and price, but it also claimed that the expansion of the United Fruit Company's enterprise was valuable because it provided US consumers with a year-round supply of fresh bananas. In this self-appraisal, "a lasting benefit" reads as the contribution the United Fruit Company was making to Americans; it vindicates the commercial profits this cross-national business generated

from its overseas banana plantations. A large number of steamers secured a nonstop banana supply for US wholesalers; it was also the linchpin that bolstered the UFC empire through the transportation of produce and passengers.[9] The illustration in Fig. 1.3 depicts the loading of bananas onto a steamer ship headed to an American market.

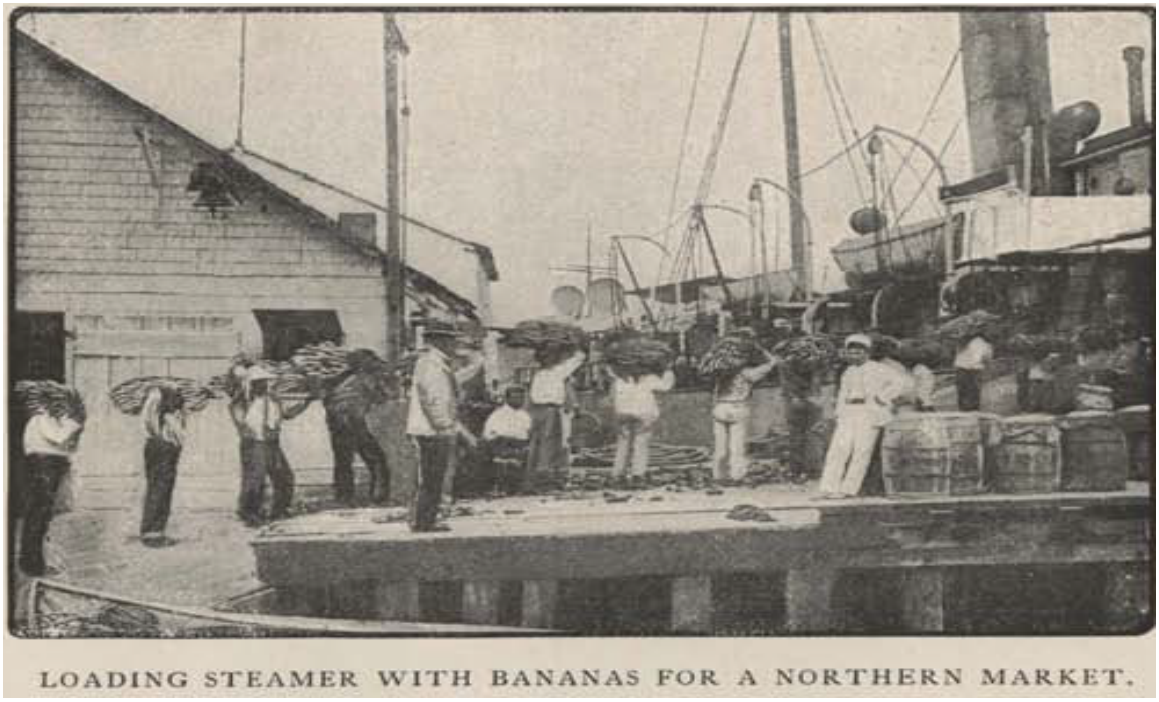


Figure 1.3 Image from *A Short History of the Banana and a Few Recipes for Its Use* (Boston: The United Fruit Company, 1904)

In reality, American consumers were able to disassociate their enjoyment of the fruit with the labor history that brought it to them because of the double marketing strategy adopted by the United Fruit Company adopted. This picture illustrates male workers carrying bunches of bananas on their heads, much like the earlier narration of the head-carrying

[9] UFC steamship tourism and its transnational banana trade were symbiotic; they became the two main sources of profits for the United Fruit Company. The tourism chapter further explicates this mutually dependent relationship.

Jamaican women. From this picture, the reader sees only part of the modern steamer, which is in fact large enough to ship bananas to US cities. The reader's gaze is meant to fall on the long line of male workers carrying bananas for loading. Most of their faces don't face the reader; only their stretching bodies and the bananas catch the viewer's attention thus making the bananas the main character and the workers' bodies the foil. The text that follows emphasizes the rapid growth of the banana trade in the US, from "one half million bunches" in 1872 to "thirty million bunches" in 1903. It is noted that the importation increase reduced the retail price of per banana to "no less than ten cents" (*SHB* 9). This business miracle nevertheless ignored the fact that workers in Central America and the Caribbean were subject to the dictatorship of the United Fruit Company. In his novel *1919* (1932), John dos Passos presents a central character named Joe Williams who, while stopping in Trinidad, notices that the wharf is crowded with Afro-Caribbean women loading bananas onto cargo ships. The women "started coming up one gangplank, each one with a huge green bunch of bananas slung on her head and shoulders" (20). The loading process lasted the whole night, and, when it was dark, "the smell of the banana and the stench of niggerwoman sweat were hot around them" (21). By using a derogatory term for Afro-Caribbean women, Dos Passos dehumanizes the women, portraying them as beasts of burden. The mixture of the banana-smell with female workers' sweaty odor reminds readers that the banana served in American homes was only possible with the unremitting and cheap labor of the West Indies. The rawness of Dos Passos's olfactory description of the loading of bananas in the Caribbean, when considered alongside the romanticized illustration and narrative of the loading of bananas in the banana cookbook underscores the fact that while American consumers were

informed that their bananas had been harvested by Caribbean people and had traveled far to make it to their tables, the image targeted to the woman-readers of American cookbooks was decidedly sanitized. They could enjoy the taste of the inexpensive banana, ignorant of the groans of the workers who toiled to make that taste possible.

Cookbooks Make Use of the Rise of Home Economics and Scientific Discourses

Not all cookbooks published after the postbellum period focused on reshaping regional history and cultural space; some still reflected middle-class tastes. These so-called "progressive cookbooks," which combined modern scientific knowledge about food with an emphasis on correct measurement, both consolidated American bourgeois cooking culture and formed a new understanding of domestic cooking for US readers. The shift of culinary attention from conventional and time-consuming preparation to nutrition-based cooking lent support to the popularity of bananas in the US: most of the banana cookbooks published between the 1900s and 1940s heavily marketed how the banana was rich in nutrition, vitamins, and carbohydrates. Up-to-date theories of healthy consumption and medical opinions also endorsed the food value the banana contained. With the help of scientific theories, home economics, and cheap prices, the banana soon became a prevalent fruit in American daily life at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Banana cookbooks adhered to the theories of domestic science and middle-class values that progressive cooking supported. The Boston Cooking School became one of the pioneers in promoting progressive cooking. The Boston Cooking School was founded in 1879, a time when moral activism, advocacy for women's rights, and the pursuit of

social progress began to flourish. Historian Laura Shapiro explains why the Boston Cooking School attracted women and girls, mostly from lower-to-middle-class families:

> The intellectual approach to the kitchen, which was the pride of the Boston Cooking School, offered women a chance to push aside some of the traditional constrictions upon their sex and stretch their minds, but in a polite way. With its borders certain and secure, scientific cookery presented a field of moral activism less daunting than many of the other popular crusades of the reform era, yet with tantalizing links to the male worlds of research, technology, business, and higher education. The women who attended the Boston Cooking School, and the careers that were born there, thrived on these links to the legitimate, the purposeful, and the rational. (47)[10]

Compared to such radical reform acts as the creation of labor union or women's suffrage, cooking with scientific methods empowered women with innovative knowledge in their roles as meal preparers. Culinary work, different from the tedium of long-term domestic labor, acquired associations with professionalism, science, and modernity. In addition to improving women's domestic cooking skills, progressive cookery built up women's sense of self-esteem and assured them that their daily practices in the kitchen were both intellectual and novel. Moreover, progressive cooking publicized mainstream middle-class values of food preparation. As Elias points out, "the cooking-school goal, a progressive mission, was to train a large number of lower-middle-class women to prepare food that middle-class and elite families who employed them would recognize as correct"—a goal that the school pursued with missionary zeal (33). Shapiro adds that

[10] Laura Shapiro, *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1986).

"training working-class girls for domestic service was an obvious priority for the Boston Cooking School at its inception" (55). Though progressive cooking provided women of different classes with an opportunity to gain innovative culinary expertise, its implicit intention nevertheless aligned with middle-class beliefs and tastes. "By establishing themselves as intermediaries between the classes," renowned lecturers in the Boston Cooking School such as Fannie Farmer and Maria Parloa "became agents of American cuisine" (Elias 34).

Progressive and banana cookbooks put considerable emphasis on scientific approaches to cooking. Published in 1896, Fannie Farmer's *Boston Cooking School Cookbook* soon became the kitchen bible for American housewives. In the preface, Farmer states the following:

> With the progress of knowledge the needs of the human body have not been forgotten. During the last decade much time has been given by scientists to the study of foods and their dietetic value, and it is a subject which rightfully should demand much consideration from all. I certainly feel that the time is not far distant when a knowledge of the principles of diet will be an essential part of one's education. (xvii)

In this preface, Farmer is arguing for the importance of scientific knowledge in modern cookery, believing the study of food value to be the bedrock of culinary skills. Unlike previous cookbooks, which were organized in banquet order, the first chapter of Farmer's cookbook begins with the scientific study of food, carefully explaining the dietetic value that food carries. In outlining the nutrition that basic foods have, Farmer first introduces the composition of foods and then teaches readers how to preserve and cook food in order

to provide nourishment for the body. The second chapter, entitled "Cookery," aims to teach meal preparers the necessary skills for preparing food. Unlike previous cookbooks, whose writers or editors assumed that readers already had mastered the fundamentals of cooking, Farmer's book starts with the basics, including how kitchen appliances function, how to prepare and preserve food, and how to correctly measure ingredients and cooking time. After reading the first two chapters, the reader would have a comprehensive understanding about kitchen work. Providing this fundamental education, which incorporated scientific principles, was a characteristic of progressive cookbooks and was later adopted by banana recipe books.

The focus on accurate measurement, clarity, and succinctness were essential characteristics shared by progressive and banana cookbooks. Farmer's cookbook was not only a classroom text used at the Boston Cooking School but was also a distillation of the kind of technique that she modeled in her cooking demonstrations: "She would mix and measure speedily at her demonstrations and explain each step with directness and clarity" (Shapiro 111). In the section on "How to Measure," Farmer underscores that "correct measurements are absolutely necessary to ensure the best results" (27) and that measuring cups and spoons and a case knife "are essentials for correct measurement" (27–28). Most of the ingredients Farmer names in her recipes are measured by standard cups and spoons and not by pounds or quarts. Her cooking method valued scientific, precise measurements of ingredients in order to safeguard the success of preparing dishes. During the cooking process, food temperature caused chemical or physical reactions in food, altered flavor, and even changed taste sensations. Therefore, a good cook must have a keen sense when controlling temperature. Instead of teaching the reader to rely on personal sense, intuition,

or experience, Farmer gives the temperature that would produce the best result for each recipe. For example, to make the fermentation of bread dough successful, "the temperature best suited for its growth is from 65° to 68° F. The most favorable conditions for the growth of yeast are a warm, moist, sweet, nitrogenous soil" (53). For Farmer, keeping good control of temperature is the core of successful culinary work. Moreover, Farmer's recipes are clear in the portions of ingredients and brief in procedures. She often uses succinct imperative sentences to instruct the reader on how to cook a dish. For cooking fried lobster, for instance, she instructs readers in this way: "Remove lobster meat from the shell. Use tail meat, divided in fourths, and large pieces for claw meat. Sprinkle with pepper, salt, and lemon juice; dip in crumbs, eggs, and again in crumbs; fry in deep fat, drain, and serve with Sauce Tartare" (165). Five short sentences suggest that the preparation of lobster is no longer an intimidating task but, rather, an easy and quick process to serve a main course on a dining table. As Janice Longone characterizes Farmer's technique in her introduction to a new edition of Farmer's book, "She explained the whys and wherefores; there is no romance, there are no flights of fancy. Simply, if you would like to make the food of Fannie Farmer, just read and follow her recipes" (vii). Without relying on florid language or an unrealistic image of cooking, Farmer's cookery featured clear instructions and well-ordered procedures so that housewives could reproduce the same meals at home. Banana cookbooks nearly copied the scientific approaches and brief recipes featured in Farmer's book to promote the banana to US consumers in the 1900s.

As bananas became domesticated as an American fruit, so they made their way into late nineteenth-century cookbooks. In her book *Bananas: An American History*,

Jenkins reminds us that bananas "began to appear in cookbooks and on menus in the United States in the 1870s, but were not widely available until the 1890s" (111). In the 1870s, most Americans did not know how to eat or prepare bananas. The most common way was by preserving the banana, "placing it raw in a bottle and then filling it with boiling water and sealing" (112). When bananas became abundant in the 1880s, according to Jenkins, "cooks became more inventive and bananas were included in dessert recipes as filling for cakes or mixed with custard, whipped cream, or gelatin" (113). Jenkins's account of the popularity of bananas at the end of the nineteenth century explains how Americans gradually accepted bananas, once seen as exotic and luxurious, as an everyday food item.

In her 1889 progressive cookbook, *Fruits and How to Use Them*, Hester M. Poole asserted that fruits played a main role in daily consumption. Poole's manual praises the banana as "the most important of all fruits" and provides various banana dessert recipes (51). Poole claimed that bananas were used for dessert with simple preparation steps. For instance, the dessert "Banana and Cream" calls only for sliced bananas, which are served with cream (52). As for "Banana Pudding," one simply lines "a glass dish with thin slices of plain cake and cover them with thin slices of banana. Have a second layer of cake and banana then pour over them a very thin boiled custard. Serve with custard whip cream piled on the top" (53). Poole's recipes gave her readers different ideas for preparing and serving bananas. Unlike the complicated procedures for cooking meat or main dishes, the banana recipes allowed housewives to present palatable fruit desserts in only a few steps. For housewives adapting to the ever-increasing pace of modern life, having an easier and quicker way to prepare meals was a revelation. As Poole states:

> [T]o women the increased welfare of fruit is a peculiar blessing. Unless the housewife be helplessly wedded to the old custom of providing heavy meats, rich puddings and dyspeptic pastry, there is no reason why she may not by the use of fruit, furnish a large and practically endless variety of dishes, one day after another, all through the year. The work of food preparation too is reduced to its minimum, and how vastly more agreeable to a woman of refinement is the handling of fruits than that of greasy animal food. (17)

Poole's articulation of the benefits of incorporating more fruits in Americans' diet culture reveals the formulation of a new identity for housewives. On the one hand, housewives were still expected to prepare meals for their families. On the other hand, preparing some easy and quick fruit dishes released them from the burden of cooking heavy and greasy main courses and simultaneously allowed them to pay attention to the balanced meals their families should have. With the rise of this new culinary discourse, housewives at the turn of the twentieth century had an opportunity to reduce their cooking load in the kitchen.

In order to make fruit cooking more acceptable in the daily diet, Poole employed the research of nutrition to validate the importance of consuming more fruits. Poole's book can be read as an instruction manual educating Americans on recognizing the importance of fruits. In the introductory chapter, she claims:

> The fruits and their more solid cousins, the grains, afford every element needed for the nourishment of the human frame. True, these elements are never found in a form as concentrated as in the flesh or animals and herein lies one mark of their superiority. . . . It is useless to lay before the housekeeper a statement of the

> amount of carbon starch, albumen, and sugar furnished by this food and that; what she [the housekeeper] wishes is the very best nourishment for the brains and bodies of those to whom she ministers and to know how to serve it in a manner at once healthful and delectable. (9–10)

By highlighting the nutritious value of fruits, Poole promoted a new fruit-based diet culture divorced from meat consumption at Americans' dining tables. Unlike the earlier understanding of fruits as supplemental or leisure food, in Poole's book, fruits become a key sources of nutrition and taste. Poole's defense of fruit's nutritious value—especially compared to greasy and fattening animal-based food--was exactly the same used in banana cookbooks and exemplifies the rise of nutrition discourse at the end of nineteenth century.

Medical endorsements further stressed the critical importance of food value and necessary nourishment. In the late nineteenth century, the germ theory of disease gained traction; how to stay away from ailments and keep homes in a healthy condition became essential in domestic science. The American Home Economic Association, founded in 1909, studied the digestibility of foods; in the 1920s and 1930s, food research focused on the fields of "vitamins and minerals, especially iron, calcium, and the vitamins A, B, and C, with emphasis on the measurement of these nutrients in food and in the body" (Jenkins 84). In the early twentieth century, the study of food consumption moved steadily toward a focus on dietary science, health, and prevention of illness.

Banana cookbooks published from 1900 to 1930 fundamentally followed this progressive discourse by underscoring the rich nutritive value of the banana and featuring simple preparations that reduced the meal preparer's cooking load. Instead of

emphasizing the foreign and exotic characteristic of the banana, these progressive descriptions of the food value of the banana transformed this tropical fruit into a discursive signifier of up-to-date dietary science and made it an exemplar of the American diet. In the second chapter of *A Short History of the Banana and a Few Recipes for Its Use*, entitled "Bananas as a Food," it is noted that the food value of the banana is preferable to that of apples and oranges in terms of protein, fat, and carbohydrates (12) and that the banana could match other fruits and vegetables by "pleas[ing] us no less in taste than in appearance" (14). Furthermore, the book reminders readers, the banana contains no acid and thus is suitable for breakfast consumption and does not cause the digestive problems common with starchy foods. Through objective evidence, the United Fruit Company persuaded "good housekeepers" to "study the virtues of this unappreciated product" (14). The author of another progressive banana cookbook, *From the Tropics to Your Table: Eighty-Three Tested Banana Recipes*, claims that "the Bananas are one of Nature's most wholesome and most easily digested food" and that "more and more physicians and dietitians in hospitals . . . are realizing the value of the ripe banana as food for invalids and children" (1, 4). To give the reader a clear sense about when "the banana is now at its best for flavor and nutrition," this cookbook uses an illustration featuring three phases of the banana, from "partially ripe" to "fully ripe" (5). The author of a 1930 progressive banana cookbook titled *Bananas in the Modern Manner: Recipes Menus and Suggestions for Housewife and Hostess* drew on theories from nutrition experts and modern vitamin studies to celebrate the banana as "one of the most important carbohydrate (energy-producing) foods; an excellent source of vitamins A and C, a good source of vitamin B, and like other fresh fruits, the reaction of the banana is

alkaline—opposed to acidity" (1). In the last page of *Everyday Banana Recipes* (1927), the phrase "Doctors and Dietitians Recommend RIPE BANANAS" captions a portrait of a man who seems to be a doctor, implying that medical professionals approve "the Banana as one of the most valuable fruit-foods in the dietary" and find the fruit "particularly beneficial" to treat "children's ailments caused by malnutrition" (21). These superlative expressions coupled with the suggestions of dietetics seek to establish the banana as a panacea for human health woes and as a super food at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The style of brief recipes also helped promote the popularity of the banana in the US retail market. After American consumers learned of the importance and value of the banana, how to convince people to buy bananas became a crucial topic. Teaching homemakers to prepare bananas—with cooking choices from salads to light meals, main dishes, and desserts—became an efficient strategy to encourage the public to savor this tasty fruit at their dining table. To include as many varieties as possible, recipes in banana cookbooks were usually short and easy to prepare. For example, in one recipe, a housewife only needed ingredients commonly found in most kitchens, such as banana pulp, sugar, milk, juice, salt, cinnamon, one egg, and molasses. The recipe directs cooks to "Mix the ingredients together and bake until firm in a pie-pan lined with pastry, as for a squash pie. The cracker may be omitted unless a rather firm pie be preferred" (*SHB* 23). Three steps—measuring, blending, and baking—can make a pie for a whole family. The recipe pamphlet titled *Yes! 100 Ways to Enjoy Bananas* is a compilation of one hundred recipes in a sixteen-page, postcard-sized cookbook. The small font in the book allows more recipes to fit on a page, each entry set in a larger, bolder, captivating red font. The

book instructs readers cooking "Banana Croquettes" to "remove skins from firm bananas, and cut in halves crosswise. Then remove a slice from each end (to make croquette shape). Dip in crumbs, egg and crumbles again. Fry in deep fat and drain on brown paper" (4). This short recipe suggests that cooking with banana can be done easily and quickly. To make a variation, "Banana Rice Croquettes," the cook need only use "boiled rice" to "mould around each section of banana" (1), thus yielding a creamy and rich treat.

Yet another densely packed recipe book, *From the Tropics to Your Table: Eighty-Three Tasty Banana Recipes* includes eighty-three recipes, grouped in categories like salad or dessert. Recipes are organized like advertisement columns in a newspaper: some are short if the procedures are simple; longer recipes mean that those dishes might be complicated in preparation. If a housewife can make "Three of a Kind of Milk Sherbet" by blending "the juice of lemons and oranges with the meshed pulp of bananas," flavoring it with sugar, adding "milk and cream," and freezing it, she is able to develop milk sherbet of various flavors based on this simple recipe (22). Banana cookbooks, which underscored the dietary value of the banana and expanded the options for eating a banana from raw to cooked, both followed a progressive discourse to fabricate a new staple fruit in the US and paved the way to construct a consumer identity of American women.

Cookbooks Lead to the Formation of Woman as Consumer

Commercial efforts to promote the banana via cookbooks reinforced the link between women and banana consumption and preparation. US consumer society gradually developed after the American Civil War. Companies manufactured products in

mass and needed to expand the market to efficiently sell goods. The tendency to consume more commodities produced by modern technology became more common for American people of all classes. To brand merchandise, mass marketing employed advertisements to fuel consumers' desire to purchase, teach consumers how to use products, and sell goods to customers nationwide. The burgeoning print industry of monthly magazines, daily newspapers, and lightweight pamphlets or books disseminated information about commodities to readers and consumers. Among these promotional materials, corporate cookbooks exemplified a newly developed marketing strategy: selling a particular commodity by educating readers about innovative cookery. By connecting women with consumerism, banana cookbooks published by corporations hid the reality of the transnational exploitation of land and labor that brought bananas to the American market.

Corporate cookbooks had several aims that all in the end served the interests of the corporation. Corporate cookbooks often focused on a single commodity, giving consumers a comprehensive and deep understanding of a new brand. The advertising in the cookbooks aimed to "help familiarize customers with new products such as soups and self-regulating ovens" promoted by manufacturers (Elias 44). These ads appealed to modernity sensibility, assuring home cooks that the products advertised would both bring innovation to their lives and reduce their work in the kitchen. One of these cookbooks, *Delicious Quick Desserts* (1929), promoted "Junket," a custard-like dessert of milk, sugar, and fruits set with rennet. At the beginning of the century, desserts and pastries became more and more popular in American diet culture. How to prepare a variety of tempting sweets became a challenging task for meal providers. A flavored junket saved housewives from the tedious preparation process of mixing various ingredients, making a

crust, and baking; they could simply add a package "Flavored Junket" to one pint of fresh and lukewarm milk, stir, let the Junket dissolve, then pour into "individual dessert glasses and let stand undisturbed in a warm room until firm—about 20 minutes" (2). The recipe instructs readers to "chill before serving" and to "serve in the same glasses, plain or with whipped cream, fruit, or some more elaborate topping" (2). Aside from the setting and chilling time, the entire preparation of junket took less than five minutes. Fruits, extra toppings, and whipped cream made for a mouth-watering dessert. The following pages introduce a plethora of recipes to demonstrate how the junket could be "simple," "more elaborate," decorated with "tempting toppings," or transformed into "delightful variations" (4–7). In addition, because "what we eat must be wholesome as well as appetizing," "desserts are lighter, daintier, yet they must supply a definite part of the food content of the meal. Junket answers every requirement of the new diet trend—perfectly" (1). The description's nod to the nutritive value of junket was meant to honor the home cook's role as nutrition monitor for her family and to assure her that Junket-based desserts could be considered for daily consumption.

The rise of home economics strengthened the popularity of corporate cookbooks, which implicitly advocated middle-class tastes. In "Envisioning the Rational Consumer, 1900–1920" (2012), historian Carolyn Goldstein argues that manufacturers, retail sellers, progressive educators, and mass-circulation print materials forged a marketing network to persuade Americans of all classes to consume in accordance with their budget.[11] The identity of the female consumer was central to a climate of informed consumption. As

[11] See the chapter "Envisioning the Rational Consumer, 1900-1920" in Carolyn Goldstein's *Creating Consumers: Home Economists in Twentieth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, U of North Carolina P, 2012), 21-61.

Goldstein argues, "By 1900, a first generation of home economists commanded an ambitious project to transform American homemakers into rational consumer citizens while at the same time establishing themselves as experts in the developing consumer society" (24). For home economists, housewives were potential shoppers who could rationally apply their knowledge of domestic science while purchasing commodities. Here, homemakers did not simply provide skilled labor in the kitchen but actively planned expenditures.

Between 1899 and 1908, Ellen Swallow Richards, a pioneer scientist, organized the Lake Placid Conference to campaign for "the improvement of living conditions in the home, the institutional household and the community" (Goldstein 26). Most of the participants were white, middle-class educators, writers, reformers, or scientists, and their goal was to "characterize middle-class culture as a hall mark of a 'comfortable' American standard of living" (Goldstein 27). These attendees shared their agenda of the value of the middle-class family and wrote recipes or cookbooks to promote manufacturers' products (Goldstein 179). Again, American bourgeois life meant an improved, pleasant, and modern domestic style. Consuming up-to-date items advertised in magazines and books and learning housekeeping knowledge endorsed by experts of home economics ensured that homemakers would manage their families efficiently and economically.

Returning once again to *A Short History of the Banana and a Few Recipes for Its Use*, there was a symbiotic relationship between the United Fruit Company and the author of the cookbook, prominent domestic expert Janet McKenzie Hill, who marketed

the banana with the cooking language of home economics.[12] Once the United Fruit Company could maintain a year-round supply of fresh bananas, selling the banana to every family through cookbooks was an efficient strategy to increase the sale of bananas. Hill had graduated from the Boston Cooking School in 1882 and founded The Boston Cooking School Magazine. She participated in the Lake Placid Conference and its support of the home economic movement. In addition to writing a corporate cookbook for the United Fruit Company, she wrote *Dainty Desserts for Dainty People: Knox Gelatin* (1909) for Knox Gelatin and *Choice Recipes: Chocolate and Cocoa Recipes, Home Made Candy Recipes* (1913) for Walter Baker & Co.[13] Hill's recipes for cooking with bananas, chocolate, and cocoa helped to Americanize transnational commodities, either from Latin America or Africa and imported through cross-national enterprises, and incorporate them into US food culture. That is to say, the narrative of corporate cookbooks endowed these foreign goods with a new American identity and subsumed them into American foodways. Hill's *A Short History of the Banana and a Few Recipes for Its Use* helped to give a new American identity to the banana that matched US consumer culture. For this recipe book, Hill created multiple recipes using the banana, from light salads to hot main courses, desserts, jams, and sauces. In this corporate cookbook, the banana was not simply to be consumed fresh but acted as a main

[12] The cooperation between food producers (or processors) and experts of home economics shows that home economists, according to Harvey A. Levenstein in his *Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet* (New York: Oxford UP, 1998), "no longer depended only on schools or government for jobs. Food processors now hired hundreds to develop recipes using their products, demonstrate them, and give testimonials to their nutritive value" (158). While the American Home Economics Association promoted educational knowledge of domestic science, "its scholarly journal, the Journal of Home Economics, became an important vehicle for food advertisers" (158). The food advertising agents, through institutional avenues, expanded their business to reach more consumers.

[13] See Janet McKenzie Hill, *Dainty Desserts for Dainty People: Knox Gelatin* (Johnstown: Charles B. Knox Co., 1909), and *Choice Recipes: Chocolate and Cocoa Recipes, Home Made Candy Recipes* (Dorchester: Walter Baker & Co., 1913).

ingredient to add variety to dishes. For example, "Hashed Lamb and Bananas" inspired meal preparers to cook meat with banana, offsetting the heaviness of the meat with the light sweetness of the banana. Other recipes offered other novel ideas, such as mixing bananas with "stewed cherries" to "serve with sponge or other cake as a dessert dish," or steaming bananas with "stale bread crumbs, beaten eggs, sultana raisins, grated lemon juice, and sugar" to make "steamed bananas and raisin pudding" (20, 22). Hill suggested to her readers that they sprinkle slices of banana over salad, ice cream, or cereal to improve their flavor (15, 27, 28). Hill's banana cookbook encouraged Americans to make bananas their daily fruit choice.

In public spaces, the often sensational calls for consumption also enchanted Americans. In his poem "New York" (1934), Claude McKay records the countless commercial billboards and vendors' calls: "But oh the city shouts! A thousand signs, / Buildings and lots and shattered businesses, / . . . / For Sale! For Sale!" (5–6, 17).[14] The city became an enclosed space where the sounds of selling echoed in people's minds; meanwhile, advertising figures stimulated buyers' desires for purchases: "More goods for sale than purchasers can buy! / The city's monster advertising cries" (21–22). The shouts of promotion thundered across the city, "weaving Manhattan's glorious fantasies" (24). The power of marketing went hand-in-hand with the myth of purchasing, creating a loop of American consumption in which buying led to a beautiful and perfect life. The 1923 song "Yes! We Have No Bananas" showcases another clever tactic used to market the banana: presenting the seller as if he suffered from a banana shortage. In an article in *Time*, the song's lyricist, Frank Silver, explained that the song was inspired by a Greek

[14] See Claude McKay, *Complete Poems*, ed. and intro. William J. Maxwell (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2004).

vendor's shout: "About a year ago my little orchestra was playing at a Long Island hotel. To and from the hotel I was wont to stop at a fruit stand owned by a Greek, who began every sentence with 'Yess.' The jingle of his idiom haunted me and my friend [Irving] Cohn. Finally I wrote this verse and Cohn fitted it with a tune" (42).[15] The Greek seller's yell of "Yes" exercised the conjuring power of language, encouraging consumers to stop by his stand and purchase what he was selling. As celebrated in Silver's catchy song:

> When you ask him anything, he never answers no.
>
> He just 'yes'es to you death, and as he takes your dough
>
> He tells you
>
> Yes, we have no bananas
>
> We have-a no bananas today. (5–9).

The affirmative "yes" invited passersby and stimulated their desire to purchase. Moreover, the Greek vendor's accent perhaps conveyed to fellow immigrants, especially those from Eastern and Southern European, a sense of affinity and an encouragement to become familiar with American food culture. Though he had all kinds of fruit and vegetables, including string beans, onions, tomatoes, and potatoes, the vendor kept repeating, "yes, we have no bananas. We have no bananas today" (15–16). The juxtaposition of yes and no in one sentence created a grammatical perplexity: how could one say yes first, but then immediately reply with no? Ironically, it was this logical contradiction that was intended to lure customers in and to stimulate their desire to buy.

The "yes" refrain in the song "Yes! We Have No Bananas" depends on that strongly asserted "yes" to conceal the scarcity of bananas. In the early 1920s, banana

[15] Frank Silver, "No Bananas," *Time* (July 2, 1923), p. 42.

plantations in Central America suffered from Panama Disease, which spread through banana plants from their roots to their leaves. Once the soil got infected by the bacteria, all plants would wilt and die quickly. Because bananas were reproduced asexually through propagation from shoots, if plants were completely infected, no healthy shoots could be used for reproduction. The disease so devastated the banana harvest in Central America that the United Fruit Company could not maintain its supply to the US retail market. Nevertheless, a definite answer of "Yes!" tactically hid the fact that bananas were short in supply. It kept bananas popular through the shortage and coaxed buyers to consume what the seller promoted. The shouting voices of the sellers and the popular jingle directed consumers into a sensory realm where the voices became another method for selling commodities.

Another corporate cookbook, *Yes! 100 Ways to Enjoy Bananas*, plays on the popularity of the song "Yes! We Have No Bananas." On the cookbook's cover, the "Yes!" is in bright red, followed by an exclamation mark (fig. 1.4), eye-catchingly reanimating

Figure 1.4 Cover Image, *Yes! 100 Ways to Enjoy Bananas* (New Orleans: Bauerlein, Inc., 1925)

the Greek vendor's shout. When you read the title aloud, your voice automatically recalls the song and the catchy, if logically bewildering, jingle that inspires you to want (to purchase) bananas. In her 2004 book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed argues that emotions "are after all moving," since the word "emotion" comes from the Latin, *emovere*, meaning, "to move," or "to move out." "Of course," Ahmed reminds readers, "emotions are not only about movement, they are also about attachments or about what connects us to this or that" (11).[16] Emotions, Ahmed asserts, are two-sided: they both move us toward and attach us to objects: "The relationship between movement and attachment is instructive. What moves us, what makes us feel, is also that which holds us in place, or gives us a dwelling place" (11). The movement and attachment embedded in emotions do not remain contradictory but interactive—the feelings that closely link us to objects also carry us to them. Ahmed's theory of emotionality provides a useful window to interpret the title of *Yes! 100 Ways to Enjoy Bananas*. Consumers were meant to feel a thrilling attachment to "Yes!" because this affirmation reminded them of the grammatical confusion repeated in the melody of "Yes! We Have No Bananas." Sensational pleasure, mixing with puzzlement, were intended to generate buyers' interest in this fruit and encourage them to purchase more bananas. The second part of the title, "100 Ways to Enjoy Bananas," indicated that the supply of the banana was abundant, so homemakers could prepare bananas in multiple ways—all of which the book implied were scrumptious and enjoyable. The red color used for "Yes" and "Bananas" encouraged the readers to respond to the implicit marketing message to buy

[16] I will focus more on affect theory as a reading strategy to explain the entanglement between emotionality and act in the next chapter.

more bananas. The book title, through employing consumers' collective attachment to a popular tune, maneuvered Americans into the realm of consumption.[17]

The consumption of bananas further empowered homemakers to reproduce an ideal middle-class domestic life. The cookbook cover of *Yes! 100 Ways to Enjoy Bananas* depicts a kitchen scenario with a housewife cutting a banana while her baby sits in a high chair, eating his own banana. The cover presents the woman in the role of meal provider, responsible for taking care of her child's health and nutrition. In addition, the cookbook cover was designed to teach readers how to enjoy bananas. In a clean and well-lit kitchen, the housewife cuts bananas into pieces without difficulty and puts them into a box. Meanwhile, the child, sitting next to his mother, happily eats a peeled banana. As advertised in progressive and corporate cookbooks, housewives could complete their domestic work effortlessly and comfortably. The mother is wearing the iconic white apron of the traditional, middle-class housewife, and this apron is meant to signal to readers that she is one of them and that she feels confident preparing healthy and delicious meals for her family. The apron's white color also telegraphs cleanliness, suggesting that the mother on the cover practices the discipline of modern home economics in her kitchen. In his book *A History of Cookbooks: From Kitchen to Page over Seven Centuries*, Henry Notaker writes about how cleanliness became a core of domestic household: "The tablecloth represented the virtue of cleanliness. . . . A similar point of view was detectable in the dominant bourgeois ideals of the nineteenth century. Cleanliness became a social distinction. The growing middle class wanted to distance

[17] The syntax of "Yes! We Have No Bananas" was copied in a number of banana cookbooks published in the 1920s. "Yes! Homemade Banana Recipes" exemplified how publishers counted on the emotionality the American audience attached to that song to sell bananas.

itself from the working class, and one of the ways it did so was by keeping the home clean and tidy" (295).[18] Like the white tablecloth that Notaker describes, the white apron signals a clean kitchen that the mother maintains for the health of her family. The kitchen depicted on the cookbook cover also features a shining table and modern kitchen appliances, which make the kitchen appear bright and sterile, while the mother's green dress and the yellow bananas add color and interest. Altogether, this cover sends the message that eating and preparing bananas is a delightful experience enjoyed by model bourgeois families.

The fact that *Yes! 100 Ways to Enjoy Bananas* featured a woman on its cover endowed the target readership with two identities: that of modern housewives and consumers. Through reading cookbooks, early twentieth-century women acquired cooking skills and savvy with which to carry out their traditional roles in the kitchen. Unlike nineteenth-century cookbooks, which focused on heavy protein dishes, this book cover telegraphed a new, lighter image to match the tastes and mores on the modern cook. The child on the cover seems satisfied with his banana, which required almost no preparation, thus sending the message that the modern housewife no longer needed to spend all her hours in the kitchen cooking, but could feed her whole family gracefully and leisurely. Moreover, the cookbook's title, touting "100 Ways to Enjoy Bananas," was meant to inspire housewives to buy lots of bananas, which could be used in 100 ways. The more bananas the housewives bought, the greater variety of meals they could make for their families. As the advertising agent J. Walter Thompson insisted, "The women

[18] Henry Notaker, *A History of Cookbooks: From Kitchen to Page over Seven Centuries* (Los Angeles: U of California P, 2017).

spend the money, and to reach the women, one must enter the family."[19] In other words, the pairing of the kitchen scene and the affirmative book title served as a linchpin to construct the female identity as homemaker and consumer.

The composition of the book cover of *Yes! 100 Ways of Enjoy Bananas* exposed the process of how the identity of women consumers was cultivated in the early twentieth century. In his history of American consumption, Charles McGovern argues that from 1890 to 1945, national advertisers created the American consumer.[20] At the turn of twentieth century, consumer psychology directed advertisers' attention to women consumers, who "did not simply use a cold-blooded economic calculus in making purchasing decisions" (39); sentimental suggestions had power. Thompson directed marketers to "address your message to the intelligence, the curiosity, the love, and yes, the cupidity of the women, and the thing is done" (Ohmann 112). Though this marketing concept blindly assumed that women were more susceptible to sensibility,[21] it did explain how women readers might respond to the message to consume that was embedded within images. The cover of *Yes! 100 Ways to Enjoy Bananas* was arguably appealing to women readers because the image suggested they, too, could have an ideal middle-class family if they bought and cooked bananas as the cookbook instructs. Namely, *Yes! 100 Ways to*

[19] See Richard M. Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Verso, 1996), p. 112.

[20] See Charles McGovern, *Sold American: Consumption and Citizenship, 1890-1945* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2006).

[21] Actually, during this time period (1890–1930), some advertisers agreed that women consumers didn't buy products blindly but carefully examined how advertisements used data to support their claims. Though advisers had a different understanding of the psychology of women consumers, they believed that emotional appeals were important to women consumers. For more, see McGovern, pp. 36–41.

Enjoy Bananas taught housewives how to prepare bananas, encouraged women consumers to shop, and justified their shopping act.[22]

Women of Different Classes Embrace Bananas

Most of the banana cookbooks were aimed at a middle-class readership; however, women from middle-class, working-class, and lower-income families all carried the burden of housekeeping and child care, and for them, learning how to efficiently prepare meals with variety and nourishment was a top priority. Even though working-class people did not have enough capital to consume luxury goods, their ability to consume was still crucial for the sale of goods. Print materials were one way that the banana was marketed to working-class consumers. After the mid-nineteenth century, lower production costs led to a flourishing of lightweight print materials, like cookbooks. By employing nutrition theory to fashion the banana as what we would today call a superfood and by championing simple ways to prepare bananas, banana cookbooks of the early twentieth century won the trust of women from different classes. The cheap price and year-round supply of bananas made this foreign fruit as common as milk for American consumers, who could afford to enjoy a banana every day. The power of print culture and the abundant banana supply encouraged housewives from all economic classes to add the banana to their grocery lists.

[22] After the mid-nineteenth century, advertising agencies targeted women buyers and constructed their consumer identities accordingly, but this commercial strategy assumed traditional gender roles, and most advertising aimed at women referred to ways to decrease household work. This gender inequality—true of middle-class women and working-class women—was ignored in the progressive discourse at the beginning of the twentieth century. For more, see Katherine Leonard Turner, *How the Other Half Ate: A History of Working-Class Meals at the Turn of the Century* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2014), especially pp. 26-27.

The popularity of middlebrow magazines and mass-market print materials cultivated the cultural taste of working-class people. With the mechanical improvements of the papermaking industry in the 1880s, the use of automated presses, and the growth of a national transportation network, large-scale printing costs drastically decreased. Publishers of books, newspapers, and magazines, bathing in this wave of print progress, gained readers and subscribers. *Harper's* and *Scribner's* attracted intellectual readers, while *McClure's* and *The Ladies' Home Journal* targeted middle-class women. *The Ladies' Home Journal* even achieved a circulation of one million in the 1920s.

Meanwhile, thanks to the growth of free public schooling and new opportunities for immigrants to learn English, more and more people from all levels of society were able to read at the turn of the twentieth century. These factors, combined with technological progress, contributed to the rise of a middlebrow reading culture. Americans of all classes were able to access the latest knowledge and to cultivate their reading tastes through daily newspapers and/or other popular print materials.[23] As Ann Fabian describes in her essay "Laboring Classes, New Readers, and Print Cultures," cheap publications of fiction were available in street newspaper kiosks and railway paper stands.[24] Young male workers were particularly attracted to cheap fiction, but this mass-produced medium also allowed women, children, and workers to escape "the discipline and decorum thought to be built into the best books" (307). That is, reading mass-

[23] In his essay, "The Industrialization and Nationalization of American Periodical Publishing," in *Perspectives on American Book History* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 2002), Charles Johanningsmeier explains how the transformation of the print industry stimulated the growth of American periodicals at the turn of the twentieth century. The development of print culture helped construct the US readership of middlebrow magazines and national newspapers.

[24] See Ann Fabian, "Laboring Classes, New Readers, and Print Cultures" in *Perspectives on American Book History*, 285-310: 306.

circulation print materials "held for workers at least the promise they could make of their readings their own meanings without the intervention and influence of those who considered themselves the arbiters of culture" (307). Thus, reading popular newspapers and cheap fiction allowed working-class people not only to absorb new knowledge but also to develop their taste counter to the standards set by elites.

Working-class readers were encouraged to turn to cookbooks at this point in US print culture. The educational goal of the Boston Cooking School, Elias writes, was to "advocate training for working-class women (as well as expanded educational opportunities for upper-middle class women)" (34). Cooking was an activity that transcended classes, and home economics was a subject that women of all classes were encouraged to master. Furthermore, some home economists at the Lake Placid Conference, such as Caroline Hunt, believed that "women's power as consumers" could "improve the lives of working-class women" (Goldstein 30). Though most cookbooks published after the late nineteenth century perpetuated middle-class household values, nutritional science and innovative culinary expertise helped working-class women know how to manage a family with modern domestic knowledge.

Like the cheap fiction and newspapers abundant in this period, cookbooks were rather compact, small, and thin. *Yes! 100 Ways to Enjoy Bananas* was roughly postcard-sized and *Yes! Home Made Banana Recipes* (1930) was a duodecimo pamphlet of twenty-three pages. These portable banana cookbooks, I argue, disseminated cooking skills and practical knowledge of home economics to literate women from all regions and classes. Cheap and nourishing, bananas—prepared in hundreds of variations—brought the gospel of healthy eating to each family's dining table. This household profession,

popularized through cooking guidebooks, inspired meal providers, especially working-class women balancing tight budgets, to master nutritional dietary requirements in domestic management.

The learning of new culinary knowledge fostered the acquisition of taste for working-class women, even new immigrants. In his book about the social pretentions of the middle classes in the modern world, Pierre Bourdieu contends that class is constructed by economic, social, and, most influentially, cultural capital factors: "Using symbolic goods, especially those regarded as the attributes of excellence, constitutes one of the key markers of 'class' and also the ideal weapon in strategies of distinction, that is, as Proust put it, 'the infinitely varied art of marking distances.'"[25] Bourdieu points out that class can be distinguished by different notions of the attributes of excellence; for example, working-class people like melodrama, while the bourgeoisie favors opera. The class distinctions of cultural competence, aesthetic judgments, and taste are transmitted through family and educational systems. Banana cookbooks illustrate the fact that middle-class culinary taste was promoted as the dominant foodway for families of all classes. With the advance of literacy, working-class people and immigrants could access information about this foreign fruit through the lightweight cookbooks (Turner 28-50).[26] Culinary procedures and nutrition theory gradually influenced readers' choices of food. Beginning in the 1870s, America's food system changed; "the majority of Americans who lived in cities were buying brand-new food products, as well as more processed versions of familiar foods" (Turner 48). Cheap bananas soon became popular in the

[25] See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984), p. 66.

[26] In the Progressive Era, more reformers advocated that immigrants should have opportunities to learn English. Therefore, a number of schools were founded to help immigrants achieve language competence.

American diet. Bourdieu argues that the academic and educational capital that working class people and immigrants gained helped them to acquire the cultural taste endorsed by the dominant class (113). The scientific food theory adopted in banana cookbooks meant that these publications—and therefore the banana that they promoted—appealed to readers of all classes.

The illustrations in banana cookbooks were mouth-watering. In fig.1.5, assorted

Figure 1.5 Inside spread of *Yes! 100 Ways to Enjoy Bananas* (New Orleans: Bauerlein, Inc., 1925)

banana desserts served on elegant dishware inform readers that this inexpensive fruit could be dressed up and turned into stylish and delicious sweets. Returning for a moment to Johanningsmeier's essay "The Industrialization and Nationalization of American Periodical Publishing," the invention of zincographs, photoengravings, and halftone photographic reproduction in the late nineteenth century meant that "by 1915 most modern American newspapers and magazines were graphic cornucopias, appealing to

less literate readers with numerous illustrations in advertisements, news stories, and features" (331). Illustrations directly advertised products and gave readers concrete visual cues with which to contextualize the meaning of images. Moreover, they helped readers, no matter their level of literacy, to understand the significance of the text. I also contend that the illustrations in banana cookbooks gave homemakers a sense of immediacy: that these desserts could be completed once readers finished reading the recipes because the time between preparation and presentation was rather short. The banana was often promoted for the ease of its culinary preparation, and the illustrations affirmed the advertising language.

Using images of children to sell bananas was meant to solidify the status of the banana as what we would today call a superfood and thus attract the attention of mothers. Since the 1860s, advertisers believed that marketing a product's family value was the best way to attract women consumers. The book cover of *Yes! 100 Ways to Enjoy Bananas* represents the woman in the role of meal provider, responsible for taking care of her child's health and nutrition. Meanwhile, the baby boy happily holds his banana. The banana in the cover image was thus a great food choice for a middle-class family. The duty of caregiving was also an arduous task for working-class women on a budget. At the turn of the twentieth century, working-class people, especially those in poor living conditions, tended to suffer from malnutrition and the infant death rate was high (Turner 13–18). How to provide family members with sufficient food and nutrition on a limited budget became a crucial issue for working-class housewives. The banana, the purported "body builder" that was "delightful to taste, easy to digest, and of rare tissue building

quality," soon appeared in the pantries and on the tables of working-class families (*100 Ways* 17).

The cover of *The Food Value of the Banana* (fig. 1.6) portrays a smiley, rosy-cheeked boy holding a banana. While the boy's smile shows his happiness with his banana snack, the healthy glow of his rosy cheeks implies that his banana-eating has provided him with nutrients.

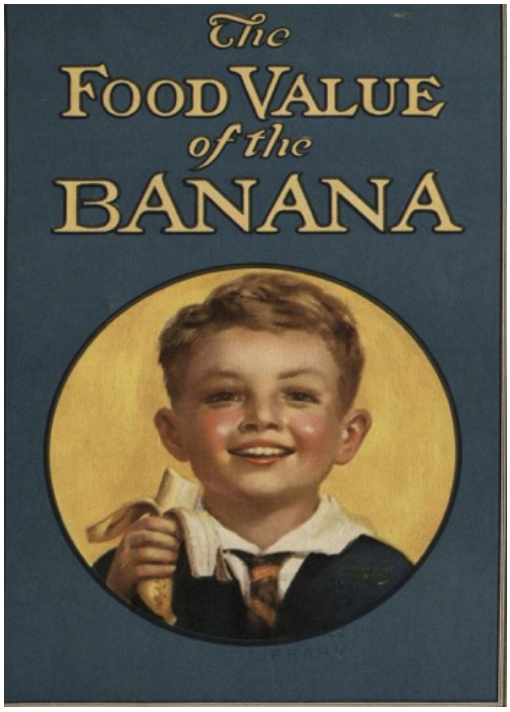


Figure 1.6 Cover image, *The Food Value of the Banana: Opinion of Leading Medical and Scientific Authorities* (Boston: United Fruit Company, 1928)

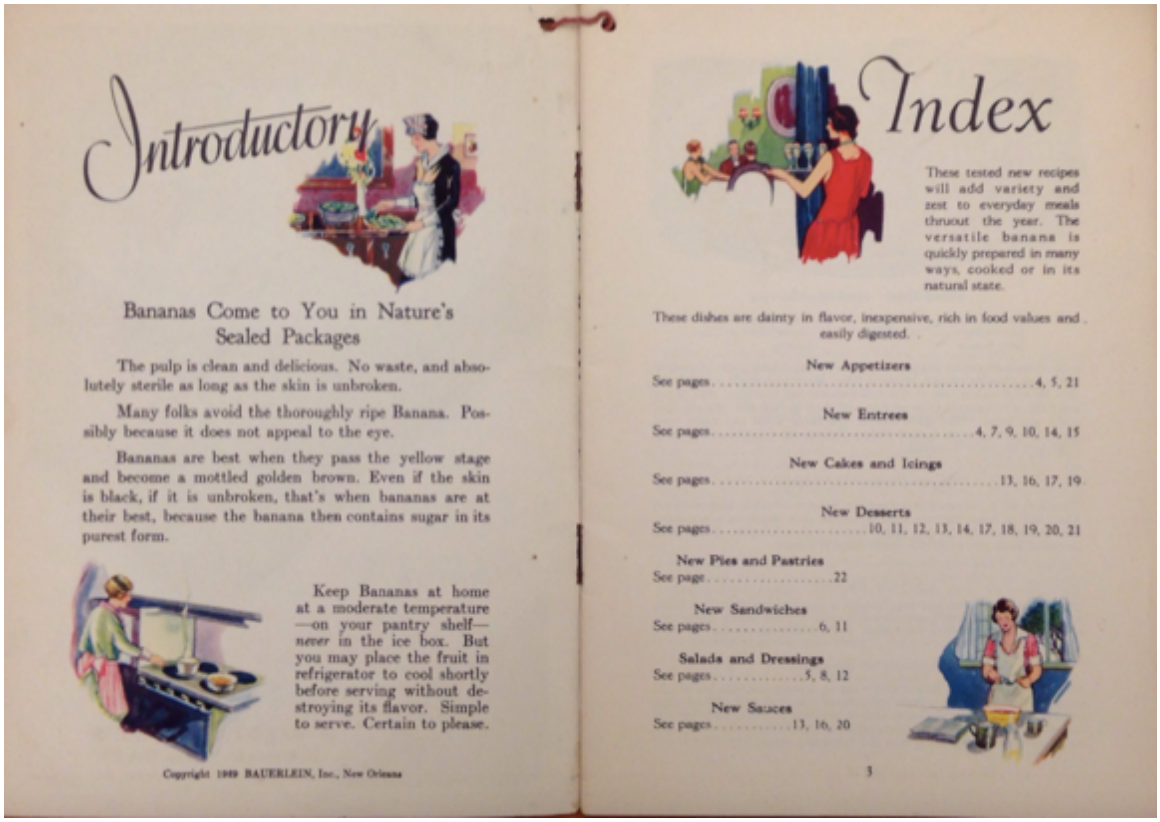
The warm yellow used to highlight the title and the background of the boy's portrait not only evokes the color of bananas, which strengthens the connection between the commodity and the reader's reception, but also suggests a feeling of happiness, optimism, and energy. The half-peeled banana conveys that the banana is a ready-to-eat food sealed

until ready in a natural germ-proof seal that protected the fruit from contamination. The book's text draws on the testimony of health experts and official organizations to assert the cleanness, food value, and health the banana brought to children. The author of *Yes! Homemade Banana Recipes* quotes Dr. Oscar Dowling, president of the Louisiana State Board of Health, who said the following: "In approximate terms, one dozen Bananas are equal to one pound of porterhouse steak in nutrient value" (23). The cookbook also cited the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, which said that, "the Banana, as suitable infant food, has been used in the tropics for generations" (qtd. on 23). With the imprimatur of scientists, housewives of all classes, perhaps worried about malnutrition, infection, or pulmonary tuberculosis, could turn to the banana as a safe and healthy food choice for their children. While analyzing the discourse of advertising at the turn of the century, critic Richard Ohmann notes that advertisements "consistently addressed readers as belonging to one of the two highest social classes, or as aspiring to be like such people" (206). The smiling boy demonstrates the advertisement's intention to appeal to mothers of all classes. The healthy boy, wearing a clean white shirt with a tie and a jacket, could be a middle-class child with access to great family care and an abundant food supply. As I noted before, Bourdieu's theory states that degrees of capital (economic, social, and cultural) are not fixed but are, rather, relational to one's class, which could change. Since working-class families had opportunities to gain educational and cultural capital based on the wages they earned from jobs, they were able to invest in their children. The cleanness, health, and energy represented in this image reveals the wishes all mothers have for their children. Since the banana was common, inexpensive, and highly nutritious, housewives subject to the minimum living wage could afford bananas for their families. Because the

banana cookbooks touted the health-giving properties of the banana, working- and lower-class women, I contend, were encouraged to believe that, as long as they served bananas, they could offer their children the same high-quality nutrition that bourgeois mothers could.

In fact, advertising to promote bananas in the early twentieth century not only fashioned Americans as consumers but also changed the working-class diet culture. In his book *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*, Sidney W. Mintz claims that when the price of sugar went down in the nineteenth-century in Britain, working-class people consumed more sugar than before. Laborers turned to sweets and desserts to access immediate energy (Mintz 149–50). Likewise, as the price of bananas dropped, the fruit's popularity among the working classes went up. In 1872, one banana "retailed [for] no less than ten cents" (*SHB* 9). After 1900, however, with the development of distribution networks and railroad freight cars, bananas were more easily transported to cities across the US, and prices dropped. Early twentieth-century urban wageworkers had relatively little time to prepare meals. Since the banana was cheap, nutritious, easy to prepare, and did not require preservation procedures such as canning or drying, it soon became a great food choice for working-class women to save cooking time, provide their family with nutrition, and meet the demands of a fast-paced work environment.

In the cookbook *Yes! Home Made Banana Recipes*, the introductory page (fig. 1.7) briefly and clearly states how easy it is to prepare bananas: "Throughout the year," the banana is "absolutely sterile as long as the skin is unbroken," has "no waste," and can be eaten from green to ripe "for everyday meals" (2–3).



Introductory

Bananas Come to You in Nature's Sealed Packages

The pulp is clean and delicious. No waste, and absolutely sterile as long as the skin is unbroken.

Many folks avoid the thoroughly ripe Banana. Possibly because it does not appeal to the eye.

Bananas are best when they pass the yellow stage and become a mottled golden brown. Even if the skin is black, if it is unbroken, that's when bananas are at their best, because the banana then contains sugar in its purest form.

Keep Bananas at home at a moderate temperature —on your pantry shelf— *never* in the ice box. But you may place the fruit in refrigerator to cool shortly before serving without destroying its flavor. Simple to serve. Certain to please.

Index

These tested new recipes will add variety and zest to everyday meals thruout the year. The versatile banana is quickly prepared in many ways, cooked or in its natural state.

These dishes are dainty in flavor, inexpensive, rich in food values and easily digested.

Figure 1.7 Introductory page to *Yes! Home Made Banana Recipes* (New Orleans: Bauerlein, 1929)

For working-class women, the banana was a versatile and affordable food choice, which, as the cookbook demonstrated, could be eaten alone, cooked, or paired with other ingredients. For example, one of the recipes, "Banana and Cheese Sandwiches," suggests spreading pierced bananas mashed with cream cheese and flavored with orange juice on top of bread (6). The cookbook's promotional slogan, "simple to serve, certain to please," perfectly encapsulates working-class women's needs (2).

The ready-to-eat characteristic of the banana truly played an important role in the diet of working-class families. As historian Katherine Turner indicates, unlike middle-

class families, who had their own kitchen space, working-class families often shared their kitchen with other families or had no partitions between kitchen, dining room, and living room (36–39). Owning no dedicated kitchen space meant that working-class families might not have had enough kitchen appliances for them to prepare or store food. A small kitchen also limited storage space. Since they didn't have iceboxes or refrigerators to preserve food, "they [did] not want a pound of butter or a leg of meat" (Turner 58). Therefore, working-class housewives prepared meals every day and bought convenience food or food in small portions. By doing so, they could meet the dietary needs of their family members even though they were inconvenienced by a small kitchen space. The banana—cheap, ready to eat, easy to preserve, and rich in nutrition—was thus one of the best food choices for working-class families.

Beyond American Foodways and Class Divisions

Consumption in the US is not simply an interaction between producer, advertiser, and consumer, but also a construction of American nationality. Since the nineteenth century, consumer advertisements have naturalized consumption as an American characteristic. This commercial rhetoric "is indeed in culture—in symbols, language, rituals, and forms of expression—that nationality is made and redefined," as McGovern argues in *Sold American* (9). In other words, the symbolic messages embedded in cultural representations shape Americans' beliefs about their national characteristics. Corporate banana cookbooks were no exception. The first illustration in *A Short History of the Banana and a Few Recipes for Its Use* (fig. 1.8) represents how the consumption of the

banana was naturalized as an American foodway and reconstructed the relationship between the US and Latin America.

For American consumers, commercial advertising implicitly includes national vocabulary. In "Consumption and Citizenship," McGovern describes this dynamic:

> Consumption and goods were characteristic activities and symbols of American nationality—being a good American meant being a good consumer. These were not arguments grounded in economic nationalism . . . but rather in cultural nationalism . . . [A]dvertisers forged powerful links among consumption, nationality, and culture; with frequent reminders that their wares served explicitly "American" needs and ideals, advertising cast goods as the material expression of American identity and consumption as the means to become American. (48)

McGovern demonstrates how American advertisers made their marketing campaigns persuasive by conflating the act of consumption with national identity and cultural value. If goods can have an American nationality, then what US consumers purchase constructs their citizenship: they are buying for America. McGovern points to a root beer advertisement that reads, "Uncle Sam Drinks Hires Rootbeer"; Hires Rootbeer fashioned their beverage as an American beverage by saying it is "the national beverage Uncle Sam drinks" and overlaid on a US map, (Sold American 113). The patriotic text and image are meant to forge a sense of bonding and common identity among consumers, based on a shared product, regardless of where they lived.

The book *A Short History of the Banana and a Few Recipes for Its Use* also interlaced advertising and US national discourse. In its first illustration, a banana, crowned with the trademark of the United Fruit Company, stands on the banner labeled

"West Indies" (fig. 1.8):

Figure 1.8 Cover Image, *A Short History of the Banana and a Few Recipes for Its Use* (Boston: United Fruit Company, 1904)

Two women flank the banana; while a blonde female wearing a regal dress represents America, a darker-skinned woman symbolizes Central America, South America, and the West Indies. This image epitomizes how the US imagined Latin America—as the

indolent and sensational Tropics. By comparison, the image telegraphs, people in North America have lighter skin and are better educated, since the blonde female holds her quill to the page of a book. Latin America is portrayed as a smiling, standing, bare-footed woman of color. She holds no pen and reads no book, as if she were incapable of accessing knowledge and civilization.[27] On the one hand, this racial rhetoric conforms to cultural stereotypes of the South as less advanced and slower-paced, and on the other hand, it satisfies the Northern white fantasy that the South is a primitive haven still in a state of natural innocence. These stereotypical perspectives, however, subsume Latin America (which provides the US with raw materials and is vulnerable to economic exploitation) under the colonial dominance of the United Fruit Company.

The interlaced cross-national politics embedded in this illustration strategically developed Americans' understanding of tropical regions. After the mid-nineteenth century, Ohmann writes, the octopus-like railroad network and door-to-door service the postal system helped the growth of the mail order system: "In the 1860s, a number of entrepreneurs began selling by mail; more precisely, they advertised and received orders by mail" (68). Further, fast or special trains were assigned to distribute newspapers throughout the US: "Under the 1879 Postal Act, first-class postage cost three cents per half ounce or fraction thereof, while second-class matter, including all periodicals, could be mailed for only two cents per pound" (Johanningsmeier 331–32). That is to say,

[27] It is worth noting how women's bodies became discursive way to depict Latin America as sensational and exotic in the first half of the twentieth century. In the 1930s and 1940s, Carmen Miranda's rolling eyes, big smile, and remarkable dance earned her the nickname "The Brazilian Bombshell." Comparing the woman in this illustration to Carmen Miranda, one finds that women's bodies of different races (Miranda as a white woman and the illustrated woman as a woman of color) are interchangeably used as an emblem of the Tropics. Moreover, the racial and geographic stereotypes still dominate the belief in which the (global) North is superior to the (global) South. For more on this topic, see chapter four of this dissertation.

publishers and advertisers could mail their printed materials at a lower cost, and consumers could receive their subscriptions more quickly and easily. The convenience of sending publications to American families increased the circulation rate of newspapers, mass-market magazines, and even banana cookbooks. Readers could obtain their own copy of *A Short History of the Banana and a Few Recipes for Its Use* if they sent "10¢ in stamps" to "A. W. Preston, President, 131 State Street, Boston" (29). The consumption drive naturalized the way that Latin America was characterized as a supplier of raw produce for US buyers. The soft brushwork, gentle curves, and bright colors of the first illustration in *A Short History of the Banana and a Few Recipes for Its Use* concealed the exploitative reality of how the banana was reproduced, transported, and retailed. But, the image transformed the act of consuming a banana into a pleasurable one responsive to American consumer society and citizenship. The logo of United Fruit Company, reminiscent of the US flag with its red, white and blue design, exemplifies consumption as an American characteristic and signifies the economic control this transnational business exercised over its colonies.

Conclusion

By tracing how different types of cookbooks, nutrition discourse, and marketing tactics domesticized the banana as an American staple fruit, this chapter has unpacked the various manifestations of the banana between 1880 and 1930. In this era of mass consumerism, the commodification of the banana and the formation of women's consumer identity are intertwined in the cookbook print culture. The advertising executive of the United Fruit Company paired the Progressive discourse and nutrition

theory with the promotion of the banana to spur women's consuming desire. However, the more the banana was sold to American families, the more economic exploitation people of Latin America were vulnerable.

CHAPTER III

CLAUDE MCKAY AND POETRY OF JAMAICAN IDENTITY: TOURISM, CARIBBEAN DIASPORIC WRITING, AND RESISTANCE

In this chapter, I consider the ways in which the transnational trade of the banana is grounded in Caribbean exploitation and how advertising tactics employed by the United Fruit Company, incorporating enticing fantasies and tropes to fuel American's colonialist desires, have been spurring American tourism to the Caribbean since the late nineteenth century. I make an in-depth study of Claude McKay's "The Tropics of New York" to better understand and complicate these phenomena.

By scrutinizing the banana and tropic imaginings in commercial advertisements and in McKay's poems, I argue that the banana enterprise exposed the dialectical and unsettled struggles of geopolitics, literary production, and colonialism between the Caribbean and the US. McKay's "Tropics of New York" questions Caribbean stereotypes and exposes the exploitation it suffered under US imperialism by comparing the foodway journey of tropical fruits to the speaker's own diasporic journey and finding both estranged by displacement. His poem "King Banana," on the other hand, challenges the imperial colonialism that had monopolized the economy of Caribbean banana plantations and advocates restoration of autonomy. In this chapter, I examine such poems alongside a critical study of the commercial advertisements and literary texts that show how Americans came to regard the Caribbean as either the exotic or the subjugated other.

The United Fruit Company Tourism

The increase in international banana business managed by the United Fruit Company shaped Jamaica into an important commercial hub and then a tourist destination. In his history of the Jamaican tourist industry, *To Hell with Paradise*, Frank Fonda Taylor traces the production history of the banana to show that not only did it become a profitable crop in Jamaica after emancipation but, in fact, the "growth of the banana market," especially after the 1870s, "brought more regular and rapid transport to connect both island (Jamaica) and mainland (the US)."[1] The commercial transport of raw bananas via steamship shortened the distance between American metropolises and Jamaica; it took fewer than five days to travel from Boston to the island in the summer, for example (43–44). The trade became so swift, in fact, that at the end of the nineteenth century, "in the early days of the Jamaican Fruit trade," there were more sailings leaving Port Antonio each week than ones leaving Liverpool (Taylor 44). Meanwhile, the growing demand for bananas in the US market encouraged the tourist trend of cruising to the Caribbean in the winter. The rise of Jamaican tourism could not be disentangled from the banana trade:"It was due to the banana that paradise was rediscovered in the form of Jamaica. . . . Tourism was sired by American banana traders [the Boston Fruit Company first and the United Fruit Company later], who had made the island a major base of operations" (Taylor 37).

The thriving banana trade helped advance the tourism industry in the Caribbean across the Atlantic between 1880 and 1900. In addition to the economic success of the banana trade, the United Fruit Company established itself as the leader in the Caribbean

[1] Frank Fonda Taylor, *To Hell with Paradise: A History of the Jamaican Tourist Industry* (Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2003), p. 45.

tourism industry. Critic Sean X. Goudie has studied the stories of two writers who traveled to the Caribbean in 1896.[2] Sarah Orne Jewett was a writer of local color in Maine and Sui Sin Far was an Asian-American writer embarked for Jamaica as "a cheaply paid reporter for Gall's Daily News Letter" (qtd. in Goudie 314). In his essay about these two writers and Caribbean American regionalism, Goudie marshals images and representations of the West Indies found in Jewett's story "The Foreigner" and Sui Sin Far's story "Away Down in Jamaica" to contend that "cultural imaginaries reinforce and/or resist the emergence of US dominance in the Caribbean American 'region'" (310). Goudie argues that the United Fruit Company's dominance in the Caribbean was inseparable from US-Caribbean literary landscapes. According to Kingston newspaper *The Colonial Standard and Jamaica Dispatch*, tourists paid a very affordable £12 (around $60 in today's currency) to travel from Boston to Port Antonio on a comfortable steamship. Such prices encouraged US travelers to enjoy a modern vacation in a remote country (Taylor 44). As touted in the advertisement in Fig. 2.1, the United Fruit Company

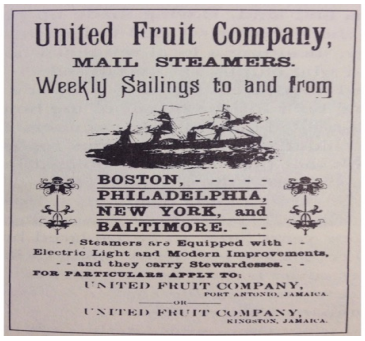


Figure 2.1 The United Fruit Company Mail Steamer Flyer, 1900[3]

[2] See Sean X. Goudie, "Toward a Definition of Caribbean American Regionalism: Contesting Anglo-America's Caribbean Designs in Mary Seacole and Sui Sin Far" in *American Literature* 80.2 (2008): 293-322: 312; hereafter, Goudie.

[3] This flyer was reproduced in Taylor, *To Hell with Paradise*, p. 45, and is archived in the National Library of Jamaica.

ran weekly steamship connections between four major East Coast cities and two ports in Jamaica. The names of the American cities are in a bigger and bolder typeface than the two Jamaican ports, and this graphic arrangement mirrors the characterization of North America as a continent and Jamaica as a southern island country subsidiary to the United Fruit Company, the name of which is also printed in a larger typeface than that of the port cities. The ad promises "electronic light and modern improvements" and "stewardesses" on the cruise ships, which are ready and equipped to ferry city-weary Americans to a tropical paradise in comfort.

The UFC advertisement helped shape readers' understanding of what the Caribbean was, and this understanding could be imaginatively shared everyone who happened across the ad. According to the theorist Benedict Anderson, reading the same print material at roughly the same point in time creates an imagined bond among readers, even though they do not know each other.[4] In his book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Anderson argues that the key element to position people who are strangers or from different generations within a united national discourse is to use the imagined bond—that is, imagining that we share the same origin, blood, and history. This imagined bond can be translated into cultural reproductions, such as print materials, maps, and museums, that construct people's knowledge of what their nation and its history are. For example, when examining how newspapers wield influence in the creation of consensus among readers, Anderson states:

> We know that particular morning and evening editions will overwhelmingly be consumed between this hour and that, only on this day, not that. . . . The

[4] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 35.

> significance of this mass ceremony—Hegel observed that newspapers serve modern man as a substitute for morning prayers—is paradoxical. . . . Yet each communicant is well awarded that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion. . . . At the same time, the newspaper reader, observing exact replicas of his own paper being consumed by his subway, barbershop, or residential neighbours, is continually reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life. (35–36)

A great number of readers reading copies of the same newspaper fosters the imagined sense of a communal bond. That these people are accessing the same material—even if their responses differ—and that they are reading the material synchronously creates an imagined solidarity among readers, as if they are involved in a supportive community.

Though Anderson's theory emphasizes the construction of national consciousness, his explanation of an imagined bond provides me with a lens with which to analyze why representations of the idyllic Caribbean became a catalyst that boosted the tourist industry. Such advertisements shaped travelers' preconceptions about this tropical area. When readers saw the UFC flyer advertising the Caribbean cruise, they read the same language and saw the same image that suggested that traveling to the Caribbean could be comfortable and adventurous. It is as if those readers, all viewing the plain drawing of a steamship and seeing the cities listed in bold typeface were imagining what it would be like to leave home and board a ship bound for a tropical island port—and somehow there was a community forged just through that shared experience of seeing the same flyer and

mentally picturing taking a steamship to Jamaica. The UFC tourist industry relied on this imagined connection to advertise the Caribbean as a (profitable) vacation destination.

Promoting the Caribbean cruise as an exciting adventure became a fundamental marketing focus of the United Fruit Company. The UFC's promotion of Caribbean travel was one way that the company marketed the banana, which was increasingly popular in the US. As discussed in Chapter Two, the United Fruit Company published *A Short History of the Banana and a Few Recipes for Its Use* to educate Americans, especially middle-class housewives, about the banana, and at the end of the cookbook, there are three advertisement pages promoting the UFC's steamship lines to the Caribbean. The steamship lines, collectively nicknamed "The Great White Fleet," were designed to efficiently ship bananas to the US within one week and could ferry American tourists to the Caribbean for an exotic tropical vacation. These advertisements sought to sell the idea of Caribbean travel. The top of the first advertisement page (see Fig. 2.2) features a

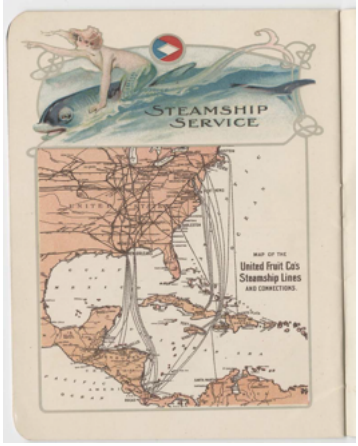


Figure 2.2 Advertisement for the UFC's Steamship Line to the Caribbean, from *A Short History of the Banana and a Few Recipes for Its Use* (Boston: United Fruit Company, 1904)

whimsical sketch of a mermaid with blond hair and white skin riding a blue dolphin on an azure ocean and pointing outside the frame of the advertisement, toward imagined adventure. Underneath the image is a map recording the steamship routes operating between the United States and the greater Caribbean, some connecting Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore to Havana, Kingston, and Bocas del Toro, and some shorter, routes operating between Bocas del Toro and Mobile or Galveston in the South. To American readers, this map implied both that the geographical distance between the US and the Caribbean Basin had been shortened and that overseas travel to the Caribbean had become possible. The advertisement promises that the steamships are

> especially adapted to tropical travel. They have commodious promenade decks, cool and airy, well-ventilated staterooms situated on the main and hurricane decks amidships, thus insuring a minimum of sea motion. The dining saloon is located on the main deck well forward of the engine room, and removed from all disagreeable odors incident. Bathrooms are supplied with fresh or sea water and are at the disposal of passengers at all times. (*SHB* 31)

Bucking the earlier stereotype of the Tropics as the white man's grave, characterized by unbearable hotness and dangerous fevers, the UFC used its advertising to reshape the popular notion of the Caribbean, transforming in into an isle of pleasure where the vacation begins on the comfortable, modern steamship itself, on which passengers could enjoy the cool breezes blowing across their faces, quiet meals far from engine sounds and smells, and sanitary facilities. Taking a Caribbean cruise was meant to feel like an extension of their modern life, with ships "furnished throughout with a perfect system of electric lighting and steam heating," and "everything is done for the comfort and

convenience of the passengers" (*SHB* 31). Thus, comfort and convenience became the biggest selling points of the United Fruit Company steamship service. At the turn of the century, according to the advertisement pictured in Fig. 2.3, the United Fruit Company had at least seventy ships operating on the Caribbean Sea. These ships weighed an aggregated 110,000 tons and were designed for "every possible safety and convenience" (*SHB* 31). Under the blue sky, this white ship with the United Fruit Company's flag sails on a blue ocean with the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor receding into the distance. The colors on the advertisement suggest coolness, ocean breezes, and pleasure.

Figure 2.3 Advertisement for the UFC's Steamship Line to the Caribbean, from A Short History of the Banana and a Few Recipes for Its Use (Boston: United Fruit Company, 1904)

The travel writers hired by the United Fruit Company wrote enchantingly about the Caribbean in a series of guidebooks. In one such guidebook, *The Gates of the Caribbean: The Story of a Great White Fleet Caribbean Cruise* (1922), travel writer William McFee romanticized the experience of cruising on the Caribbean Sea and staying in Havana, where, he observed the following: "As the dusk falls like a mantle of misty azure over the harbor and the lights spangle the distant shores, you pass the cavernous darkness of an ancient gateway, and pause in the shadow of the quaint belfry of a ruined church" (5).[5] By interweaving colors and lights and the ancient and the ruined in one sentence McFee rhetorically situates the reader in a mysterious and fantastical space that is romantic and full of temptation. Between the 1910s and 1920s, the United Fruit Company regularly published travel guidebooks to introduce the Caribbean to an American readership. Guidebook writers wove together their experiences in a series of cities to create romantic travel narratives—a kind of Grand Tour of the Caribbean. These travelogues were paired with US domestic railway and US–Caribbean steamship timetables, helping readers make concrete plans for creating their own adventure.

Indeed, these guidebooks arose alongside the development of the travel industry, which in itself was linked to the rise of a new discourses fashioning travel to the Tropics as a pleasurable activity. With the advance of tourism, the idea of traveling south no longer seemed degenerate or negative but, rather, youthful and positive. In her essay tracing this history, "The Pleasures of Degeneration: Climate, Race, and the Origins of the Global Tourist South in the Americas," historian Catherine Cocks uncovers how the popular mythology of the tropics as Eden—where natural resources are abundant and

[5] William McFee, *The Gates of the Caribbean: The Story of the Great White Fleet Caribbean Cruise* (Boston: The United Fruit Company, 1922).

where nonwhite people remain unspoiled by civilization—goes hand-in-hand with the modern tourist industry.[6] According to Cocks, the earlier dichotomy between the North and the South was based on climate determinism and the fear of degeneration. This dichotomy portrayed light-skinned people in cool areas as harder working and rational and dark-skinned people, subject to hot weather and humidity, as more indolent and dull (217). However, by 1900 the tourism industry to the southern US and to Central America was burgeoning.[7] To market travel to the South, promoters needed to eliminate travelers' potential fear of the tropical heat, and so some advertisements touted the cool and breezy air and others boasted the healthful and regenerative climate that could cure "ailments associated with cold weather, especially tuberculosis" (Cocks 222).

Health-promoting resorts became one of the biggest selling points of Jamaican tourism beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. Before 1850, malaria, yellow fever, cholera, and typhoid were epidemic in Jamaica, and bodies as well as waste were piled on the streets. The rise of the Jamaican tourist industry, according to Taylor, was rooted in the improvement of public health and the promotion of "Jamaica as a healthy spa" (20). By studying travel memoirs and tour guides that recorded the improvement of sanitation in Jamaica between 1850 to 1865, Taylor argues that converting Jamaica from "Hellshire" to "Healthshire" marked "a revolutionary departure, as it sought to overthrow the old conception of the colony's climate and replace it with a radically different orthodoxy"

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[6] Catherine Cocks, "The Pleasures of Degeneration: Climate, Race, and the Origins of the Global Tourist South in the Americas" in *Discourse* 29.2/3 (2007): 215-35.

[7] In fact, the development of the tourist industry, as Cocks indicates, cannot be separated from the "the development of transportation and accommodations" (220). The construction of railroads in Florida, southern California, Central America, the steamship service operated by the United Fruit Company, and the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914 all helped support the development of the pleasure-travel enterprise. In order to make Caribbean travel profitable, the United Fruit Company launched steamship lines and opened luxury hotels in Jamaica, such as the Titchfield Hotel (Cocks 220–21).

(20).[8] This radically different approach, which shaped Jamaica as a haven of health, was also promoted in travel advertisements. An advertisement by Elder, Dempster and Company promoting its regular connections between Bristol and Jamaica, promises that Jamaica "offers exceptional attractions to TOURISTS and those seeking health. This island possesses great natural beauty, and its warm, healthy climate is recommended by the medical- faculty. Polo-playing, yachting, golf, tennis, riding and driving are particularly good. Excellent shooting and fishing" (qtd. in Taylor 28). After the late nineteenth century, Jamaica provided visitors various recreational activities, ranging from enjoying the natural scenery, staying at a health resort, or engaging in programs outdoors. Jamaica's hot and humid weather conditions (which caused deadly diseases) were repackaged as a "warm, healthy climate." Tourists could enjoy sports and wilderness adventures as they did in their home countries. Jamaica, a British tropical colony, had been rhetorically transformed from a white-man's graveyard to an ideal paradise of health and joy that offered modern travelers an escape from illness and pressure.[9]

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[8] In his travel observations, "Impression and Experience of the West Indies and North America in 1849," British traveler Robert Baird wrote that he "observed a growing tendency in the public mind in this country to regard Jamaica as a place of sanitary resort" (qtd. in Taylor 20).

[9] Another crucial argument in Taylor's book rests on the hotel economy. The United Fruit Company not only profited from cross-national steamship sailings but also accommodations. Capitan Baker managed the Titchfield Hotel and Peak View Hotel Cottages to accommodate the tourists his ships brought from the US (44–49). The development of tourism led to infrastructure improvements that accompanied the hotel business, which improved the basic systems the Jamaican people needed; however, the Jamaican people became economically dependent on tourism (or, euphemistically, hospitality). Both Tom Barry et al.'s *The Other Side of Paradise: Foreign Control in the Caribbean* (New York: Grove P, 1984) and Mireille Rosell's *Postcolonial Hospitality: The Immigrant as Guest* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2001) explore the exploitative practices in tourism of the Third World. As Krista Thompson points out in *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque* (Durham: Duke UP, 2006), hotels in the Bahamas, Nassau, and Jamaica were usually segregated areas where blacks "were denied access to the spaces that represented tropicality for tourists and modernity for many elites" (16). In her book *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombie* (London: Routledge, 2003), Mimi Schiller also investigates how a tourist gaze invents the Caribbean and "see[s] Caribbean people simply as scenery" (62).

Not only did travelers earn a chance to be healthy, they were also promised a renewed sense of youthfulness while traveling to the Caribbean. Shivering northeasterners could leave the drudgery of wintertime in the northern hemisphere and find cool breezes and sunny weather with summer and vitality in the Tropics, thus bolstering the idea of a tropical journey as, in Cock's word, "a return to childhood, a retreat from the burdens of adulthood and civilization, and a return to Eden" (Cock 223). The twentieth-century travel industry refashioned the West Indies as a utopia and pleasure haven. In these "enchanted isles" that can be reached "in but two days' time from New York," tourists were not bothered by work and worry and could indulge themselves in a dreamland full of fountains, warmth, and gaiety that promised a return to youthfulness (Cock 223).

The UFC advertisements of the 1910s successfully used the imagery of health and happiness to transform the Caribbean into a dreamland of pleasure. These commercial advertisements, with their drawings, maps, and words, contributed to the romanticizing of the Caribbean. An advertisement that appeared in an issue of *Life* (fig. 2.4) promised that the Great White Fleet would take passengers on pirates' adventures

Figure 2.4 Advertisement for the United Fruit Company's Steamship Service, "The Great White Fleet" in *Life*, 1915.

while promotes health and leisure in the Caribbean. By alluding to the Caribbean as a place where "the pirates hid their Gold"—a place of outlaws and embedded with fantasies of treasure—the United Fruit Company portrayed the Caribbean cruise as a voyage to explore the golden days of yore. The image of three pirates examining a treasure chest turns the Caribbean into a land full of wealth and possibilities. The ad transforms the treasures of Caribbean piracy into the modern treasures of "health and happiness," which "are the treasures sought" on their ships. American tourists departing from New York or New Orleans could easily travel in luxury around countries of the Caribbean Sea in "15 to 25 days" and experience "scenes of romance." The succinct but tempting sentences established the reader's romantic conception of the Caribbean and portrayed it as a paradise accessible in just a few days.

The short travel time conveyed a sense that the Caribbean belonged to those who could easily reach it. The cruise line maps of the United Fruit Company at the bottom of the advertisement erased national boundaries between the US and countries in the Caribbean. Actually, the small-scale map distorts the geographical distance between these nations: the horizontal axis is much longer than the vertical axis, shortening the distance between America and the Caribbean and concentrating the Caribbean countries into a smaller area. On the map, the short distance between New York and Havana suggests to the reader that the steamship could quickly reach Havana without difficulty. Several important ports, such as Havana, Colón, and Guatemala City, are depicted as quite close to each other and connected with the cruise lines. The advertisement provided American readers with no actual understanding of how these countries were geographically related. Instead, it misrepresented them as clustered together in the metaphorical backyard of the

US. Though the US is not named on the map, the invisible diagonal line linking the steamship and the slogan is suggestive of an imperial climate and presents the whole Caribbean Sea as an American territory.

The visual cues and space presented in maps determine how a reader interprets imagined geographical knowledge. In his book *Atlas of the European Novel 1800–1900*, which explores how maps allow the reader to expose significant but overlooked relationships embedded in literature, Franco Moretti argues that "geography is not an inert container, is not a box where cultural history 'happens', but an active force, that pervades the literary field and shapes it in depth."[10] Moretti examines how geography, atlases, and maps actively shape literary texts and become inseparable from the literary narratives. In other words, investigating how an atlas or a map functions in a literary text reveals how space dynamically interacts with written words to construct a text. Space, Moretti claims, "is not the 'outside' of narrative, then, but an internal force, that shapes it from within. Or in other words: in modern European novels, what happens depends a lot on where it happens" (70). Moretti suggests that space has already intertwined with the narrative development of modern European novels. Though Moretti's argument is mainly rooted in his research and reading of European novels of the nineteenth century, his examination of the symbiotic relation between map and narrative sheds light on the UFC advertisements. In many of the advertisements, line maps are joined by pictorial images. This design shows that the United Fruit Company, as a transnational enterprise dominating the banana trade in North America, strived to promote its commercial success while it also advanced its tourism business. However, if we follow Moretti's route to

[10] Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* (London: Verso, 1999), p. 3.

scrutinize how a map actively fashions a narrative, we can find that these advertisement maps were not simply visual tools to represent the banana kingdom of the United Fruit Company but were also acting as a constructive force to establish an imperial bond between the US and the Caribbean.

The map of the Caribbean area in the 1915 advertisement in fig. 2.4 not only reflects American tourists' romantic imaginings of a modern-day Eden but also, given the US's post-Spanish War acquisition of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippine islands, arguably whetted their appetite for new territories. Next to the area map, a middle-class family enjoys their leisure travel across the azure Caribbean Sea from the ship's deck. The mother smiles and holds her child, while the ship's captain, in uniform, points toward the pirates with his index finger. Though the representation of a bourgeois family evokes the comfort of the trip, the image of the uniformed ship's officer implies that this steamship is sailing toward an area waiting to be conquered and that US imperialism has exercised its power to dominate the Caribbean. The *OED* defines "index" as "a sign or measurement of something." Here, the sailor's index finger informs the reader how to measure and understand this new territory. With the aid of the adventure narrative, the Great White Fleet and a sailor's index finger pointing towards the pirates (a symbol of the Caribbean) imbued the steamship journey with a sense of the "conquest of the tropics."[11] The fleet and the sailor expose the imbalanced power relations between the US and the Caribbean: the US fleet sailed toward the West Indies for new colonies, with the

[11] "Conquest of the Tropics" is the main title of Frederick Upham Adams's biography on the United Fruit Company, *Conquest of the Tropics: The Story of the Creative Enterprises Conducted by the United Fruit Company* (New York: Doubleday, 1914). In this book Adams delineates how the United Fruit Company established their business enterprise in Central America and the Caribbean. As the word "conquest" indicates, Adams regards the United Fruit Company's strategies maneuvering in these tropical places as a necessity to transform the tropics from the primitive to the civilized.

Caribbean positioned as a virgin land to be colonized. The fleet not only transported passengers to milk the sweetness of the Caribbean but also employed military force to control Caribbean countries.[12] Though the Great White Fleet was established to ship bananas and passengers between Central America and the US in the early twentieth century, it was also a symbol of US economic imperialism.

Boundary contouring, perspectives, and coloring in cartography also construct the reader's spatial imaginations. As Anderson argues in *Imagined Communities*, "European-style maps [bird's-eye view maps] worked on the basis of a totalizing classification, and led their bureaucratic producers and consumers towards policies with revolutionary consequences" (173). For Anderson, bird's-eye view maps translate abstract space into a concrete knowledge and represent spatial reality. Latitude, the curve of the coastal lines, the locations of cities, etc., actualize the reader's spatial understanding of a nation or national boundaries. Anderson argues that cartographic information is valuable for colonizers to deploy their (military) surveillance. An imperial map in which "British colonies were usually pink-red, French purple-blue, Dutch yellow-brown," Anderson explains, is "like a detachable piece of a jigsaw puzzle. As this 'jigsaw' effect became normal, each 'piece' could be wholly detached from its geographic contexts" (175). Anderson's thoughts on a colored jigsaw-puzzle map indicate that a map constitutes a measurable spatial discourse and severs nations from their geographic links with other countries, as if each country were independent and waiting to be conquered. The implication of a colored jigsaw-puzzle map, I suggest, is the same as Charlie Marlow's

[12] The Great White Fleet was also the nickname of the sixteen US battleships sailing on a world voyage between December 16, 1907 and February 22, 1909.

ambition to conquer Congo's unknown colonies in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899):

> Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say, 'When I grow up I will go there'. . . . But there was one yet—the biggest, the most blank, so to speak—that I had a hankering after. (11)[13]

When Marlow touches these blank spaces on the map, he does not conceptualize them as places with historical backgrounds but, rather, imagines them as available places he can explore and control. The large size of a blank (white) space further nourishes Marlow's fervid motivation for his adventure. The map metaphor in *Heart of Darkness* exemplifies Anderson's argument about how a map fabricates an imagined bond between actual and discursive spaces.

Furthermore, imperial maps legitimized imperialism. They "entered an infinitely reproducible series, available for transfer to posters, official seals, letterheads, magazines, and tablecloths, and hotel walls. Instantly recognizable, everywhere visible, the logo-map penetrated deep into the popular imagination forming a powerful emblem" (Anderson 175). Here Anderson indicates that printed materials with imperial maps, most of which were common publications, established and reinforced the reader's conceptualization of nations. These small publications built up readers' imagined geographic fantasies because

[13] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*1899 (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005).

they were ubiquitous and not recognized as propaganda. Contrary to films or ideological works, the tiny printed maps were seldom associated with propaganda publications and were often used as emblems. Because these images appeared everywhere, and because people treated them as honest representations of geography, their messages of imperialism and colonialism, I argue, easily implanted in the reader's mind without being challenged. In other words, readers unwittingly absorbed an imperialist mind-set.

The advertisement entitled "The Call of the Caribbean" (fig. 2.5) illustrates the

Figure 2.5 Advertisement by the United Fruit Company Steamship Service, titled "The Call of the Caribbean," *Life*, 1916.

complicated process of how a map tactically constructed the reader's reception and obscured its intrinsic political intentions. Though Anderson's interpretation of cartography focuses on how the colonizer or the colonized uses maps to promote colonial dominance or an anti-colonial appeal, his analysis of the grammar of maps supports my reading of the UFC advertisements, helping decode how the joining of national imperialism and tourism consumes the Caribbean. In "The Call of the Caribbean," images and text almost completely cover the continent of North America. Meanwhile, the visible coastlines not only represent the shapes and geographical locations of North America, the Caribbean, and part of South America, but they also exaggerate the size of the North American continent and downsize the other two regions. This cartographic distortion reflects the imbalanced relationships—such as territory size, economic power, and resources—that already existed between the US and the Caribbean and Latin America. Moreover, the words marking isthmian portions and cities of the Caribbean Basin are difficult to decipher, thus erasing the national particularities of these small countries from the map and signaling that these nations were subjugated to the large continent (i.e., the US). The strategy of juxtaposing images, the brand name, and cruise information in a collage-like format simultaneously reinforces and obscures the asymmetrical connections between America and the Caribbean. In the middle of the flyer, "The Great White Fleet" joins with a small white steamship and route lines to deliver an inviting message: a cruise transported passengers across the Caribbean Sea to the countries of "health and happiness." The slogan "The Call of the Caribbean" also tempts the reader/traveler to want to visit this shining fairyland with "golden sunshine," "the purple of tropic palms," and "a radiant sea." The colorful language both reinforced earlier tourism discourse,

which fashioned the Caribbean as a paradise, while more actively and seductively enticing the reader. The exhortation that "you owe it to yourself to take that long promised vacation, NOW!" positions the reader in a scenario of an imperative dialogue. An invisible speaker tells you, the reader, that you have failed to treat yourself to a recreational break. The *OED* defines the word "owe" as "to be indebted to" or "to be under obligation." If one is indebted to a person, s/he surely has an obligation to repay it. The "long promised vacation," in this imperative conversation, stands not only for the "promised" credit to pay off the debt but signals that the Caribbean is a "promised" land full of pleasures. Moreover, the word "promised" works together with "The Call of the Caribbean" to engage the reader/traveler in a call-and-response loop. The call of the Caribbean cajoles the reader/traveler, invites a response, and promises to repay the debt in the form of enjoyment. The tone of advertising language softens the intrinsic political and militant dominance, but it also complicates the power dynamics between the US and the Caribbean.

The deck pictorial image further increases the complexity of the relationship between the continent and the islands. At the top of the flyer is a scene of tourists enjoying the moonlight on the deck. A lady with a fashionable coat and hairstyle smiles faintly to a gentleman wearing a tuxedo. A beam of light illuminates them from behind, lighting the side of the lady's face and torso and casting shadows on the gentleman. On the other side, moonlight floods the deck, shining on a tourist, who leans against on the railing. In the middle, darker section, a traveler reclines on a deck chair. The sharp contrast between brightness and darkness establishes a sense of suspense and hints that unknown intrigue might have already happened among this group of travelers. The

scenario on deck—such as the contrast of lighting, the lady's mysterious smile, and the gentleman's dark, expressionless face—accentuate the tense atmosphere. The deck illustration, I contend, conjures feelings of suspense, curiosity, and expectation of crime. These elements hint that the cruise might be headed to an outlawed, unknown place, potentially subject to crime.[14] Read in this way, the Caribbean is an escape for criminals, who are called to flee America.

The picturesque drawings of birds, however, twist the atmosphere of suspense and place the Caribbean within an aura of (imagined) nature. On the top of the flyer, a white seagull with big, white wings leads the Great White Fleet and its travelers to the Caribbean and the lure of nature. At the bottom of the flyer, two toucans with bright orange and black bills and dark feathers perch on green palm leaves. Since palm leaves often symbolize the jungle, where animals live, and since the jungle was synonymous with the Tropics, this colorful picture intensifies the tropicality of the Caribbean and reinforces the association between the Caribbean and the primordial. The brilliant colors underpin assumptions about the Caribbean: it is a place of rejuvenation, vitality, and warmth. The eye-catching, vivid drawing of tropical birds, positioned next to the Yucatán Peninsula, represent the Caribbean. When the flyer map clusters together countries of the Caribbean Basin, the national boundaries become invisible, omitting the particularities and history of each country and suggesting that the inclusive geographical term "the Caribbean" is sufficient to encompass all. Moreover, the equation between the bird drawing and the Caribbean both replace the geographic facts of the Caribbean and

[14] The image of the Caribbean as an area of violence and crime has long persisted in popular culture. Ernest Hemingway's novel *To Have and to Have Not* (1937) follows Harry Morgan's black-market activities between Florida and Cuba. In *The Godfather Part II* (1974), Michael Corleone extends his crime empire to Havana.

translate this area into a discursive place overflowing with recreation. Through its marketing strategies, the United Fruit Company stimulated readers' sense of romanticism.

Colonial mythologies also fed into the UFC advertisements. In "'No One Belongs Here More Than you': Travel Ads, Colonial Fantasies, and American Militarism," Judith Raiskin argues that American travel advertisements associated with "national myths, dominant beliefs, and persisting desires" demonstrate "Americans' immediate concerns (born of specific historical, political, or economic moments) and invoke various enduring fantasies or fears that lead Americans to travel or to think about the world in often troubling ways."[15] Travel advertisements, for Raiskin, foster Americans' imaginings of travel destinations, most of which are constructed through problematic fictions and popular common presumptions. Moreover, travel ads "serve to justify both past and present inequalities and exploitation that result from nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonialism, current economic neocolonialism, and American military presence worldwide" (270). Raiskin's perspective reveals the logic the United Fruit Company deployed in these advertisements. The collage strategy of combining maps, tempting descriptions, and graphic images in "The Call of the Caribbean" exposes how the Caribbean was transformed from a geographical location into an imagined place. These advertising messages were not randomly juxtaposed with each other but, rather, were carefully laid out to craft an image of the development of Caribbean tourism. In this romantic narrative, economic exploitation and colonialism are neutralized as necessary strategies to support the travel business. Because the narrative of the ads of the United

[15] Judith Raiskin, "'No One Belongs Here More Than You': Travel Ads, Colonial Fantasies, and American Militarism" in *Post-Empire Imaginaries?: Anglophone Literature, History, and the Demise of Empires*, ed. Barbara Buchneau, Virginia Richter, and Marijke Denger (Leiden: Brill Rodopi, 2015), 267-70.

Fruit Company strategically copies fantasies constructed by nineteenth-century European colonialism, and because it takes advantage of "Americans' general geopolitical ignorance about the differences in the colonial or political histories of their travel destinations," these ads easily transform Americans' conception of the West Indies into islands of enchanted landscapes, rejuvenation, and escape (Raiskin 270). The visual cues—the modern filmic tone, the cartoon-like drawing, the geographic mapping, and the attractive descriptive texts—seem at first to have nothing in common. However, these cues activate readers' emotional nostalgia and idyllic imaginings of the Caribbean as a tropical paradise of temptation—whether illicit or recreational in nature. The half-covered map indicates where that paradise is, but it simultaneously obscures the American intention of territorial expansion. The modern pictorial image seems incompatible with the tropical characteristics of the Caribbean; these two contradictory messages, which both mask an underlying imperial dominance, are in fact two faces of the same objective. The United Fruit Company sold a fantastical image of the Caribbean to customers to encourage an idyllic understanding of the region. The tourism industry thus created a discursive Caribbean and popularized this fantasized kingdom as reality.

"The Tropics in New York"

The Caribbean writer Claude McKay saw past these facile romanticisms hawked to North American tourists. Though born to a peasant farming family in Jamaica, McKay had a remarkable liberal arts education.[16] His English-born schoolmaster, Walter Jekyll, provided him with an education in English literature and German poetry and philosophy.

[16] William Maxwell, Introduction and ed., *Complete Poems* [of Claude McKay] (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2004): xiii.

Under Jekyll's guidance, McKay studied poets Milton, Shelley, and Keats, and philosophers Goethe, Schiller, Kant, and Schopenhauer. McKay wrote verse in the Jamaican dialect, known as Patois, or Jamaican Creole, and in 1912 published two collections: *Songs of Jamaica* and *Constab Ballads*.

To study modern agriculture in Tuskegee, Alabama, McKay began his journey to America on a United Fruit Company passenger–cargo ship in 1912. As critic Michael North points out, the United Fruit Company was so powerful and influential that it could "bring both product and person so far from home and then erect a wall of glass between them."[17] Together with the exported bananas, McKay emigrated from Jamaica to the US, from a southern island to a powerful northern continent. After studying at the Tuskegee Institute, McKay enrolled at Kansas State College for two years, but in 1914 went to New York City to advance his literary career. While taking various working-class jobs, McKay wrote poems and joined a group of anti-capitalist radicals. After 1919, McKay regularly published his poems in renowned socialist magazines such as *The Liberator* and *The Masses* and became a prominent figure in the Harlem Renaissance. When McKay's collection Harlem Shadows was published in 1922, Max Eastman, the chief editor of *The Liberator*, praised McKay's volume as "the first significant expression of [the Negro] race in poetry" (qtd. in Maxwell xv). Eastman's compliment shows that McKay's emphasis on race struck a chord with contemporary American literary circles and made representations of black Americans and Afro-Caribbeans visible.

McKay's "The Tropics in New York" delineates the entanglement between the foodways of tropical fruits and the speaker's diasporic experiences, reflecting the fact

[17] Michael North, "The Linguistic Expatriation of Claude McKay" in *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth-Century Literature* (New York: Oxford UP, 1994): 100-23, 112.

that the tropical fruits and the traveling speaker are both estranged by their transnational journeys. “The Tropics in New York” expands the reader’s geographical scope, demonstrating how tropical fruits and immigrants travel from the south to the north and critiquing the ways that the process of commodification silences this diasporic history. The first quatrain of “The Tropics in New York” reveals how tropical fruits are objectified as commodities waiting for sale:

> Banana ripe and green, and ginger-root
>
> Cocoa in pods and alligator pears
>
> And tangerines and mangoes and grape fruit
>
> Fit for the highest prize at parish fairs. (1–4)

From the speaker’s perspective, New Yorkers were ignorant about where these tropical fruit came from or how they came to be in New York. Displayed on a fruit stand, the fruits had already lost their history and characteristics: customers were able to name the fruits but failed to differentiate them. Ripe and green bananas were juxtaposed together, but nobody acknowledged the differences between them. Cocoa in pods kept the original shape of cocoa before processing; however, buyers knew nothing about cocoa in the shell. The reason why the avocado was renamed “alligator pear” remained unknown to purchasers, who did not question how the avocado, a popular and cheap fruit from Mexico, could be transported to an American city and sold widely. New Yorkers probably felt that pairing an animal name with fruit seemed interesting. The tangerine, local to Florida, was placed next to mangos and grapefruit that had traveled from even further afield. The juxtaposition of these tropical fruits wiped out their distinguishing characteristics. Moreover, the exorbitant prices created a sense of scarcity, equating

exotic with extravagance. What characterizes the tropical fruits for sale is not their particularity but their market price.

For the speaker, however, the tropics in New York were neither characterized by the imaginary projection of the exotic or the romantic but by the sensory presence of the tropical fruits. As North indicates, "repeated consonants, particularly the g's and r's and the g's and n's give the lines a concrete, almost crunchy sound" (111). These crunchy sounds correspond to the images of fruit, signifying the way that tropical fruits have become a part of New Yorkers' daily consumption. The fruits' high prices in this setting make them unattainable for the speaker, whose economic situation is exposed. The banana is no longer an ordinary fruit, but, rather, a high-end commodity alienated from its cultural roots.

The scenario of the first quatrain exposes how the transnational business of the banana is rooted in the exploitation of the Caribbean. For tourists from the US, the Caribbean area was a recreational haven of cool breezes and romantic adventures. However, hidden behind this pleasure and enjoyment was the profit earned from the banana trade and the unspoken US imperialism that exported raw materials from the virgin lands of the Caribbean. By only listing the names of fruits without providing further clues, the first quatrain of "The Tropics of New York" exposes this invisible history: when tourists visited the Caribbean, they did not understand that the steamships also transported bananas. When bananas were sold in New York, the banana plantations controlled by the United Fruit Company and the diasporic journey disappeared. The exorbitant price indicated the value of the banana but not its story. The speaker's hunger and the crunchy sounds of the syllables revive the bodily sensations the banana produces

in the speaker. Although the commodification of the banana separates it from its homeland and cuts the connection between the speaker and the fruits, McKay's poem gives one Caribbean speaker a voice.

In the second quatrain, the speaker's pastoral reminiscences of homeland and the past recall the missing connection among people, land, and fruit memory.

Set in the window, bringing memories
    Of fruit-trees laden by low-singing rills,
And dewy dawns, and mystical blue skies
    In benediction over nun-like hills. (5–8)

Here the tone and diction are quite soft. In the first quatrain, where McKay repeatedly uses the conjunction "and" to join a plethora of fruits, here the conjunction joins the fruits to parts of the landscape. This rhetorical strategy conveys a feeling of nervousness because there is no pause for the reader to take a breath. Contrary to the scenario of the quick pace of the city, the pastoral scenario in the second quatrain is serene and at ease. McKay employs some commas and dashes as well as many long-vowel words in the second quatrain, slowing the reading speed and creating a languid atmosphere. Unlike ugly and harsh New York, the speaker's rural homeland remains a utopia. According to North, in this pastoral world, "where there was 'cocoa in pods' there are now 'low-singing rills,' and alligator pears give way to 'dewy dawns' and 'mystical blue skies / In benediction over nun-like hills'" (111). Contrasting metropolis to countryside, the speaker reminisces about his beautiful past and distances himself from the harsh life he encounters in New York.

The language of the poem creates a different sense of connection between the speaker and the islands than the language used in the UFC advertisements. In the poem, nostalgia brings the speaker back to the peaceful motherland. In the ads, colorful images combined with romantic texts stir up a desire for adventure. The Great White Fleet advertisements lead the reader/tourist to the last wonderland of the twentieth century. In this wonderland, travel time was short but the recreational pleasures were great. The Caribbean cruise operated by the United Fruit Company signified a return to Eden. In contrast to the commercial journey coded with fairy-tale imaginings, the speaker of the poem relies on the power of memory to conjure an image of his homeland. In other words, memory constructs a bridge linking the speaker's treasured past with his present suffering. The scenery described in this quatrain is an evocation of his Eden; nevertheless, this Eden seems more utopian than that represented in advertisements. The speaker's Eden stands apart from the economy of capitalism and American imperialism, away from the exotic representations promoted by the tourism industry, and away from the destiny of diaspora. The nature of the Edenic homeland heals and nourishes its residents.

The poem's ending suggests that the history of the banana trade from the West Indies to America is ignored in New York. This unspeakable loss reflects the speaker's diasporic route from Jamaica to the US, from a serene homeland to a metropolis of harsh life. The speaker mourns:

> My eyes grew dim, and I could no more gaze
>
> A wave of longing through my body swept,
>
> And, hungry for the old, familiar ways
>
> I turned aside and bowed my head and wept. (9–12)

Driven by his craving for the old days, the speaker cannot help but cry. His tears symbolize the impossibility of a return to his Eden and the sorrow he feels for the loss of his people's and his homeland's autonomy. As the crunchy sounds in the first quatrain addressed the sensory implication of biting into tropical fruits, here the word "hungry" is inscribed with both a physical hunger for the banana and a nostalgia for the wonderful past that the speaker desires. The impossibility for the speaker to satisfy his bodily desire prompted by the presence of this tropical fruit of his homeland represents the alienation of a person living in the (urban) diaspora. The speaker is like the tropical fruits transplanted to the city fruit stand, severed from his cultural roots and unable to make others understand his history. The speaker's weeping in "The Tropics in New York" intensifies his sense of rootlessness. Both the speaker and the banana experience a displaced identity crisis, with their locality transformed by forces globality. McKay does not offer a couplet as a final solution to this suffering and separation, leaving his heartbreaking dilemma unresolved.

Before further elaborating upon the power of affect that the lack of a couplet in "The Tropics in New York" reflects, I want to examine why McKay adopted the poetic form of a sonnet to articulate his feelings. A renowned Afro-Caribbean poet in the literary circle of the Harlem Renaissance, McKay, as he says in his autobiography, *A Long Way from Home*, "wrote a series of sonnets expressing [his] bitterness, hate, and love."[18] Most of the sonnets composed between 1919 and 1922 were collected in *Harlem Shadows* (1922), including "The White House," which portrays the US as a segregated land deteriorated by racism, "The Lynching," which exposes the horror of an African-

[18] Claude McKay, *A Long Way from Home*, 1937 (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1970); hereafter, *LWH*.

American man hung without a trial, and "America," which personifies the racially divided US as a ruthless lady torturing an African-American admirer. McKay's sonnets, most of which were Shakespearean, were celebrated for their poetic aesthetics and for the way they revealed his his identity with black people.[19] In his autobiography, McKay recalls that literary editor Frank Harris believed McKay's early sonnets—like "The Lynching," which reported the St. Louis massacre "like an anticlimax"—were not his best work (21). Determined "to find expression in writing" and "a bigger audience," McKay eagerly took Harris's advice on his poems and followed John Milton's strategy to present "sublime human cry of anguish and hate against man's inhumanity to man" (*LWH* 4, 20, 21).

After his poem "If We Must Die" had been accepted by *The Liberator*, McKay let Harris read it, "want[ing] to know" if he "had risen to the heights and stormed heaven" (*LWH* 32).[20] McKay's interest in Harris's opinion shows how the Jamaican-born poet shaped his character and emotions within this traditional genre in order to appeal to white audiences. North questions whether McKay's adaptation of different forms satisfied the taste of patrons:

> Is it any wonder, then, that each of McKay's major changes in literary direction coincided with a change of place and thus of patron? He wrote no dialect poetry after leaving Jamaica and Jekyll, no significant poetry at all after leaving the United States and Eastman. He did not return to the United States from Europe

[19] "If We Must Die," McKay's most celebrated poem, was originally published with a Petrarchan sonnet structured with an octave and a sestet.

[20] After reading "If We Must Die," Harris shouted, "Grand! Grand! You have done it. That is a great poem, authentic fire and blood; blood pouring from a bleeding heart. I shall be proud to publish it in Pearson's" (*LWH* 32).

and Africa until his career as a writer of fiction was thoroughly played out . . . , but the last, at least, was impractical and even inexplicable" (104).

North's critique of McKay's versatility reveals his doubts about McKay's real intentions: did McKay appropriate these particular genres to please potential readers, or did he use them as literary experiments to voice Jamaican peasant resistance, racism, and vagabond solidarity? North asks if the web of literary production controlled by white patrons/readers was subjugating a black diasporic writer to literary trends of the dominant culture. I agree that McKay took his potential readership into consideration, using the sonnet form to attract more readers who preferred Western canonical literary forms. In the literary circle of the Harlem Renaissance, which hailed black vernacular writing as a validation of black dignity, McKay's abandonment of Jamaican dialect and his embrace of the English sonnet increased the tension over what forms black art should take. Black writers of the Harlem Renaissance were supposed to give voice to the New Negro[21] by adopting experimental forms, innovative expressions of (vernacular) language, and identity-based art, like jazz, as Langston Hughes argued in his essay "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1926): "We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter."[22] I argue, however, that McKay's appropriation of the sonnet form exposes the wrestling process through which McKay framed his critique of racism; by using different genres and languages, he expressed his love for his race. McKay's sonnets might be regarded as compliance with a traditional

[21] The term "the New Negro" here is associated with the influential anthology edited by Alain Locke: *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1925).

[22] Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" in *The Nation* (June 23, 1926): 692-94, 692.

literary form adored by white readers. Nevertheless, what needs to be examined further is how McKay's tactical strategy rewrites the privileged sonnet genre and how McKay's composition of sonnets uncovers tension in the racial imaginings between African-American and Afro-diasporic writers and between white patrons and black creators.

The concept of "traveling" provides an access point for evaluating the dynamics of McKay's challenge to the sonnet form. Traveling in McKay's poems does not simply stand for a journey from place to place but expands it to a negotiation process in which both sides act reciprocally. The *OED* defines traveling as "creeping, spreading by horizontal growth of the rootstock," or "moving in a fixed course." In her chapter "Claude McKay and Harlem Black Belt of the Metropolis" in her book *Black Empire*, Michelle Ann Stephens interprets McKay's endeavor to "search for the proper words and narrative" as "a groping for forms in which to express both the travels and the desires for refuge among this community"—in other words, how an African-American male writer locates his position in the US.[23] She contends that the "question of the form of writing appropriate to express the unique circumstances of modernity would remain a major preoccupation of McKay's life" (141). For Stephens, the sonnets McKay wrote in New York and the novels he published later reflect what he experienced in his transnational journeys. Each form shows McKay negotiating mainstream literary circles seeking recognition. Stephens argues that McKay used his travel experiences to personify the modern experience. In his book *A Transnational Poetics*, Jahan Ramazani explains that poetry, "more often seen as local, regional, or 'stubbornly national,'" can become a

[23] Michelle Ann Stephens, "Claude McKay and Harlem, Black Belt of the Metropolis" in her *Black Empire: The Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United States, 1914-1962* (Durham: Duke UP, 2005): 129-66, 141.

cultural artifact, dissolving singularity if it is situated within a transcultural/transnational context.[24] When discussing how the transcultural poems by T.S. Eliot, Sterling Brown, and Grace Nichols evoke hybridization between lyric and language, Ramazani argues the following:

> [C]ross-cultural poems cannot be reduced to Bakhtin's putative lyric homogeneity: instead, they switch codes between dialect and standard, cross between the oral and the literary, interanimate foreign and indigenous genres, span distances among far-flung locales, frame discourses within one another, and indigenize borrowed forms to serve antithetical ends. (4)

Transnational poems, for Ramazani, become a mixture in which diverse cultures and literary manifestations interact with each other. These heterogeneous elements do not support one-directional homogenization from the powerful to the powerless, from the global to the local, and from the civilized to the indigenous. Instead, the encounter is the process of creolization that allows transnational poets to "bring into expression their specific experiences of globalized locality and localized globality" (10). Cross-national poems demonstrate the dynamic of negotiation between the global and the local, intermingling and reciprocating poetic characteristics to forge a new field where differences coexist.

McKay's poem "If We Must Die" exemplifies how this diasporic Caribbean writer appropriates the valued sonnet form to represent his anger about a major US racial conflict in the 1910s. This sonnet is structured with three quatrains and a couplet: the first two quatrains encourage the oppressed to fight against the powerful, even if they must

[24] Jahan Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2009).

sacrifice, while the third quatrain exhorts the powerless to face defeat with dignity. The couplet brings the rebellious spirit to a climax, showing the rebel's absolute faith in fighting back, even when his life is at stake.[25] This sonnet, which was first published in Eastman's *The Liberator*, "was reprinted in every Negro publication of any consequence," McKay recalls, "Ministers ended their sermons with it, and the congregations responded, Amen. It was repeated in Negro clubs and Negro schools and at Negro mass meetings" (*LWH* 227). McKay confesses he "was amazed at the general sentiment for the poem," especially from black readers. Their recognition meant that McKay felt himself a poet (*LWH* 227).

As critic William Carroll argues, the emotions expressed in McKay's poems suggested "a love-hate amalgam" that articulated his "love of blackness and love of black people of the world."[26] Carroll argues that McKay redefined the sonnet form, traditionally associated with one's love for a lady, to juxtapose his love for his kinsmen and his anger towards racism. Another literary critic weighs in on McKay's motivations and contributions. The sonnet form, contends James Keller, was "specifically selected [by McKay] to illustrate the poet's political agenda, to expose and undermine the many misconceptions about African Americans that the dominant culture seeks to perpetuate."[27] For Keller, McKay jettisoned the conventional topic of courtly love when

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[25] This poem is a combination of the Petrarchan sonnet and the Shakespearean sonnet. When "If We Must Die" was first published in *The Liberator*, there was a gap between lines 8 and 9 so that the poem was structured with an octave stating a problem, incident, or situation and a sextet providing a solution (Maxwell 332).

[26] William Carroll, "A Sonnet Sequence for the Diaspora: The 'Angry Sonnets' of Claude McKay," *MAWA Review* 14.2 (1999): 89-94, 89.

[27] James Keller, "'A Chafing Savage, Down the Decent Street': The Politics of Compromise in Claude McKay's Protest Sonnets" in *African American Review* 28.3 (1994): 447-56, 450.

composing his sonnets, instead giving voice and a platform to misrepresented black people so that they could contest oppression and racial segregation. Considering line 9 of "If We Must Die"—"Oh kinsman! we must meet the common foe!"—this passionate appeal to black people to not surrender to brutality marks the transition of the sonnet. This animated call, Keller argues, originated from Henry V's famous "St. Crispin Day" speech:

> McKay's reference to his "kinsmen . . . far outnumbered" is reminiscent of King Henry's promise that all men who fight heroically on St. Crispin Day will be his "brothers." . . . McKay's use of these materials constitutes a mutual appropriation of materials by the alienated minority artist and the power structure. Shakespeare's work constitutes the conservative European cultural traditions that are recuperated by the marginalized artist for the purpose of transforming the dominant culture. (450)

Keller's reading of allusions in "If We Must Die" corresponds to Ramazani's argument that a transnational poem challenges the asymmetrical structure of power relations, questions the divisions of hierarchical dichotomies, and allows the marginal minority, through repositioning value-loaded and European-centered conventions in a local context, to claim its validity and place-based identity.

Moreover, when the privileged sonnet form, with its Shakespearean heritage, travels to the Caribbean and the US, its cultural legacy and also the speaking subjects are changed or replaced. These poetic modifications demonstrate McKay's consciousness of the tension between the rooted culture and literary heritage. The opening of this sonnet rewrites Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*: "If I must die, / I will encounter darkness

as a bride, / And hug it in my arms" (3.1.93). In McKay's hands, "If we must die—let it not be like hogs" (1) a plural speaking subject—a collective—is substituted for Shakespeare's single speaker, while an imperative tone describing a brutal outcome replaces Shakespeare's euphemistic personification of death. Here the appropriation and translation of a love scene into a tough and determined act reveals McKay's attempt to implant US locality and racial conflicts in a European form. As Ramazani argues, when examining encounters between the global and the local, one cannot simply reduce the paradigm to "one-sidedness and other inadequacies" or imply that the global overpowers the local and the local is a source for supplying (insignificant) experiences.[28] Instead, what a boundary-crossing, "form-intensive genre of poetry," i.e., the English sonnet in the US, exposes is "the linguistic, formal, and imaginative freshness and vividness that make many a poem" ("Form" 121). For Ramazani, the relationship between form and content, which mirrors the dynamic between the global and the local, is not a rigid dichotomy, but, rather, a mixture with nuances and complexities.

McKay's portrait of a collective act to rebel against racism transforms Shakespearean conventions and expands what the sonnet represents. In "If We Must Die," McKay uses the subject of racial violence to rewrite the sonnet tradition and to substitute individual, erotic love with his love for his people. The traces of rewriting and substitution demonstrate how McKay, as a diasporic writer who received a British education in Jamaica, debates with a canonical literary form by using his Jamaican identity and his support for a racial uprising. As McKay states in the "Author's word," published in *Harlem Shadow* (1922), "I have never studied poetics; but the forms I have

[28] Ramazani, "Form," in *A New Vocabulary for Global Modernism*, ed. Eric Hayot and Rebecca Walkowitz (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2016): 114-29, 117.

used I am convinced are the ones I can work in with the highest degree of spontaneity and freedom" (qtd. in Maxwell 351). "Spontaneity and freedom" empower McKay to refashion the sonnet from a local into a global, boundary-crossing, affective poetic form. The sonnet form is thus stripped from its traditional literary values and appropriated to allow this speaker to augment the intensity of his emotions.

In "The Tropics of New York," hunger and tears express the nostalgia for homeland and the suffering and loneliness a diasporic person feels in a city. He feels physical hunger as an immigrant in a big city with little money; meanwhile, he feels psychological hunger for his homeland. This double hunger cannot be sated. The speaker's tears not only express the impossibility either for his return to the homeland or a satisfaction of his yearning, but they also nod to the cruel exploitation of the Caribbean. Cross-national trade made bananas a costly commodity in New York—too costly for a Caribbean immigrant to purchase. The double exploitation—the banana as commodity and the speaker as underrepresented subject—exposes the complicity between transnational businesses and American imperialism: in order to meet the demand of the US market, the Caribbean has relegated to an exporter of raw materials and labor.

To approach this problem of the loss faced by a diasporic person, I wish to turn to Michelle Cliff's short story "The Dissolution of Mrs. White" (1987). In this story, the speaker's hunger leads to her aphasia after her family moves to the city.[29] Similar to McKay, Kingston-born Cliff moved back and forth between Kingston and New York City in her teens. After receiving her bachelor's degree at the University of London, she

[29] My thanks go to my advisor, Prof. Mary Wood, who suggested that I read Michelle Cliff's novels, especially *No Telephone to Heaven* (New York: Plume, 1996), to enrich my study of Caribbean diasporic writing. While analyzing McKay's linguistic expatriation, North also compares what hunger signifies in this short story with "The Tropics of New York" (112).

lived in different US cities. Her writing features multicultural protagonists (mostly female) who question colonial suppression and reflect the suffering experienced in the Caribbean diaspora. Comparing Cliff's "The Dissolution of Mrs. White" and McKay's "The Tropics of New York" allows us to examine the ways in which food is for both writers emblematic of the isolation experienced by uprooted Caribbean people and how it symbolizes immigrants' attachment to their homeland. Though "The Dissolution of Mrs. White" was published in the late 1980s, the sorrow, sense of rootlessness, and cultural alienation are evocative of the 1920s experience represented in "The Tropics of New York." Both works reveal the long-term economic subjugation of the West Indies and the ongoing racial and economic discrimination against Caribbean immigrants in America.

"The Dissolution of Mrs. White" highlights the socio-economic and workplace discrimination that a Jamaican immigrant family encounters in New York City. Kitty, the protagonist's mother, migrates from Kingston to New York and verbalizes her feelings about this move through the tropical foods she finds in chain stores selling Jamaican produce:

> Kitty did not speak to the women around her; their accents clashed and they said they could not understand each other. . . .
>
> Kitty mastered the route by subway and returned with mangoes, yams, cho-cho, saltfish, plantains, callaloo, goatmeat, and Jamaican curry to rub it with. She came home with these things laden in her arms, as if to say, Family, this is for you. In these shops she broke her silence, here she felt most the loss of home, of voice, even as she brushed the loose dirt off the yam-skin, imagining its origin in the bush, stroked the rough green lips where the cho-cho split, stuck her finger in the

> sap where the mango had been joined to the tree, remembering how it could burn and raise a sore. Resisting a desire to rub the sharp stickiness into her nostrils and around her mouth. In these places she was unto herself, speaking to the shopkeepers as if solitary. (64–65)

Like the speaker in "The Tropics of New York," whose tears and hunger signify a speechless separation from his hometown, Kitty's silence signifies the trauma she has experienced. Because of their different accents, Kitty and her Italian neighbors cannot communicate—or perhaps refuse to communicate—with each other. Kitty's aphasia shows the actual impossibility of communication and her inability to make herself understood. Only through Jamaican food can Kitty regain the ability to articulate her nostalgia for Kingston and her emotional attachment to its soil. Various tropical foods speak to Kitty's life experiences: the route the Jamaican foods travel mirrors Kitty's diasporic journey.

Enclosed spaces, such as Jamaican grocery stores or her home, mark a territory that allows Kitty to reconnect herself with language and emotions. In the chain stores and at home, Kitty's powerful and spontaneous feelings triggered by food memory flow through a series of words and phrases. Commas and participles extend the sentence beginning with "In these shops." Language translates Kitty's unspoken sentiments into something visible, audible, and sensible. Commas provide short pauses, while present participles, like "imagining" and "remembering," lead the reader to an imaginary space to share Kitty's lived experience. The ending nasal sounds—for example, "-ing," "yam-skin," "in," or "n"—glide over words, not only making intonation uninterrupted but also intensifying the level of sound effects, as if Kitty were singing her history. The bilabial

fricatives and stops of consonants capture Kitty's burst of feelings—her lips are not sealed and Kitty speaks. "Green lips" personify the split of a cho-cho, a tropical pear-like fruit, which utters Kitty's words when Kitty's fingers rub it. The sticky substance of the mango, which stays on Kitty's fingers, nostrils, and mouth, reminds Kitty that her memories of the Jamaican soil and landscape are inseparable from her. The senses of touch, smell, taste, and hearing connect Kitty with the Caribbean and transform the American grocery shops and Kitty's New York home into Jamaican spaces. These sensory experiences create a dynamic relationship between enclosed Caribbean places and the big city: only when Kitty tastes the watery texture of the mango in New York can she experience what Jamaica means to her; only when Jamaican foodstuffs are sold in chain stores in Brooklyn can Kitty understand that both she and the tropical foods have been uprooted. Physical sensations activated by food open Kitty's consciousness to an awareness of her separation from her homeland and her sense of loss.

Kitty's sensory attachment to Jamaican food in "The Dissolution of Mrs. White" and the speaker's hunger and tears in "The Tropics of New York" portray how sensations embody the local memories that fire diasporic immigrants' imaginings of the Caribbean imagination. They also translate affectivities into a weapon to destabilize a cross-national imbalance of power. Cliff carefully makes clear that it is Kitty's hunger for certain foods that bring up memories that in turn act as a catalyst she uses to reposition herself in the foreign land in which she finds herself. For McKay, hunger, sweat, and tears expose the speaker's unsatisfied appetite for fruits of his homeland and his unbearable alienation from both The tropics and the US. Moreover, these intense feelings show how the trade

history, which shaped the banana from a local product to a global commodity, has been erased from the circuit of transnational exchange.

In digging deeper into McKay's "Tropics of New York," I turn for now to Sonya Posmentier and her article that reads Caribbean agriculture as cultural continuity:

> But lest we consign the vision of the fruit to universal history, the speaker claims the fragmented sensory experience as his own, and as the trigger for a process of remembering that 'through my body swept.' . . . This [the speaker's consciousness, experienced sensorially] is particularly significant when we consider slaves' use of the space of the provision ground to assert cultural autonomy in the face of historical fragmentation.[30]

The sensations of McKay's speaker, Posmentier argues, are linked with his cultural roots and make his space to be a locus where he claims his subjectivity, though it might be composed of fragments of an often sad history. If so, diasporic immigrants, places, transnational mobility, and emotions are involved in a dynamic in which what belongs to the Caribbean/the local is not represented as an imaginary homeland but as an active force for challenging the relationship between the powerful and the powerless. Though the uprooted Caribbean immigrants leave their home country, the feelings aroused by the foodstuff of the provision ground create a cultural bond between nature and a subject wrestling with exploitation, aphasia, and homelessness.

In his "The Tropics of New York," McKay does not channel a Wordsworthian "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" with a couplet. Instead, he leaves a sense of incompleteness, which is the strategy he employs to remind the reader of what is missing

[30] Sonya Posmentier, "The Provision Ground in New York: Claude McKay and the Form of Memory" in *American Literature* 84.2 (2012): 273-300, 291.

and what is silenced in hemispherical trade and migration. Sweat, hunger, and tears do not simply signal the separation a Caribbean immigrant experiences and the alienation he feels in his new metropolitan surroundings, but they also reveal how affectivities—even if they are sorrowful—create a space that enables the speaker to (re)articulate personal history, commodity exchange, and diaspora. The speaker's bodily sensations toward the overpriced tropical fruits make previously overlooked colonialism visible. They also expose the tension of how a diasporic subject and tropical fruits are enmeshed in global trade and economic divisions. These feelings possess the force of resistance, refusing to be underestimated in a transnational circuit of displacement, animating the speaker's lived experiences as a microcosm of the tension between the Caribbean and the US, and, finally, conjuring sympathy and understanding in the reader.

The lack of a final couplet highlights the speaker's strong feelings. That last iambic line, "I turned aside and bowed my head and wept," Posmentier argues, "underscores the speaker's control of the sense, the sense that the traumatic break from the homeland need not define the future. Thus, even if the sonnet is the very sign of that break and that trauma, its measure enables McKay's measure in relationship to the experience of displacement" (292). By McKay's not limiting melancholic feelings to simple laments over loss, Posmentier claims that he has allowed the feelings and the iambic meter to interact with each other; through stress and rhyme, McKay can evaluate the distance between a diasporic subject and nostalgic emotions. Through expressed emotions, the sonnet is able to give voice to Caribbean history. For Posmentier, "the ending of the poem is marked by its openness, and this openness invites reading and rereading, as we experience the speaker's unfulfilled craving" (287). The absence of a

solution at the end activates an endless interpretive circuit in which sensations and longing encourage the reader to linger in a three-quatrain space that intermingles the Caribbean landscape and a city of commodities.

Posmentier's perspective helps me argue the dialectical relation between feelings and the sonnet form and to reconsider how feelings unsettle hierarchy in binary oppositions, such as the global versus the local, the colonizer versus the colonized, signification versus objectification. In "The Tropics of New York," sensations and form enrich each other symbiotically. "Root," "fruit," "swept," and "wept" fuel the iambic meter because these four short stressed words (which relate to the provision grounds and sentiment) increase the intensity of empathy and attachment. The iambic meter, with its bilabials and fricatives, translates emotions into a tangible sensory experience when readers recite the poem. The long and gliding vowels describing the natural world of the Caribbean in the second quatrain summon the cultural strength to narrate the plantation economy absent from the gilded commodities. The pastoral images and expressions of uncontrolled sorrow in the third quatrain express the speaker's undying love—and unsatisfied desire—for his homeland. In other words, emotions fill the vacancy created by the extraction of substance from the commodity, but the subject is unable to verbalize them. Without the resolution a concluding couplet would have provided, the turmoil of emotions rewrites the global economy with Caribbean locality, remediates the power relationship between them, and re-empowers objectified commodities to become lived provisions.

By not providing an ending couplet, McKay asserts his resistance to the form of the sonnet.[31] The absence of a couplet illustrates how McKay skillfully maneuvers within the conventions of the sonnet to represent the complexity between the Jamaican landscape and transnational trade. William Butler Yeats, whose sonnet "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" also describes peaceful memories of the countryside, also offered no couplet at the end. Michael North compares the two poems and finds that when "glimmer" and "grow" conjure village images of "clay and wattles," "the language of memory" becomes "universal, for both poets rely on a certain dewy dimness to describe their longing for home" (112). There is, North thinks, an allusive relation between Yeats's lake isle and McKay's tropics, which suggests that discursive remembrance embodies the poets' nostalgic attachment to their respective homelands. North's perspective supports the literal interpretation of "The Tropics of New York" that I argued above; however, we should not assume the Jamaican reference to be a homogeneous, non-changing, and archaic counterpart to a modern metropolis. "The language of memory" should not remain "universal"; if it did, it would imply that memories of the homeland represent a common ground that unites a group of people. Instead, the language of memory remains ever-changing and variable in response to different historical and cultural contexts.[32]

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[31] I thank Professor Weishin Gui at the University of California–Riverside. At the panel on "Postcolonial Literature" at the 2016 Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association convention, Professor Gui asked if the lack of a couplet in "The Tropics of New York" should be regarded as a failure of the sonnet form. Professor Paul Peppis at the University of Oregon also questioned how "The Tropics of New York" could be read as a sonnet since McKay offered only three quatrains. These questions have driven me to articulate the complex relationship between form, content, and emotions intertwined in this tropical/metropolis text.

[32] Here I critique not only North's reading of the memory in "The Tropics of New York," but also that in "The Lake Isle of Innisfree." My interpretation of why local memory should maintain its many facets is indebted to Ramazani's critique of Franco Moretti's Distant Reading. For Ramazani, though Moretti proposes "foreign plot; local characters; and then local narrative voice" to show how "the modern novel" came to "a compromise between a western formal influence (usually French or English) and local materials," he still contended that "the abstractive formal dimensions of a text (novels) are almost entirely

The absence of a resolution in "The Tropics of New York" opens the possibility that the Jamaican story, which coexists with the city experience, has not yet reached its end. The opening quatrain introduces the tropical fruits, while the second one returns the reader to Jamaica. These two quatrains, composed with nouns, prepositional phrases, and participle clauses, have no clear tenses to indicate when they happen—as if these representations were rootless and imaginary.[33] In the third quatrain, the past tense shows that the pastoral attachment makes city life unbearable for the speaker: tears flood the eyes, sweat drips from the body. Yet the ending is missing, leaving the diasporic story incomplete and beginning an endless interpretive circle to define where the displacement journey of fruits and immigrant will go in the future. The speaker's strong emotions and bodily movements cannot be controlled by a couplet, nor can a couplet express the intensity of feeling. Therefore, while some may regard "The Tropics of New York" as a failure to align with the sonnet form and meter, this failure could simply reveal McKay's agency in claiming the importance of affectivities. Experiencing these emotions, the reader sets sail for Jamaica to understand why Jamaican peasants rebel against colonial imperialism.

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associated with the Western metropole and raw materials with the peripheries" ("Form" 115–16). Ramazani's perspective has led critics to reflect on the ways that the hierarchical dichotomy of the two ends continues unchallenged—even though we bring an interactive approach as we wrestle with the imbalanced relationship. Ramazani's reminder about how a "literary-critical paradigm is in danger of 're-inscribing a hegemonic cultural center'" prompts me to emphasize the heterogeneity and unresolvable tension between form and content as well as between the global and the local in McKay's poems ("Form" 117).

[33] Posmentier also mentions this grammatical nuance (291).

Caribbean Resistance and Rebellion

Resistance and rebellion were the key themes in McKay's two early collections: *Songs of Jamaica* and *Constab Ballads*, both published in 1912, before McKay left for the US. As W. A. Domingo argues in "Gift of the Black Tropics," Caribbean writers "bring the gift of the black tropics of America and to their kinsman."[34] For Domingo, "the gift of the black tropics" means "the insistent assertion of their manhood in an environment that demands too much servility and unprotesting acquiescence from men of African blood" (349). Domingo values the racial consciousness and resistance that Caribbean writers bring to African Americans and to the literary circle of the Harlem Renaissance. He recognizes that the rebellious character in the Caribbean tradition is "blazing new paths, breaking the bonds that would fetter the feet of a virile people" (349). Domingo recalls what McKay wrote in "If We Must Die": "Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack, / Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back" (qtd. in 349). Caribbean writers equip African Americans with a strategy of active resistance to confront US institutional racism and inequality. Domingo's emphasis on resistance in Caribbean culture turns the reader's literary attention to the West Indies. This turn marks the possibility of a paradigm shift, extending the scope of literary production from the US to the Caribbean and exploring different histories and cultures that are foreign to US readers.

McKay's first book of poetry, *Songs of Jamaica* (1912), gives voice to the impoverished lives of black Jamaican peasants and their resistance culture by using Jamaican dialects. McKay mixes poetic devices, such as lyrical ballad, folk song,

[34] W. A. Domingo, "Gifts of the Black Tropics" in *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Alain Locke (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1925): 341-48, 341.

repetitive rhymes, monologue, and Jamaican dialect, to represent colonialism in the early twentieth century. In contrast to *Constab Ballads* (1912), which uses less Jamaican dialect and in which the poetic forms are more organized, the poems in *Songs of Jamaica* have more irregularities and interpretive difficulties for readers who are familiar with the Western verse tradition. In his "King Banana," in *Songs of Jamaica*, McKay sharply represents the exploitative cruelty of the banana economy in Jamaica.

McKay dedicated this collection to his intellectual mentor, Walter Jekyll, who had first encouraged him to use the medium of dialect to capture the lives of Jamaican peasants. In the preface he wrote to *Songs of Jamaica*, Jekyll perpetuated the hierarchies of the English language, subjugating McKay's Jamaican tongue to the dominance of the English of Great Britain—but not harshly. Jekyll wrote:

> What Italian is to Latin, that in regard to English is the negro variant thereof. It shortens, softens, rejects the harder sounds alike of consonants and vowels; I might almost say, refines. In its soft tones we have an expression of the languorous sweetness of the South: it is a feminine version of masculine English; preeminently a language of love, as all will feel who, setting prejudice aside, will allow the charmingly naïve love-songs of this volume to make their due impression upon them. But this can only happen when the verses are read aloud, and those unacquainted with the Jamaican tongue may therefore welcome a few hints as to pronunciation. (Maxwell 283–84)

Jekyll appreciates the phonetic traits of Jamaican English: its shorter and softer consonants and vowels and the sweeter sounds they produce. That sweetness recalls the stereotypical image of the South as a place of pleasure and lassitude. He points out that

softness and tenderness are feminine qualities, which might hint at a language's weak position in the power relation of languages. Though Jekyll recognizes the importance of the Jamaican dialect and equates it with Italian, the dialect Dante Alighieri used to write *The Divine Comedy* (1320), he insinuates that the Jamaican voice cannot compete with the masculine paradigm. Just as Italian could not register Roman glory, Jamaican Creole cannot communicate English honor. The phonetic quality, geographical imagery, and gender presumptions imposed upon the Jamaican dialect further accentuate the affiliation between love-song and the local variant, suggesting that the black voice performs as an imagined Other on which an English master easily casts his unchallenged presumptions. By praising Jamaican Creole's characteristics of softness and short vowels does not subvert the hierarchical structure between the privileged and the powerless. Instead, it justifies a white colonizer's romantic fantasies, positioning the primitive Jamaican tongue as an unpolluted Eden to recuperate what is lost in an Englishman's accent. In their book on McKay and identity, Kotti Sree Ramesh and Kandula Nirupa Rani point to the dilemma that a Jamaican poet negotiates with the politics of languages: "The relationship that McKay developed with Jekyll early in his career seems paradigmatic of that existing between many 'colonials' and metropolitan elite 'patrons' in which the patron desires the writer to create 'authentic' and 'native' art that differs from metropolitan codes."[35] However, the real Jamaican voice, under the system of patronage, has become an unreliable vehicle, mediating between what a British intellectual desires to read and what a black writer writes in order to be recognized.

[35] Kotti Sree Ramesh and Kandula Nirupa Rani, *Claude McKay: The Literary Identity from Jamaica to Harlem and Beyond* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2006), 46.

Literary critic Heather Hathaway, however, argues that McKay's intermingling of the local vernacular and standard English shows the immaturity of his poetic creativity.[36] Hathaway recognizes McKay's struggle with the validity of adopting the Jamaican dialect and recounts the weight of social protest represented in *Songs of Jamaica* through a native voice. For Hathaway, "while McKay's early work does reveal poetic inexperience, the limitations of his dialect verse seem to result less from a conscious effort to wrestle into one form the two arms of his literary heritage and more from an inability to suppress his self-chosen 'native' tongue—standard British English—for the tongue imposed on him as a 'native'—Jamaican dialect" (35). In other words, Hathaway reads McKay's vernacular poems as unsuccessful: neither do they reflect his literary education nor do they offer a transcription of a true peasant voice. For example, in his poem "The Hermit," McKay writes the following:

> Far in de country let me hide myself
> From life's sad pleasures an' de greed of pelf,
> Dwellin' wid Nature primitive an' rude,
> Living' a peaceful life of solitude. (1–4)

Hathaway notices McKay's choice of replacing "the" with "de" in the first two lines. This phonetic replacement, she says, "leaves the reader uncertain about the form the poem will take. The second line is plagued by similar irregularity: the dialect 'an'' and 'de' contrast sharply with the nearly archaic 'pelf,' as well as with the remainder of the line" (36). For a reader used to standard English, the combination of sound changes and usage of the old-fashioned "pelf" (money) seems awkward. Moreover, these poetic

[36] Heather Hathaway, *Caribbean Waves: Relocating Claude McKay and Paul Marshall* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1999).

varieties are included in the form of a folk song, which can disorient the reader or listener, who is unsure of the poet's true intention. By analyzing how meter and rhyme hamper McKay's control of the Jamaican dialect, Hathaway claims that "McKay's linguistic irregularities, which do not occur in an identifiable system or patter, . . . force us to question whether he or Jekyll, as his guide, fully trust dialect to convey accurately the meaning the author hopes to express" (37). For Hathaway, the incompatibility between form and linguistic particularities in McKay's dialect poems counters Jekyll and McKay's belief in the power of the peasant voice.

Counter to Hathaway's devaluation of the agency of Jamaican dialect in *Songs of Jamaica*, some critics have argued in favor of McKay's dialect verse, which is between prosody and the vernacular, and demonstrates the dissident voices of colonial modernity. These critics focused on the irregularities of language, the unfamiliarity with standard English, and the negotiations of subaltern cultures.[37] Reading "The Apple-Woman's Complaint" and "The Heart of a Constab" as "a verse of repossession that rehabilitates dialect as a medium for poetic expression and colonial critique," Paul Peppis argues that McKay's Jamaican verse "finds innovative ways to represent and deploy Jamaican patois that neither deny nor overcome the conditions of coloniality" (40).[38] Instead of evaluating McKay's vernacular poems as eccentric, compared to traditional English poetics, Peppis positions McKay's texts within the context of the colonial system to which Jamaica was

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[37] See Simon Gikandi, *Writing in Limbo: Modernism and Caribbean Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992); Matthew Hart, *Nations of Nothing but Poetry: Modernism, Transnationalism, and Synthetic Vernacular Writing* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010); and Charles W. Pollard, *New World Modernisms*: T. S. Eliot, Derek Walcott, and Kamau Brathwaite (Charlotte: U of Virginia P, 2004).

[38] Paul Peppis, "Salvaging Dialect and Cultural Cross-Dressing in Claude McKay's *Constab Ballads*," *Twentieth Century Literature* 59.1 (spring 2013).

subjected, exposing how Jamaican poetic voices reveal the root of subaltern culture and wrestle with the colonial power. The linguistic experiments in *Constab Ballads*, "sometimes by subversion, irony, and disguise," enact as "a creolized modern verse that renders dialect a rich and potent medium for responding to the experiences of colonial modernity" (Peppis 40). Peppis recognizes the agency of the local dialect and situates the creolized linguistic particularity within the realm of modern poetry. He claims that McKay's Jamaican vernacular poems, composed of subaltern agency and linguistic variations, is like "early modernism in its ethnographic mode" (Peppis 40).

On the one hand, these inclusive readings accept peripheral local dialects as manifestations of modernisms. On the other hand, subsuming McKay's vernacular poems under the name of modernism can be dangerous because it suggests that they are only worth researching because they fall into a category of Western literary form. While McKay's vernacular poetry does have modernist aesthetic value, I would argue that when we researchers apply the concept and merits of modernism to literary texts, we should be attuned to whether or how our modernist reading is repositioning a colonial text with subversive potency within a value-loaded hierarchy defined by Western norms. In *Caribbean Discourse*, Édouard Glissant uses the Prospero-Caliban metaphor to caution against an imbalanced relationship between the West and the Caribbean:

> In *The Tempest* the legitimacy of Prospero is thus linked to his superiority, and epitomizes the legitimacy of the West. The ambiguity is therefore that Literature and History were at the same time proposed in the West as instruments of this Totality (moving from primitive linearity to a global system), but that in this proposed Totality was inserted the unprecedented ambition of creating man in the

> image of the Western ideal, with degrees in the elevation from Caliban to Prospero.
>
> At this stage, History is written with a capital H. It is a totality that excludes other histories that do not fit into that of the West. . . . Literature attains a metaexistence, the all-powerfulness of a sacred sign, which will allow people with writing to think it justified to dominate and rule peoples with an oral civilization.[39]

Glissant indicates that the singular concept of History ostracizes histories that are different from the Western model and also conflates non-Western histories into a single entity that responds to the Western narrative of progress. Literature (with a capital L) uses tropes and strategic representations to legitimate this structure of dominance. For Glissant, the literary metaexistence exposes how the imagined connections or exclusions represented in Literature obscure the differences between the West and non-West, justify the existing asymmetrical relationship between the global and the local, and erase the cries of the people. In *The Tempest*, civilized Caliban kneels down in front of Prospero. Glissant's critique of the Western ideal of History and Literature alerts modernist scholars to the danger of using the concept of modernism in the realm of abstract knowledge. The modernist focus on the analyses of form, linguistic variations, and aesthetic achievement should not ignore that "the peoples who until now inhabited the hidden side of the earth fought [against the Western model], at the same time they were fighting for food and freedom" (Glissant 76). That is, modernist discourses rarely emphasize the power of affect from the Caribbean soil grassroots cultures.

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[39] Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays* (Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 1999): 75.

By challenging the traditional dichotomy between rationalization and experience, recent affect theory claims that emotion is inseparable from the process of subjectification. Instead, it advocates for an interlocking relationship between emotions, the subject, and the non-subject. McKay's poems are imbued with feelings such as irony, doubt, bewilderment, ambivalence (toward the motherland and America), and resentment. These feelings complicate the poems' symbolism and lead the reader to question the rhetorical process of abstraction and the incarnation of sensations. Reading McKay's poetry from the perspective of affect explains how the weight of powerful feelings attaches to the Caribbean soil and its people and acts as a linchpin substantiating Caribbean subjectivity. In her book *Feeling in Theory: Emotion after the "Death of the Subject,"* critical theorist Rei Terada argues that emotions are not simply a phenomenon produced by subjective consciousness but "arise from others' subsidence, from reflection on emotions, and from the very absence of any particular thing to feel."[40] Terada's emotion theory questions the hierarchy between subjects and emotions; that is, emotions are not second-tier in relation to subjects but, rather, are independent entities that interact with subjects.

Terada reads emotions against the grain; that is, she believes that emotions remain alive after the age of the "death of the subject." Similarly, Sianne Ngai's theory of ugly

[40] See Rei Terada, *Feeling in Theory: Emotion after the "Death of the Subject"* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2003): 13. In recent affect studies, scholars have tended to clarify what different affective terms—such as emotion, feeling, pathos, and affect—mean in theoretical realms. For Terada, "by emotion we usually mean a psychological, at least minimally interpretive experience whose physiological aspect is affect. Feeling is a capacious term that connotes both physiological sensations (affects) and psychological state (emotions)" (4). Sianne Ngai, in the book *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2007), argues that "the affect/emotion split originated in psychoanalysis for the practical purpose of distinguishing third-person from first-person representations of feeling, with 'affect' designating feeling described from an observer's (analysis's) perspective, and 'emotion' designating feeling that 'belongs' to the speaker of analysand's 'I.'" (25). In this chapter, affect theory is one of the stepping stones I use to recover the grassroots characteristics that diasporic Caribbean writers show in their texts. Therefore I use these affective terms interchangeably rather than scrutinize how different terms for emotion shape affect theory.

feelings, which focuses on negative emotions that are often ignored in aesthetic studies, argues that they are critically productive in order to "expand and transform the category of 'aesthetic emotions,' or feelings unique to our encounters with artworks" (6). Ngai animates ugly feelings, such as anxiety, envy, or irritation, that offer no pity or catharsis (as Greek tragedies do), demonstrating an avenue to approach texts, forms, genres, and cultural contexts from the flip side of aesthetic theory. Ngai both emphasizes "'constructivist' rather than 'expressivist' forms as ideal sites for examining the social and symbolic productivity of emotion in general" (10) and claims that "feelings are as fundamentally 'social' as the institutions and collective practices that have been the more traditional objects of historicist criticism . . . and as 'material' as the linguistic signs and significations that have been the more traditional objects of literary formalism" (25). Feelings, for Ngai, are neither a secondary category supplementing grand discourses (such as historical and literary criticisms) nor a by-product generated by a process of signification. Instead, feelings' effects unveil how social institutions overlook the value of affectivities, represent how canonical standards depreciate the agency or dissent they expose, and reconstruct the relationship between what can be signified and what can be felt.

In Melville's short story "Bartleby: The Scrivener," the statement "I would prefer not to" reveals Bartleby's refusal to accept what sociolinguistic order means to him. As Gilles Deleuze argues, the suspense produced by this incomplete sentence drives Bartleby's boss and the reader mad, because neither knows what Bartleby is

denouncing.[41] In fact, the moment of suspense and madness reverses the relationship between emotion and signification (Bartleby's copying and the narrative)—"the essential point [the queer phrase] is its effects on Bartleby: from the moment he says I WOULD PREFER NOT TO (collate), he is no longer able to copy either. And yet he will never say that he would prefer not to (copy): he has simply passed beyond this stage" (Deleuze 70). Deleuze's reading of Bartleby's speech act points out that emotional effects invite the reader to interpret what the narrative fails to represent. In other words, the affective perspective, by divulging what is absent in Bartleby's speech, shows who Bartleby really *is*.

The process of reading absence from presence and designating the meaning of affectivities recognizes how affect directs the reader to underscore the relationship between subject and emotions. In Brian Massumi's "Ideology and Escape," he suggests that affect "is directly relational, because it places affect in the space of relation: between an affecting and a being affected. It focuses on the middle, directly on what happens between" (91). Relying on Baruch Spinoza's definition of affect as "the capacity to affect or be affected," Massumi examines how affect establishes a relationship between two ends (91). That is, the process of wrestling between affecting and being affected results in a middle, and that is where affect happens. The dynamic in-betweenness of affect, for Massumi, results in "a theory of affect for resistance" where "a first degree of resistance in any encounter . . . is not simply passive, but already expresses a capacity, and . . . it is these encounters that are determining" (93).

[41] Gilles Deleuze. "Bartleby or The Formula" in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (London: Verso, 1998): 68-90, 70.

Massumi's articulation of the transitional relationship between resistance and affect provides a new access point for understanding resistance: resistance is not a reactionary act that is caused by oppression, but, rather, an active encounter that determines a mutual relationship. Interpreting resistance as a passive act limits the potential of resistance to affect the structure of power. Massumi further explicates his understanding that "the feeling of the transitional encounter is not 'raw' feeling. It is imbued with an immediate understanding of what is under way, what might be coming—and what we are becoming. This is enactive understanding: it is one with the action. It is what I call a thinking-feeling" (94). Unlike traditional philosophers' classification of emotions as representational supplements that blind the subjective critical faculties, Massumi's thinking-feeling concept both protests the privileged ideal endorsed by Western metaphysics and argues that thinking is inextricable from feeling. Thinking-feeling revises René Descartes's maxim, "I think, therefore I am," to assert instead, "I think-feel, therefore I am." The thinking-feeling dimension in affect theory, I argue, resists deadlock in debates about whether or not feelings can overwhelm the faculty of abstract speculation or why feelings are secondary to intellect. Instead, it highlights the dialectical process between thinking and feeling.

In the first poem in *Songs of Jamaica*, "Quashie to Buccra" (meaning "black man to white man"), the speaker recognizes the encounter between Jamaican peasants and white colonizers as a start of resistance:

> You tas'e petater an' you say it sweet,
> But you no know how hard we wuk fe it;
> You want a basketful fe quattiewut,

'Cause you no know how 'tiff de bush fe cut. (1–4)

In the first stanza, the speaker, through monologue, identifies with the local farmers as "we," reproaching that the ruling class is ignorant of how the Jamaicans suffer from economic exploitation. The angry, bitter tone decries that the value of the peasants' labor is reduced to how little money is earned from the sale of "petater" (sweet potato). Beyond the price, the white colonizers know nothing about how local agriculture supports the Jamaican people. The anger imbued in the first stanza intensifies the self-assertive position that the Caribbean people (we) adopt.

As Albert Camus asks and answers in his book-length essay *The Rebel* (1951), "[W]hat is a rebel? A man who says no, but whose refusal does not imply a renunciation. He is also a man who says yes, from the moment he makes his first gesture of rebellion. A slave who has taken orders all his life suddenly decides that he cannot obey some new command."[42] Rebellion is a yes-no act: the rebel refuses to accept how he has been treated and decides to take action against oppression. This yes-no consciousness, originating from a feeling of anger, actually recognizes the self-esteem and value the Jamaican people already have. Camus then clarifies that rebellion cannot be equated with resentment, because "resentment is always resentment against oneself" (18). However, the rebel, "from his very step, refuses to allow anyone to touch what he is. He is fighting for the integrity of one part of his being. He does not try, primarily, to conquer, but simply to impose" (18). Camus emphasizes that the beginning of rebellion is self-imposing, asserting the value one has; the belief of self-importance then triggers acts of rebellion that subvert the imbalanced structure of oppression. Camus's concept of the

[42] Albert Camus, *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt* (New York: Vintage, 1951).

rebel responds to Massumi's thinking-feeling perspective: at the moment of encounter, raw feelings such as anger are not simply reactionary but already involved in a thinking process that understands the past and envisions what will come. The first stanza questions the legitimacy of colonialism in "Quashie to Buccra"; it is "quashie" who talks back to and rebels against buccra, not "buccra" who commands the local, thus inverting the power relationship.

Affective reading recuperates McKay's dialect poems from a unified and linear narrative imposed on Caribbean history and underscores the local power the Caribbean literature demonstrates. In his essay "Cross-Cultural Poetics," Glissant, who is "not far from believing that the written is the universalizing Sameness," argues that "the oral would be the organized manifestation of Diversity."[43] Accentuating how the oral tradition substantiates Caribbean writing, Glissant believes that the oral is a vehicle for representing diverse cultures in the Caribbean. McKay's vernacular verse integrates folk characteristics that expose the diversity within the Caribbean collective memory. His poem "Whe' Fe Do?" (What to Do) narrates how the Caribbean people suffer from economic hardship and colonial exploitation while earning a living under severe weather conditions:

> We hab to batter in de sun,
> An' dat isn't a little fun,
> For Lard!' tis hellish how it bu'n:
> Still dere's de big wul' to live do'n—
> So whe' fe do?

[43] Édouard Glissant, "Cross-Cultural Poetics," in *Caribbean Discourse*: 97-110.

We nigger hab a tas' fe do,

To conquer prejudice dat due

To obeah, an' t'ings not a few

Dat keep we progress back fe true—

But whe' fe do? (13–22)

For the local people, the sun is not as enjoyable and enchanted as the Caribbean tourism advertisements romanticize. On the contrary, the merciless sun burns their bodies and results in unbearable pain. Pleasure and fun forsake them; endless labor and suffering dominate them. The local collective memory of exertion under the blazing sun is absent from the advertising images of the azure sea, white-sand beaches, and cocktail glasses.[44] The first three lines represent the Caribbean that tourists never read about in travel narratives and mock the fantasy of the Caribbean as an evergreen and sunbathed utopia. Hard and desperate as their life is, the peasants need to survive. The question "Whe' fe do?" leads them to find a way forward by revolting against colonialism. This question, moreover, causes the people to become thinking-feeling subjects. It transforms their emotions into an awareness of rebellion that carries them "far beyond the point" they "had reached by simply refusing," so that they "now demand to be treated as an equal" (Camus 14). In other words, by recounting the exploitation of labor in the Caribbean you are able to construct the local and collective identity and to reassert belief in the importance of self. The folk lyric style of "Whe' Fe Do?" paired with rhymed verse in the

[44] Neither portraying the Caribbean as an Eden where pleasures are abundant nor coloring the Caribbean with a nostalgic emotion, Eric Walrond's *Tropic Death* (1926) further challenges the stereotype of the Caribbean as a haven of recreation and portrays the exploitative reality the Caribbean people encounter under US imperialism. In this book of stories the Caribbean sun causes severe droughts; black workers constructing the Panama Canal Zone receive silver while whites earn gold; black boys dive into the water in order to pick up coins left by tourists; and prostitution, unendurable suffering, and hopelessness are ubiquitous.

Jamaican dialect consolidates the Caribbean cultural identification with the land and the people.

The spirit of resistance becomes more powerful and the act of rebellion comes into force in the following stanza. In his endnote to McKay's *Complete Poems*, editor Maxwell explains that by taking a "we" position, the speaker claims as a collective task the combating of prejudice and also underscores the traditional values of "obeah": the "system of ritual magic brought to Jamaica by Astante people of West Africa" (286). This two-way maneuver guides the people to recognize the true Jamaica. Reclaiming the magic traditions of West Africa not only counters the biased narrative that privileges Western civilization over the native but also reclaims Jamaican dignity. Magic is no longer a cult of superstitious belief but the cultural roots of the African diaspora in the Caribbean. Obeah helps the Jamaican people to reconstruct their subjectivity.

Moreover, the juxtaposition of "progress" and "back" teases out the progressive rhetoric Western colonialism employs to degrade the colonized and subverts the hierarchy between progress and regression. Progress remains a core concept in colonial discourse, foregrounding the push to civilize the native, who is regarded as inferior and primitive. The colonizers—bearing their "white man's burden," in the words of Rudyard Kipling—believe that colonialism brings to indigenous people knowledge, order, and truth. The idea of progress, empowered by the development of reason, science, and pragmatism, suggests a forward-moving direction while simultaneously devaluing the native and non-Western traditions as simple, barbaric, and unsophisticated. However, the phrase "progress back" rewrites the Western narrative that is based on prejudice. It rewinds the modern perspective on local history and redefines progress. The question of

"Whe' fe do" and its rebellious rhetoric exemplify Camus's argument about the rebel: "The rebel himself wants to be 'all'—to identify himself completely with this good of which he has suddenly become aware and by which he wants to be personally recognized and acknowledged" (15). By valuing the importance of black rituals, the Jamaican people boost their self-esteem and their sense of agency to narrate their own stories. Their rebellion does not originate from passive resentment but from their faith in defending who they are.

In the poem "King Banana," the affective tone strengthens this sense of cultural esteem. The poem delineates the history of Jamaican plantations and recognizes the value of local agricultural roots. Structured by nine rhymed quatrains, "King Banana" criticizes the colonizer's greed and simultaneously claims the Jamaican peasants' pride, which is not destroyed by the severe economic exploitation they experience:

Green mancha mek fe naygur man;
  Wha' sweet so when it roas'?
Some boil it in a big black pan,
    It sweeter in a toas'.
A buccra fancy when it ripe.
    Dem use it ebery day;
It scarcely give dem belly-gripe
    Dem eat it diffran' way. (1–8)

The first stanza of "King Banana" depicts a local cooking method of frying fruit in a pan. The narrative conveys Jamaicans' confidence in their local lifestyle: the daily "making-do" practice of cooking the banana fosters the native culture. In "'Making Do': Caribbean

Foodways and the Economics of Postcolonial Literary Culture," Lynn Marie Houston argues that "the philosophy of 'making do,' an act of creation using any available resources," shows "the economic enterprise that challenges both agricultural production in postcolonial areas and postcolonial literary production."[45] Borrowing this notion from the Jamaican sociologist Olive Senior, Houston clarifies that "making do" is not an act of producing inferior products because of a lack of high-quality resources, but, rather, an everyday practice of "bricolage." As Lévi-Strauss explicates in *The Savage Mind* (1962): "the 'bricoleur' . . . 'speaks' not only with things, as we have already seen, but also through the medium of things: giving an account of his personality and life by the choices he makes between the limited possibilities. The 'bricoleur' may not ever complete his purpose but he always puts something of himself into it" (28).[46] In other words, the making-do strategy is a signifying process that conveys the meaning and significance designated by the doer. The doer and the making-do result are mutually influential: the does is what the doer acts. For Houston, "'making do' speaks to the unique cultural and agricultural context of the Caribbean" (99).[47] In the Jamaican dialect, "mancha" means "Martinique," i.e., the very best variety of banana in Jamaica, and "roas" and "toas" are words that describe two ways in which Jamaicans cook and bake bananas. Jamaicans eat

[45] Lynn Marie Houston, "'Making Do': Caribbean Foodways and the Economics of Postcolonial Literary Culture" in *Melus* 32.4 (2007): 99-113, 99.

[46] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* 1962 (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1966).

[47] Houston claims that Caribbean women's literature reveals the exploitative reality of Caribbean export economy of agricultural products and advocates the resistant making-do tactics the Caribbean people adopt to undermine the imbalanced relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Though Houston focuses on Caribbean women's literature after World War II, her foodways scope and emphasis on the grassroots power local foodstuffs embody respond to the cultural heritage Caribbean writers have foregrounded since the early twentieth century, from McKay and Cliff to Jamaica Kincaid.

bananas when they are green; in order to taste the sweetness of the banana, they roast or toast it in their "big black pan."

As Michel de Certeau suggests in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, "humans do not nourish themselves from natural nutrients, nor from pure dietary principles, but from cultured foodstuffs, chosen and prepared according to laws of compatibility and rules of propriety unique to each cultural area" (168).[48] Certeau does not ignore the nutrition and pleasures that foodstuffs offer but, more importantly, he acknowledges that food itself is an artifact filled with value, tradition, and culture. "Green mancha" here is not simply a fruit for consumption, but more a symbolic icon shaping black Jamaicans' cultural identity. The baking method depends on "objective determinations of time and space, on the creative diversity of human groups and individuals, on the indecipherable contingency of individual microhistories" (Certeau 185). In other words, cooking the banana assembles the lived experiences of the Caribbean people, which generate from their understanding of the soil and their personal culinary practices. This "cooking-do" act differentiates the black peasants from the white colonizers: while the Jamaican eats cooked bananas, a white man, a *buccra*, only eats raw bananas when they are ripe. In *The Raw and the Cooked*, Lévi-Strauss argues that the cooking procedure signifies a process of civilization and transforms the natural into the cultural.[49] That is, cooked means developed, while raw suggests primitive. The preference of raw versus cooked bananas in the first two stanzas, however, challenges Lévi-Strauss's binary proposal: the colonized

[48] In the "Doing-Cooking" section of *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Certeau heavily relies on the food theory proposed by cultural anthropologists such as Lévi-Strauss and Mary Douglas to decode the symbolic significance inscribed in food. See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkley: U of California P, 1984).

[49] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked 1964,* trans. 1969 (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

blacks, regarded as less advanced by the white colonizers, are better able to taste the cultural significance of the banana, but the *buccras*, who only eat fresh bananas, have little knowledge of the difference between culture and nature. The everyday task of cooking bananas becomes for the Jamaicans a powerful weapon to regain their cultural identity.

McKay's use of the words "naygur" and "buccra" also marks the gap between Jamaican peasants and white men. Kotti Sree Ramesh and Kandula Nirupa Rani argue the following:

> employing of words like 'buccra' for the white man and 'naygur' for the black peasant gives a sharp edge to McKay's subversive tactics, because meaning, as Pecheus considers, does not reside in language itself (i.e., in its transparent relation to the literal character of the signifier), but linguistic meaning has a material character produced by the position of the language as a signifier in social, political, and cultural struggle. (51)

For Ramesh and Rani, "naygur" and buccra" in McKay's poems on the one hand characterize the inequality and hierarchical divisions of Jamaican society. Jamaican peasants are powerless, under the control of the colonizers. On the other hand, by using the value-loaded word "naygur" to address black Jamaicans, McKay subverts the dominant relationship between the colonizer and the colonized: "naygur" is not an offensive label (as the colonizer defines it) but is a word of self-assertion that claims Caribbean dignity. "Naygur" does not mirror the colonizer's (assumed) supremacy but is, instead, a label claimed by a self-autonomous people who own their cultural heritage. When reading this poem aloud, as Walter Jekyll suggests in the preface, the reader senses

McKay's teasing of white men's lack of knowledge of eating bananas. The first quatrain is full of "m," "n," and long-vowel sounds that slow down the pace of reading and give the reader a chance to imagine the scenarios of Jamaican daily life, including cooking, which the speaker describes. The second quatrain groups words of short length and with short vowels; this develops a sense of lightness and corresponds to the speaker's scornful tone of criticizing white men's ignorance.

The recognition of traditional slash-and-burn agriculture further challenges the banana planation economy. When smoke rises, the fire "go'p to heaben wid de nize [noise] / Of hundred t'ousan' criket" (11–12). After the soil is fired,

De black moul' lie do'n quite prepare'
Fe feel de hoe an' rake:
De fire bu'n, and it tek care
Fe mek de wo'm dem wake. (13–16)

Here the speaker indicates how fire fertilizes the land: it burns worms and weeds and nourishes the soil, reducing the amount of labor required to care for the land. Setting fire to the land creates a pattern of destruction and rebirth, as the ashes of burned worms and crops provide future crops with fertile ground. Each living organism contributes to this eco-agricultural environment— the black mound can "feel" how the hoe and rake remove dead leaves, the fire burns all, and the death of the earthworms and plants regenerates the land for the next harvest. Finally, the new banana crops feed and cultivate "naygur man." Life, harvest, and death form an everlasting and autonomous cycle, strengthening the tie between Jamaican peasants and the soil. Fire-fallow cultivation is therefore not a primitive or less-civilized practice but an organic method that balances Jamaicans'

consumption needs and the supply-capacity of the land. This agricultural heritage is natural and cultural, creates life and death, and links the people and the land.

The speaker further protests against the banana plantation economy controlled by white colonizers. Although they know nothing about the cultural and agricultural importance of bananas to the Caribbean, white men still have the power to exploit Jamaican land for profit. Beginning with the fourth quatrain, the speaker points to how white men violently change the local agricultural environment in order to create large-scale banana plantations: "Wha' lef' fe buccra teach again / Dis time about plantation?" (17–18). The speaker questions what benefits the economy of the single-crop banana plantation controlled by the colonizer can bring to Jamaican peasants. For example, the Gros Michel banana was introduced into Jamaica around 1836; it was cultivated thereafter in the Caribbean islands and Central America. Since "the Gros Michel variety grown in Jamaica and Central America is a much tougher species," and since its thicker skin "can stand for more rough handling" and avoid bruising, US dealers encouraged many Jamaican farmers to plant the Gros Michel banana.[50] The Gros Michel, therefore, was in the white colonizers' economic interests. However, it was not in the Jamaican farmers' interests. Planting a single crop like the Gros Michel in huge banana plantations decreased the diversity of the local eco-agricultural environment, rendering the soil infertile and causing the banana to be easily infected by fungal diseases. John Soluri summarizes it thusly: "Extensive systems of irrigation ditches, drains, spillways, dikes, and canals reshaped the region's hydrology. The export banana industry's invasion of space unquestionably reduced biological diversity . . . thousands of hectares of Gros

[50] Peter N. Davies, *Fyffes and the Banana: Musa Sapientum: A Century History 1888-1988* (London: The Athlone P, 1990): 83.

Michel monocultures interspersed with more biologically diverse landscape patches."[51] In "Space Invader," which explores how British colonizers transformed the agricultural landscapes of Honduras, Soluri explains that the modern farming techniques used on plantations were in fact not compatible with the ecology of the Caribbean Basin but caused disastrous consequences to the land and plants, such as Panama disease. "The image of a 'sea of bananas," which is often a scenic theme of the Caribbean in travel postcards, actually represents how local nature has been exploited to satisfy North American consumers' needs (Soluri 52).

To resist against the exploitation of the land and economy, the speaker claims that "Dere's not'in dat can beat de plain / Good old-time cultibation" (19–20). The commercially focused plantation system cannot uproot long-standing Jamaican agricultural traditions, which tie the Caribbean people to the soil and forge their codependent relationship. The recognition of this legacy is not a "plain" declaration but leads the people to draw strength from the "plain" (the land). The "good old-time cultibation" is not a naive, nostalgic yearning for the past but a "making-do" practice supporting the life of Jamaican peasants and producing their sense of cultural identity.

Banana dem fat all de same
    From bunches big an' 'trong;
Pure nine-han' bunch a car' de fame, –
    Ole met'od all along. (21–24)

By regaining his native heritage and reviving it in agricultural farming, the Jamaican can grow bananas with great shape, quality, and reputation, not secondary to those planted in

[51] John Soluri, "Space Invader" in *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, and Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States* (Austin: U of Texas P, 2005): 41-74, 52.

plantations for international trade. To encourage US consumers to buy more bananas, rather than two or three individual fingers, grocers tended to cut bunches of nine bananas and displayed hands of bananas at full price. Appropriating a marketing strategy adopted by American retailers, the speaker reasserts that old farming approaches help black peasants grow better and "pure" bananas owned by them. The word "pure" responds to McKay's repetitive use of "ole," suggesting that Caribbean dignity resides in rebelling against the colonial economic sovereignty.

In addition to criticizing the white man's capitalist banana business, the speaker further proposes that Jamaicans should stop selling bananas to these businessmen and regain the agency of securing bananas for their own use:

> We re'ch: banana finish sell;
>
> Den we' tart back fe home:
>
> Some hab money in t'read-bag well,
>
> Some spen' all in a rum. (29–32)

The collective pronoun "we" connects the speaker with the rest of Caribbean "naygur man," implying that they belong to a tight-knit Jamaican community that can resist colonial dominance. When arriving at the market, "we" sell bananas and earn money to return home. "We" can keep money in a string-tied bag or pay for rum. The speaker claims that the selling of bananas is over and that the whole exploitative process has reached its end. Now it is the time for Jamaican people to handle their precious property on their own. Now it is the time for resistance:

> Green mancha mek for naygur man
>
> It mek fe him all way

Our islan' is banana lan'

Banana car' de way. (33–36)

Here the speaker emphasizes that the banana is black Jamaicans' own treasure. Jamaican people can eat it or sell it at will. Most importantly, the speaker acknowledges the power the banana brings to Jamaicans, the power that fashions the Jamaican identity—the power of the banana to stand for Jamaicans. Jamaica is neither a country to satisfy the US demand for tropical fruits nor a place whose agricultural traditions are negated. In "King Banana," through teasing white men's incomprehension about eating bananas and questioning the businessmen's economic motivations, the speaker turns the hierarchical relationship between the colonizer and the colonized upside down. Moreover, by taking a defiant attitude toward the banana plantation system, black Jamaicans earn a chance to claim the banana as their mainstay, not the commodity subject to the transnational trade. Jamaicans rebel, therefore they exist.

Conclusion

This chapter analyzes the dynamic Caribbean-US relationship of tourism and literary production within a network of cultural, colonial, and affective routes/roots. The transnational banana trade nourished the rise of Caribbean tourism and exemplifies how US colonial imperialism wields influence and control over the West Indies. McKay's sonnets and dialectic poems and Cliff's short story further portray the racial tension the diasporic Caribbean writers confronted in the northern metropolises, and the resistance Jamaicans can deploy to colonization. A foodways perspective positions the banana as a cultural artifact with multiple identities—as an international commodity, as an icon of

nostalgic attachment, and as symbol of cultural dignity. Affect studies, meanwhile, demonstrate how feelings reveal the loss suffered by the diasporic Caribbean. This loss thus becomes the Jamaican farmers' foundation for regaining their identity.

CHAPTER IV

"BANANAS IS MY BUSINESS"[1]: FROM JOSEPHINE BAKER'S BANANA SKIRT TO MISS CHIQUITA'S TUTTI FRUTTI HAT

In this chapter, I analyze the stage costumes, performances, and personae of three iconic women whose costumes incorporated bananas, and I interrogate their implicit racial and gender messages. The choice for these women to wear bananas in performances for white American and European audiences invites questions about the banana trade, the humans who harvest the fruit, and the reason why the fruit adds exoticism and sexuality to an outfit. The first subject of this chapter, Josephine Baker, famously wore a banana skirt in her *La Folie du Jour* performances in Paris's Folies Bergère music hall in the 1920s. The second subject of this chapter, Carmen Miranda, the "Brazilian Bombshell," sang and danced wearing a fruit-laden turban in the film *The Gang's All Here* (1943).[2] Finally, this chapter's third subject, the cartoon corporate mascot for the United Fruit Company, "Miss Chiquita," created in 1944, conjures Miranda in her costume and gestures, reinforcing the association between tropical femininity and bananas. The performances of these women—some of which included near-nudity, and three all of which triggered stereotypes about Latin American female sexuality—certainly brought pleasure to audiences, but I will consider what affect theory suggests about how voyeuristic pleasure challenges power dynamics and can invest

[1] The chapter title alludes to the documentary film *Carmen Miranda: Bananas Is My Business*, dir. Helen Solberg (International Cinema, Inc., 1995).

[2] *The Gang's All Here*, dir. Busby Berkeley (Twentieth Century Fox, 1943).

performers with agency.[3] Additionally, I will explore the ways in which the choice to incorporate bananas into stage costumes did contribute to exoticizing the Other, while also helping challenge American and European audiences' understanding of the divide between the elite self and the tropical Other and between representations of people of color in American popular films.

The Banana Skirt as Josephine Baker's Second Skin

As a young jazz-era performer in Paris, Josephine Baker came to fame as the lead performer in a troupe of African-American dancers and musicians from Harlem who created shows collectively called *La Revue Nègre* at the Théâtre des Champs Élysées, and afterwards her own show, *La Revue du Jour* at the Folies Bergère music hall. Baker mesmerized Parisian audiences with her flexible, versatile black body and sexuality and helped inspire *le tumulte noir*—the "black craze" in Paris. Her caramel-colored skin, curvaceous body, rolling eyes, big smile, and sensational postures made her a spectacle on the stage. This performing style continued the convention of blackface minstrelsy, in which performers offered "selected aspect of (arguable) African American culture to audiences" and in which "racial differences and enslavement reinforce distinctions between black and white Americans."[4] Baker's famous skirt made of plastic bananas, symbolizing an exotic commodity, animated Parisians' fantasies of savagery, but also became a tactic for parodying the colonial myth of female primitivism and exoticized, exaggerated sexuality. Baker's dance in her banana costume, I argue, does not simply

[3] See Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion.*

[4] William J. Mahar, *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Popular Culture* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1999): 1.

continue the colonial imaginary but also employs the pleasures of both dancing and watching in order to rewrite the relationship of the gaze between Baker and the audience. As Ahmed argues in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, "pleasure opens bodies to worlds through an opening up of the body to others" (164). Ahmed argues that the use of queer pleasure can "challenge social norms, as forms of investment" because "the display of enjoyment and pleasure" means "a form of aggression; as a declaration of 'We are here'" (164). Though Ahmed's pleasure theory does not directly relate to the colonial contexts this chapter discusses, her emphasis on how queer pleasure changes the unequal relations between heterosexuality and queer sexuality offers a theoretical basis on which to analyze the agency that Baker, Miranda, and Miss Chiquita demonstrate in their performances. Baker's dancing aligned her body with the imperial imagination of the primitive, but it also required Parisian audiences to redefine what her body represented to them.

Baker built a successful career through various performances, from blackface minstrelsy to dancing the Charleston and other, "primitive" dances. Born in St. Louis in 1906, Baker learned dances and steps from her neighbors. After leaving home at age fourteen, she performed with the Dixie Steppers, a traveling group performing in St. Louis. The blues singer Clara Smith gave Baker a job as her dresser, which earned Baker nine dollars a week. Baker traveled from New Orleans to Philadelphia with the Dixie Steppers to start her stage career.[5] In New York City Baker performed in the show *Shuffle Along*, which "choreograph[ed] dances that had originated in the traditional or contemporary African-American culture and adapt[ed] them for musicals," and The Chocolate Dandies, in which "she was a ragamuffin in blackface wearing bright cotton

[5] Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Karen C. C. Dalton, Introduction, *Josephine Baker and La Revue Nègre: Paul Colin's Lithographs of Le Tumulte Noir in Paris* (New York: H. M. Abrams, 1998): 5.

smocks and clown shoes" (Gates and Dalton 5, 6). Baker's dances, including the comedic Charleston that she performed between 1921 and 1925, became the sensation of Paris. In 1925, Caroline Dudley Reagan wanted to give Parisian audiences a revue of "authentic" black dance and music. Calling it "Le Revue Nègre," she had already recruited some dancers and musicians before hiring Baker as a lead performer responsible for dancing, singing, and comic shows (Gates and Dalton 6).

Baker's debut at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in October 1925 surprised the Parisian audience crowded into the music hall. In "Danse sauvage" (fig. 3.1), Baker, as the character Fatou, and Joe Alex, a Martinican performer, debuted a most shocking and sensational performance. Both Baker and Alex were almost naked and wore only bracelets on their ankles and wrists, bead necklaces, and feathers on their heads.

Figure 3.1 Photograph of Josephine Baker and Joe Alex in "Danse sauvage," Paris, 1925[6]

[6] This photograph is reproduced in Mae G. Henderson, *Speaking in Tongues and Dancing Diaspora: Black Women Writing and Performing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 190.

While Alex half squatted down to support Baker, Baker's back arched more than 180 degrees over Alex's body, with her right leg uplifted like a phallic symbol. While Alex looked to the side, Baker smiled at the audience, indicating her enjoyment in the moment. The bodies on the stage represented an ethnographic spectacle: the posturing of Alex's and Baker's bodies recalled an African sculpture familiar to French audiences in the 1920s, but animated in a performance. Their nude bodies suggested wildness, unconstrained force, and overt sexuality. As Mae G. Henderson argues, the shining ebony skin, exaggerated movement, and trance the performers demonstrated "conform[ed] to a French aesthetics of Africanity" and "was, in fact, fashioned largely according to French notions of what constituted 'authentic' blackness, synonymous with French notions of primitivism."[7] Henderson indicates that the African characteristics performed in "Danse sauvage" mirrored the French's imaginary of the primitive. Further, the Parisian audience believed that the represented savagery—based on their imaginings of the African Other—embodied an authentic blackness. The observations of Paul Colin, the French graphic artist commissioned to create the poster for *La Revue Nègre*, and Baker's one-time lover and long-time friend, explains how Baker constructed the exotic Other in her performances:

> Harlem was invading the Champs-Élysées Theatre. Leaping onto the stage like children at play, the troupe broke out into a frenzied tap-dance. With bright-coloured neckties, dotted pants, suspenders, cameras, binoculars and green- and red-laced boots, who needed costumes? What style . . . from our seats in the hall, Rolf de Maré, the theatre manager, André Daven, the director, and I sat gaping at

[7] Henderson, *Speaking in Tongues and Dancing Diaspora*, 189.

the stage. The contortions and cries, their sporty perky breasts and buttocks, the brilliant coloured cottons, the Charleston, were all brand new to Europe.[8]

Colin's descriptions of Baker's dance reflect, I believe, his racialized and colonialist perspective. In Colin's eyes, the uncontrolled child-like—or animal-like—performers belonged to a category of beings whose biological evolution had slowed. These dancers performed as if they were savages who needed no clothes and were simply demonstrating their uncivilized instincts and wildness on the stage, in public. Baker's dance reminded Colin, and by extension the white Parisian audience, of the savage's calling from the jungle—except that these dancers were savages brought from Harlem, a place famous for American jazz and a black renaissance, to Paris, the City of Light famous for its embrace of pleasure and hedonism.

Colin's colonialist perspectives on the black (female) body reflect how colonial expansion, fueled with the discourse of modernity, justifies the construction of the female Other as the exotic.[9] Henderson argues that the romanticizing of the black body as the primitive is intertwined with "the context of a series of World's Fairs, ethnographic exhibitions, and colonial expositions occurring in France, mainly Paris, roughly between the years 1867 and 1937" (177). Beginning in the late nineteenth century, French colonial expositions of primitive peoples supported the discourse of modernity endorsed by Europeans: Compared to those native people, the French—promoters of science,

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[8] Qtd. in Petrine Archer-Straw, "L'art Jazz and the Black Bottom" in *Negrophilia: Avant-Garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000): 106-34, 117.

[9] As Ahmed, Gilroy (1-40), Henderson (178-98), Raiskin (51-64), and other modernist critics have argued, the construction and racialization of the Other based on Enlightenment theory actually consolidates and legitimizes the expansion of modernity, colonialism, and imperialism. This approach can explain how Baker's and Miranda's bodies are represented as the exotic Other (from less developed countries/peoples) in different national and colonial contexts (that are judged comparatively progressive). The colonizer also associates race with sex to ensure that people of color are essentialized as hypersexual and feminine.

rationality, and modernity—are a superior and progressive culture. The contrast of the Eiffel Tower—the summit of science, knowledge, and technology—at the 1889 Paris Exposition Universelle juxtaposed with the reconstruction of "primitive" African villages symbolized—and highlighted the differences between—the progressive and the less developed (Henderson 178). Further, Henderson contends, according to the conventions of ethnographic photography since the late nineteenth century, "the kinesthetically staged—or dancing—black body, in particular, was linked to notions of the primitive" (181). In other words, ethnographic photography strengthened the affinity between the black body and primitivism. Some anthropologists or ethnologists regard dance as a cultural tradition and an important medium for expressing creativity for native peoples. However, this observation presupposes that the primitive is linked with dance culture. Once the primitive has been defined as "uncivilized" in the colonial context, the equation of the primitive to dance culture and the black body becomes a strongly biased presumption, designating black people as barbarians fond of sensuality, primal pleasure, and wildness.

Parisian audiences remained fascinated with the hypersexualized and racialized representation of Baker's body. Baker's dance with *La Revue Nègre* brought her stardom and success. In 1926, Baker received an offer to perform *La Folie du Jour* (the madness of the day) at La Revue Folies-Bergère. In a photograph by Lucien Waléry, an almost-naked, smiling Baker wears only gold bracelets on her arms, large necklaces around her neck and chest, and a skirt composed of banana leaves. As Baker stretches her lithe body, erotically arching her hip, her skirt becomes even more seductive, triggering associations with the exotic for the white Parisian audience. Oversized banana leaves hang from the

top and right side of the stage, creating a tunnel-vision effect that leads the audience to an image of the tropical landscape of swamp, rainforest, and primitive people sitting or hiding in the jungle (see Fig. 3.2):

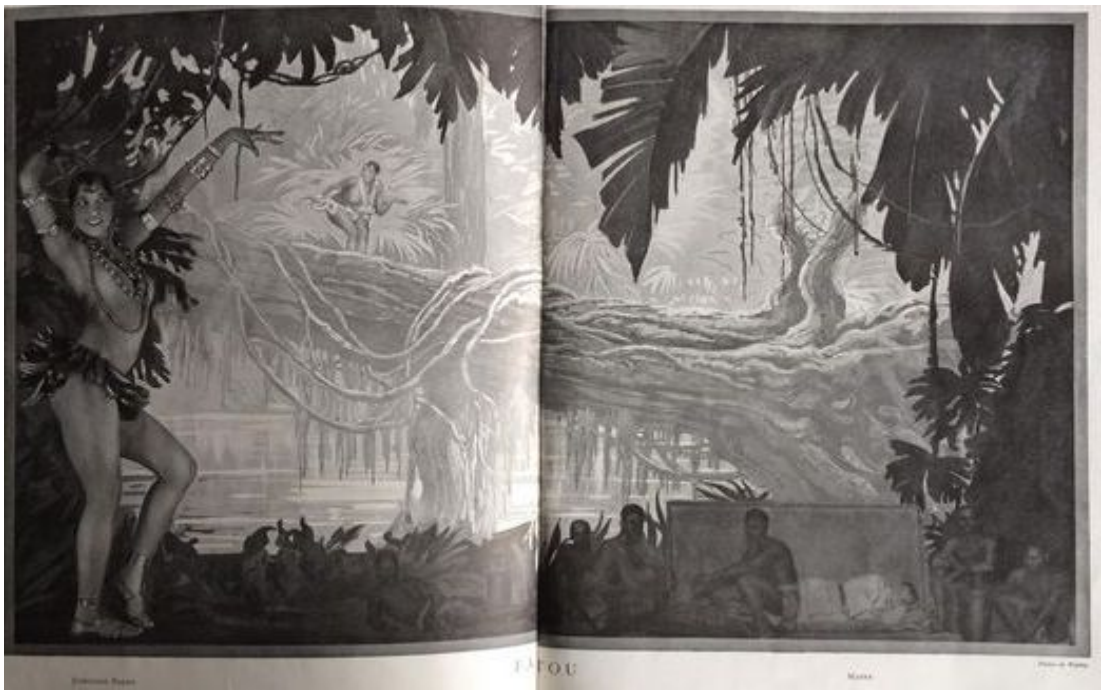

Figure 3.2 The program of La Revue des Folies-Bergère, "La Folie du Jour," ***Quatrième Album 1926-1927*****, Éditions Artistiques de Paris, 1926.**

The miniature image of Baker in an erotic posture, wearing her banana skirt, standing on the tree limb, seemingly growing out of a grove of banana leaves, accentuates her link with dark Africa, with the primitive, and with the raw materials that make possible the banana trade. In other words, Baker's stage performance exoticized by her banana skirt actualizes and accommodates white Parisians' fantasies of primitive innocence, uncivilized sexuality, and colonial domination. At the bottom of the image, a man wearing a white safari jacket and pants lies next to a group of naked men. This scenario not only reconstructs the history of white men's exploration and adventure in Africa but

also mirrors the division between savagery and civilization. While the nudity of the black men's bodies epitomizes the primitive, the clean, white clothes of the white man signal culture. This contrast between jungle and modernity aligns with the feelings of white superiority that have historically been marshaled to dehumanize African people (Henderson 189). Moreover, Baker is an African-American dancer from the New World. Baker, as herself a transatlantic commodity, acts as if she is a banana waiting to be peeled and consumed. By pairing hypersexual Baker with enduring images of colonialism, the French attitudes toward black people of Africa "alleviate white racial anxieties" (Henderson 186). The exoticized Other bolsters colonial myths about the primitive and the progressive.

Though Baker's sexualized femininity exemplified the French concept of the erotic Other, the irony and agency embedded in her performance challenged the dominant relationship between the viewer and the viewed. The notion of "métissage, in which she [Baker] combined a performance of the erotic with elements of the parodic," explains Baker's mocking of the constructed roles and sexuality (Henderson 190). Henderson contends that Baker's exaggerated sensual postures and docile body parody the biases of racialized sexuality. The interaction between Baker and the musicians, who increased the tempo of their songs to align with Baker's dance, intensifies the effect of Baker's mimicking performance. For Henderson, the irony and parody Baker exposes in her dance shift her from the position of passivity to that of agency. Anne Cheng agrees that Baker's performances reverse the imbalanced power dynamics; however, she focuses on how the representation of Baker's skin, a shining and seamless surface often reproduced in pamphlets, postcards, and photographs in the 1920s, changes how the audience sees

her body.[10] In most critical analyses, Baker's nudity is associated with the primitive.[11] However, Cheng claims that Baker's "nakedness never stands alone. Instead, frequently it seems to rely on and materially echo other epidermis, both natural and inorganic. In short, with Baker, being unveiled often also means being covered over" (8). Cheng isolates Baker's nudity from her body as if her nakedness was a garment Baker could put on or take off. Baker's nakedness, her "second skin," as Cheng calls it in her book of that title, disassociates from the material substance of her body and becomes an emblematic signifier bearing the colonial myth and the audience's voyeuristic desires. Applying the notion of surface from modern architectural theory to her analysis of Baker's nudity, Cheng contends that Baker's theatrical success "actually relied on the layered conflation of concealment and exposure, of essence and performance, of flesh and skin."[12] The striptease scene in *Princesse Tam Tam* (1935) exemplifies Cheng's argument of how Baker's skin became a fetish for Parisians and simultaneously fashioned her agency.[13] In this film, Baker plays Alwina, a Tunisian girl educated by a (white) French writer in order to be introduced as African royalty to Parisian high society. When Alwina enters a cabaret and sees the fabulous performance, she can't help but run to the stage, remove her high-heeled shoes, and begin a sensational striptease. Dancing with exaggerated erotic

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[10] See the chapter "What Bananas Say" in Anne Anlin Cheng, *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface* (New York: Oxford UP, 2011): 35-48.

[11] Most critiques of Baker's stage performances analyze the relation between nakedness and savagery. See, for example, Sieglinde Lemke, "The Black Body"; Pertrine Archer-Straw, *Negrophilia*; Samir Dayal, "Blackness as Symptom: Josephine Baker and European Identity" in *Blackening Europe: The African American Presence*, ed. Heike Raphael-Hernandez (New York: Routledge, 2012: 35-52); and Terri Francis, "Embodied Fictions, Melancholy Migrations: Josephine Baker's Cinematic Celebrity" in *MFS* 51.4 (2005): 824-45.

[12] Cheng, "Skin Fashion: Josephine Baker and Dressing Race" in *Journal of Contemporary African Art* 37 (2015): 6-15, 9.

[13] *Princesse Tam Tam*, dir. Edmond T. Greville (Arys Production, 1935).

movements, Alwina takes off her gold lamé dress. As Cheng asks: If the Parisian audience already knows Baker is a black female performer, then "what exactly is it that is being exposed?" (9). In an intriguing twist, a full-length black evening gown covers Baker's body after she removes her shining dress. If the Parisian audience expects to see Baker's naked body fulfill the desire of (symbolic) penetration, then what they see is not what they get. The audience sees a dancing body performing on the stage but what "the body offers itself not as depth or flesh, but as mobile outline, or at the most, another costume" (12). That is to say, the black gown in *Princesse Tam Tam* is a metaphor that exposes the hollowness of the colonial obsession with an exotic body. While the voyeurs gain their visual pleasure from viewing a naked female body as if they were peeling the banana, the dancing Baker undresses the silken and seamless skin/clothes, in which the materiality of her body is absent, to refute the voyeur's sexualization of her body. At this moment, when the audience realizes the gap between what they want and what they get is the point when Baker demonstrates her potency of manipulating the audience's desires.

Both Henderson's and Cheng's arguments reevaluate the agency embedded in Baker's performances; their observations, however, overlook the cultural significance and challenge to the socio-economic status quo that Baker's banana skirt brings to her dance. Henderson sees a creative collaboration between Baker and the other cabaret performers that explains why mimicry and the ironic exaggeration of tropes they employ issues a powerful challenge to colonial imperialism. Cheng's analysis of the abstraction of Baker's skin considers how her skin can be divorced from the corporeal body and how it can translate her body into an abstract representation. If Baker's skin and active stage collaboration can be strategies with which to unsettle imperial imaginaries of an exotic

Other, why cannot Baker's banana skirt act as a powerful medium to uncover the complicated relationships between visibility and invisibility, visual pleasure and resistance, and exploitation and diaspora? Cheng's interpretation of Baker's skin as surface proposes an aesthetic reexamination of the divide between depth and surface. This theoretical move distances her from the long-running debate on the entanglement of essentialism, primitivism, and modernism. In her argument about Baker's nakedness, Cheng's theoretical assumption is that "modernism and primitivism are identical" ("Skin Fashion" 14). That is, white modernism and primitivism are instrumental in shaping each other's aesthetic and artistic expressions. Negrophiles of the 1920s admired the vitality, passion, and sexuality in black culture, and they regarded blackness, in its confrontation of traditional values, as a manifestation of modernity. At the same time, black people felt recognized, since their culture and aesthetics were being admired and appreciated by whites. In Paris, in the 1920s, whites and blacks seemed to be equal. This position, however, failed to address the intrinsic racism, Eurocentrism, and cultural colonialism that European colonizers applied to black people. Henderson urges caution in studying the primitive modernism popular in European intellectual and cultural circles in the early twentieth century: "Aligned to this embodiment of primitive modernism, the popular obsession with the dancing ethnic body was complicated by contemporary ethnographic and anthropological associations linking dance, 'race,' and primitivism" (181).

When discussing how imperialism—which happened far away from the daily life of the motherland—engaged in modernism, Fredric Jameson suggests that "the structure of imperialism also makes its mark on the inner forms and structures of that new mutation in literary and artistic language to which the term 'modernism' is loosely

applied."[14] For Jameson, the way that imperialism is represented in modernism is no longer "the relationship of metropolis to colony" but, rather, a certain "imperial type" that "turns inward, towards the internal metropolitan reality" (155, 163). The imperial types, according to Jameson's reading of modernist novels, are portrayed through the depiction of space, such as maps in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and the representation of infinity of time and landscape in Mrs. Munt's train journey in E. M. Forster's *Howards End* (1910).[15] For Jameson, both imperialism and modernism have been involved in a conspiracy in which a set of tropes and vocabularies obscure the relationship between modernism and imperialism and internalize the imperial discourse in modernist artistic expressions. In other words, reinventing a negative notion like primitivism as modern or rebellious ignores the colonial context shaping the dichotomy and perpetuates the Manichaean logic that defines the self as enlightened and the Other as dark.

If the environment of cultural production in Paris in the 1920s was intertwined with the history of colonizing Africa and progressive discourse, can Baker's banana skirt—which not only represents the diasporic journeys of both Baker and the banana but is also colored with colonial sexual imagery—empower her to denounce the white colonizer's exoticization of her body? Once again, I turn to Sara Ahmed, who examines how emotions "shape the very surfaces of bodies, which take shape through the repetition of actions over time, as well as through orientations towards and away from others."[16] Ahmed contends that emotion, which is no less a force than the faculties of cognition and

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[14] Frederic Jameson, "Modernism and Imperialism" in *The Modernist Papers* (London: Verso, 2007): 152-69, 152.

[15] E. M. Forster, *Howards End* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998).

[16] Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 4.

rationality, actually constructs representations of bodies when the subject is confronted by an object. In other words, emotion is not a secondary reaction caused by objects but, rather, is "shaped by contact with objects" (7). Emotion is thus involved in a two-way circulation:

> What moves us, what makes us feel, is also that which holds us in place, or gives us a dwelling place. Hence movement does not cut the body off from the "where" of its inhabitance, but connects bodies to other bodies: attachment takes place through movement, through being moved by the proximity of others. (11)

In her theoretical understanding, Ahmed emphasizes what emotions can do rather than what emotions are. The conception of emotion as something that both moves us and anchors our attachment to others suggests that emotion is not an attribute belonging most prominently to certain categories of people, e.g., women and people of color, who might be considered less evolved. Emotion, for Ahmed, shapes relational connections between subject and object based on the contact of both sides; it shifts the relations of power.

Ahmed's affect theory of emotion offers a critical lens with which to interpret how Baker disrupted the power structure by inciting the emotions of her Parisian audience. Baker's banana skirt serves as a catalyst for challenging the categories of "primitive" and "civilized." The banana, like other raw materials—such as rum, tobacco, and sugar—reminds the white Parisian audience of their own tendency to project their desires for consumption onto these "exotic" colonial commodities. The "raw" quality of the banana also resonates with the rawness of Baker's uncovered black body and her untamed sexuality. For the white Parisian audience, Baker's naked body and arching hip reify the colonizer's fantasy of taming a subjected black female. Just as they enjoy

consuming bananas, so the Parisian spectators relish their appetite for Baker's body. As Francis argues, "In a sense Baker became the banana belt, a commodification of natural talent or raw material; she was a product of the Empire" (837). In fact, Baker understood that the stage costume and the gaze of her spectators was exploitative of her black, female body and sexuality. About her performance as Fatou in "Danse sauvage," Baker said, "In this revue, they had the idea to dress me with a belt of bananas. Oh, how people ridiculed this idea! And how many drawings and caricatures came out of it. Only the devil, supposedly, could have invented such a thing."[17] While dancing in her banana skirt on the stage, Baker knew that she was viewed as a transnational commodity inscribed with colonialists' fantasies. However, even while reinforcing imperial myths that configure a black woman in a banana belt as erotic and exotic, Baker still subverted this exploitative relationship through her dynamic dancing. When Baker danced, her banana belt would swing back and forth. Her waist and hips—already a sexually arousing erogenous zone, were bedecked with bananas, fetishized loci that reflected the fantasies her white audience members had of an erotic Other. She would dance for them, they would gaze at her, and in this dancing-gazing moment, emotions rewrote the asymmetrical relationship between audience and performer. Obsessed with or entranced by Baker's eroticized nudity and the bananas around her waist, the audience feels the sensuality of her performance. Meanwhile, as Baker presents herself as a transnational exotic commodity, she dances toward the audience, teasing their racial and sexual fantasies and expectations. Emotions that circulate through signifiers—such as nakedness, the bananas, and the hypersexual dancing body—build what Ahmed calls an "affective economy" in which

[17] Jean-Claude Baker and Chris Chase, *Josephine: The Hungry Heart* (New York: Random House, 1993), 135.

"signs increase in affective value as an effect of the movement between signs: the more signs circulate, the more affective they become" (Ahmed 45). Through her dancing, Baker established agency by offering what the spectator craves and, simultaneously, manipulating the spectator's voyeuristic desires.

Alicja Sowinska is also attentive to the ambiguities at work in Baker's self presentation. Baker's dance, she argues, is a unification of "action and objectification, fear and excitement, sending a message of resistance and agency while simultaneously challenging her audience."[18] In other words, although Baker's racialized and sexualized performance with her banana skirt responds to the white audience's colonialist fantasy of savagery and exoticness, her audacious dancing and her appropriation of the symbolism of the banana produce affective capital that unsettles the power relation. When Baker's manager, Pepito Abatino, wore Baker's banana skirt and imitated her dance, Baker reprimanded him for this parody, saying, "Pepito, you should not mock the tools of my work" (Baker and Chase 173). For Baker, the banana belt was not a mere exotic/erotic costume to satisfy the white audience's cravings for visual consumption and exploitation but, rather, an empowered weapon for upending a hierarchy between the spectator and the gazed-upon black female. The exotic becomes a vehicle for overturning distinctions between self and other, between agency and passivity.

The cabaret culture of the 1920s provided Baker a space in which she could destabilize stereotypes. In challenging racialized images, Baker found empowerment in jazz music and in other new performative modes that cabaret introduced to Europeans. Jazz developed out of American black culture, while classical music was a legacy of

[18] Alicja Sowinska, "Dialectics of the Banana Skirt: The Ambiguities of Josephine Baker's Self-Representation," *MFS* 19 (2005-2006): 51-72.

European white culture. Jazz features a polyrhythmic style, equal measures of strong and weak beats, and an emphasis on improvisation. In his 1925 article "Jazz at Home," Joel A. Rogers contends that "jazz has absorbed the national spirit, that tremendous spirit of go, the nervousness, lack of conventionality and boisterous good nature characteristic of the American, white or black, as compared with the rigid formal nature of the Englishman or German."[19] For Rogers, jazz is a national music form fashioned by American particularities and localities. Unlike European classical music, which emphasizes harmony, polyrhythmic jazz demonstrates how different elements that seem to be discordant, such as beats, sounds, rhythm, and individual voices, can be assembled to create an innovative music style. Cabaret was another new form of mass entertainment that combined music, dance, song, and drama. While watching the performance, the audience dances, drinks, talks, and smokes—without caring much about social conventions. This setting allows the audience to interact with the performers and blurs the boundaries between performers and spectators.

These unconventional performance modes offered Baker the possibility of challenging the spectator's fantasies. When Baker smiled and swung her banana skirt, the audience was invited into a realm where excitement and anxiety are intertwined. Baker's performance, as an experimental mixture of comedy, singing, dancing, and audience participation, positioned the spectator in a space where bewilderment arises and where the intellectual faculty disappears. As Jazz musicians tossed off notes of a song to match with Baker's virtuoso dance, "They [Baker and the musicians] laugh[ed] continuously" (Henderson 190). Pleasure is a crucial register in Ahmed's affect theory. As Ahmed

[19] Joel A. Rogers, "Jazz at Home" in *Survey Graphic* 6.6. (1925): 665-667, 666.

argues, pleasure can "work to challenge social norms" and "the publicness of pleasure can function as a form of aggression: as a declaration of 'We are here.'. . . Spaces are claimed through enjoyment, an enjoyment that is returned by being witnessed by others" (164–65). Ahmed claims that when pleasure is publicly expressed, not only does it destabilize social conventions but it also generates a sense of sovereignty over spaces. Baker's stage pleasure transformed the cabaret into a space where she could demonstrate her ability to manipulate the audience's voyeuristic desires through her parody of their cultural fantasies. Within this space full of heterogeneity and confusion, the hierarchical divisions—between the audience and the performer, the colonizer and the colonized, the civilized and the savage—collapse and are even subverted. Baker's banana skirt invalidates the white audience's myth of an African-American female as primitive and exotic. Baker, a foreign performer regarded as a spectacle, returns the exploitative gaze and claims her agency through her mastery of the audience's emotions.

Baker's performative pleasure and radiant stardom transformed the stereotype of the black female as primitive or savage into a cultural novelty. She was able to accomplish this in part because she was a light-skinned black woman. In the anthology of essays, poetry, and prose about the black experience that she edited and published, Nancy Cunard asks the following about Baker: "Is it a youth, is it a girl? . . . She seems to whiten as we gaze at her" (329).[20] And as she danced, Baker formed formed her body into a series of shapes without sharp angles. Within the world of the cabaret and jazz music, Baker's body transcended the binary of savagery and civilization to construct a

[20] Nancy Cunard and Hugh Food, eds., *Negro: An Anthology* (New York: Continuum, 1996).

performative mode that redefined the white audience's understanding of what it meant to be black.

Baker's modern aesthetic was a combination of mass entertainment and the early twentieth-century artistic movements of cubism and art deco. Colin's lithograph (fig. 3.3) of Baker in her banana skirt costume reflects Baker's artistic impact:

Figure 3.3 Paul Colin, lithograph of Josephine Baker, reproduced in *Josephine Baker and La Revue Nègre: Paul Colin's Lithographs of Le Tumulte Noir in Paris*, 1927 (New York Harry N. Abrams, 1997).

Her body is elongated and her skin is painted light brown. Compared to the many paintings in the Western tradition of the reclined female nude facing the spectator, in this lithograph, Baker's dynamic, dancing body is turned away from the audience, suggesting her resistance to voyeuristic control, and she moves her body without regard to audience.[21] In the artist's rendering, the banana skirt becomes an artistic decoration whose bright yellow color is attention catching. The fresh bananas are unexpected as a stage costume, and on a work of art, they are surprisingly animated—as opposed to the bananas in still-life paintings of the Western tradition. Though Colin's representation of Baker's body with the banana skirt still hints at the primitive and the exotic, his composition presents Baker as an artistic and cultural force of novelty and modernity. Baker is a black Venus, using her volatile body to translate primordial joy. She is a Black muse, creating a new vocabulary of art that blends the modern with the savage, the nude, and the tropical.

The Banana Turban as Carmen Miranda's Signature Look

While Baker's banana skirt was captivating Parisian audiences, Carmen Miranda was making a splash in the US and in her native Brazil. Her trademark baiana outfit, fruit-laden turban, and samba dance made her a cultural icon, and she was called the "Brazilian bombshell" in America. Miranda consciously fashioned herself as a Brazilian national performer and she was able to suture racial and class divisions. From the 1920s to the 1940s, the height of her Hollywood fame, Miranda's Brazilian attributes were considered synonymous with Latin America and helped facilitate the US's "Good

[21] When I compare Colin's representation of Baker's body and the conventions of the female nude in Western painting, my reading of the visual dominance of the spectator over the object of the gaze is based on John Berger's analysis in *Ways of Seeing* (New York: Penguin, 1972).

Neighbor Policy." This policy stressed that the US would not interfere in Latin America's domestic affairs but would be a "good neighbor." The discourse of the Good Neighbor Policy was able to exploit Miranda's Brazilian roots to support continued US economic and political dominance over Latin America. The iconic image of Miranda dancing with raw fruits while wearing a fruit-laden turban, such as in the film *The Gang's All Here*, reveals how Hollywood fabricated a complicated image of a Latina performer who unwittingly contributed to the imbalanced power dynamic between the US and Latin America.

Carmen Miranda was born in Portugal in 1909. Her family immigrated to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where her father opened a barbershop. Miranda's first name, Carmen, came from her father's love of Georges Bizet's 1875 opera. Set in Seville, Spain, the opera tells the tragic love story of the Gypsy girl Carmen, who, in popular culture, was exoticized as a trope of the young and passionate female. The very name Carmen, therefore, connoted exoticism and that fact imbued Miranda's stage performances with romantic imaginings. Growing up in the small Lapa district of Rio, Miranda demonstrated her love and talent for music in the school choir. In a 1933 interview, Miranda stated her passion for singing and stage performance: "I wanted to sing and to perform on the stage. . . . I had what it takes to be an artist . . . and when I was on the stage, being in the presence of so many people, I felt in my element!"[22] Though Miranda had a gift for performing, economic hardship forced to give up her formal education when she was fourteen. After working in a boutique and making and selling hats,

[22] Martha Gil-Montero, *Brazilian Bombshell: The Biography of Carmen Miranda* (New York: Penguin, 1989).

Miranda debuted in local radio and film productions in 1926. In 1928 Josué de Barros, a prolific and gifted Bahia composer, discovered Miranda and was moved by the outburst of powerful feelings in her singing. While Miranda sang "with a voice impregnated with grief and anguish," de Barros "could not help but imagine her singing our [Brazilian] music, our samba, our moving, sensual Brazilian music" (Gil-Montero 21). For de Barros, Miranda's vocal characteristics perhaps reminded him of the impoverished lives of many Bahian people and of the Portuguese musical genre *fado*, whose lyrics focus on the life of the poor.[23] Her voice also communicated her unaffected passion. Moreover, Miranda's signature style—her singing with a smile, excessive timbre, and perfect control of rhythm—accentuated her theatricality. The lively staging of her performance and de Barros's promotion of her to a radio festival in 1929 helped Miranda become a radio star and earned her a contract from a radio station, Radio Mayrick Viega.[24] Miranda established her stage popularity with her recording of "Pra Você Gostar de Mim" (So You'll Like Me), the top hit of 1930.[25]. In 1933, as the "Ambassador do Samba," Miranda toured Argentina, and in 1934 she was elected "Queen of Broadcasting in Rio de Janeiro" in a newspaper competition (Shaw 13).

Miranda also starred in Brazilian films. She and her sister Aurora starred in *Alô, alô, carnaval!* (*Hello, hello, carnival!*, 1936) and sang a famous march, "Cantoras do

[23] Miranda's split between her Portuguese nationality and her identification as a Brazilian cultural icon who played Brazilian characters in Hollywood films demonstrate the influence that 1930s Brazilian nationalism exerted on her performance career. When Miranda was in Brazil, she acted as a pop star, crossing racial and class boundaries from the white bourgeois to the Afro-Brazilian groups. In Hollywood musicals, she performed as a symbol of Latin heat, in which South America was imagined as a homogeneous space.

[24] Darién J. Davis, "Racial Parity and National Humor: Exploring Brazilian Samba from Noel Rosa to Carmen Miranda, 1930-1939" in *Latin American Popular Culture: An Introduction*, ed. William H. Beezley and Linda Ann Curcio (Wilmington: SR Books, 2000): 183-200, 188.

[25] Lisa Shaw, *The Social History of the Brazilian Samba* (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1999), 12.

rádio" (radio signers) together. *Banana da terra* (*Banana of the Land*, 1939) earned Miranda a Broadway contract from theater owner Lee Schubert because of her *baiana* performance. Her singing of "O que é que a baiana tem?" (What is it about the *baiana*?) and her *baiana* look "launch[ed] her international career as the embodiment of a pan-Latin American identity."[26] In the mid-1930s, Miranda won national fame as the most popular female singer and performer in Brazil.

Samba and the *baiana* costume were two main cultural artifacts Miranda employed to represent Brazilian identity. The *baiana* dress represents everything from working-class Bahia people to female Afro-Brazilian street vendors, and this diversity endows the outfit with a quality of cultural inclusiveness. Located at the northeast side of Brazil, Salvador, the capital city of the state of Bahia, was a major city during the slave trade. Afro-Bahian women often wear the *baiana* dress, which "includes a wide hooped skirt of varied colors; a loose-fitting white cotton or silk blouse trimmed with wide lace; a heavy, striped cotton cloth worn over the shoulder or around the waist; a cotton or silk turban; strapless, low-heeled sandals; and numerous necklaces and bracelets of coral, cowries, or glass beads"[27] (Bishop-Sanchez 15). The female Afro-Brazilian food and fruit vendors also wore this traditional clothing when conducting business in the street. Therefore, the *baiana* dress was generally regarded as a typical representation of Afro-Brazilian women of the lower class. A consistent migration from Bahia to Rio starting from the late nineteenth century also made the *baiana* costume visible in the big city. In the 1920s, *baiana* representations were popular in carnival films, theaters, and casino

[26] Lisa Shaw and Stephanie Dennison, eds. *Latin American Cinema: Essays on Modernity, Gender, and National Identity* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2005), 52.

[27] Kathryn Bishop-Sanchez, *Creating Carmen Miranda: Race, Camp, and Transnational Stardom* (Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 2016), 15.

shows, which emphasized "the figure as a typical seasonal costume for a national public and a synecdoche for Brazilian folklore for the benefit of foreign tourists" (Bishop-Sanchez 16). Here the force of cultural reproduction elevated the *baiana* dress from a regional tradition to a national trend. Moreover, in the early 1930s, gay men appropriated the *baiana* dress and redesigned it with sequined gowns to wear during their cross-dressing performances while parading through streets of Rio. After Miranda performed in her *baiana* costume[28] in the film *Banana de terra* (1938), "the gay presence at Carnival took a more definite form in 1939, as revelers cross-dressed as the *baiana*, taking carnivalesque transgressions to a whole new level through their subversive gender-play" (Bishop-Sanchez 17). As Bishop-Sanchez argues, the presence of the *baiana* costume in carnivals demonstrates the process of how the traditional dress of female Afro-Brazilians gets appropriated by a gay drag culture. Both the act of Brazilian identity building or that of gay performativity constructing already redefined the significance of the *baiana* dress in Brazil and elevated it to a national icon in the early twentieth century.

Like the *baiana*, samba was similarly fashioned as a Brazilian emblem. Samba was thought to be directly related to the *batuque*, a circle dance that slaves performed on the sugar plantations. Though different regions developed their own *batuque*, these dances had one thing in common: *umbigada*, or "bump with the belly button" (samba means *umbigada* in the Kimbundu language in Angola) (Shaw 3). Since samba had Afro-Brazilian agricultural roots, it had been regarded as a dance form for the poor, often migratory black population. From 1870 to 1930, samba was popular in the areas where

[28] The usages of the *baiana* dress and the *baiana* costume/outfit mean slightly different things in my argument. The *baiana* dress means the tradition apparel Afro-Brazilian women wore, while the *baiana* costume refers to performers' appropriation of this dress in performances or parades.

black people (often poor) lived in Rio, while "in town the highbrow Carioca [Rio][29] elites listened to French and Italian opera" (Gil-Montero 25). Beginning in the late nineteenth century, samba gradually developed into a style performed in concerts, and its religious importance merged musically with new rhythms expressing the hardship of living in Rio (Shaw 7 and Gil-Montero 25). As Shaw argues, samba and *carnaval*, brought by the Portuguese in 1500, "emerged from a long process of cultural miscegenation," which combined a European legacy from the Portuguese, African traditions from the sugar plantations, the mining culture of Minas Gerais, and the local history of the coffee plantations in Rio (3). In the 1920s three separate carnivals took place in Rio: the poor paraded in the Parça Onze area, the middle class paraded in Avenida Central, and the wealthy white élite had their balls (Shaw 4). Samba, formerly associated with "primitive" rhythms and working-class culture, slowly became the lead music of the carnival celebrations. The Portuguese poet João de Barros wrote of his impressions of carnival: "Parça Onze brought together a mixture of traditions and ethnicities—black, Indian, and white European cultures—symbolized by their diverse dress. The group of black Bahians that inhabited this heterotopic space became the city's social leaders among the mixture of other ethnic groups" (Bishop-Sanchez 16). De Barros's observation shows that the lower-class carnival in Rio in the 1920s became a space where different ethnic groups could celebrate together. It also allowed the Bahian people, who had been marginalized in Brazilian history, to lead the parade. This Bakhtinian reversal of social order and classes demonstrated to the wider populace the cultural importance that the *baiana* dress, samba, and carnival signified for the poor and lower-class Brazilian people.

[29] Carioca, either used as an adjective or a noun, means something or someone from the city of Rio de Janeiro.

The significance of the cultural roots imbued in both the *baiana* dress and samba became foundational for the wave of nation building in the 1930s. As a former Portuguese colony, Brazil has a complicated racial history. Historically, white Luso-Portuguese have controlled the superstructures. Though slavery was abolished in 1888, Afro-Brazilians did not earn racial equality, and they continued to live with the ramifications of slavery. The Tupi-Guarani, one of the most important indigenous peoples in Brazil, were also marginalized. Therefore, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Brazilian society was hegemonic and racially stratified. In the 1930s, the Vargas regime (1930–1945) promoted a sense of Brazilianness in part through radio competitions of radio stars in the 1930s. In his essay about this decade in Brazil and about the ways Brazilian nationalism were interwoven into Miranda's performances, Darién J. Davis asserts that Brazilianness was positioned as institutionalized nationalism "above racial, ethnic, and class identifications. At the same time, musical and artistic expressions of the popular classes that bore strong black influences caught the attention of the major radio stations of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, which were bent on marketing 'national culture' to a growing urban people" (184). Within the rhetoric of national identity, the ethnic music styles of the black and mulatto classes, which were discriminated against in previous centuries, were now served as cultural assets representing what Brazil is. This cultural construction claimed to erase the racial hierarchy between the white and the black/mulatto as well as geographical division between country and city, symbolizing a utopian Brazilianness that unified Brazilian people and eliminated differences of ethnicity, class, and economy.

While the Brazilian identity may have seemed optimistic in its claims of racial inclusiveness in the 1930s, it was rooted in subordinating racial diversity into the "whitening ideal" (Bishop-Sanchez 44). In response to the traditional rivalry between the powerful southern states, the marginalization of Afro-Brazilians from the northeast, and the influx of European and Japanese immigrants, the Vargas regime was eager to shape a Brazilian identity that incorporated local heritage to fortify a national consciousness (Shaw 29). In 1932, the Vargas government sponsored a large carnival event and popularized it as a national festival (Shaw 11). Recognizing the cultural significance of the *baiana* dress, carnival, and samba and elevating them as examples of Brazilianness demonstrated that Brazil was a multiethnic nation that respected racial diversity and embraced cultural integration. Nevertheless, this elevation of the ideal of cultural integration concealed the power of the whitening ideal to reduce the impact of Afro-Brazilians and other ethnic groups on the Brazilian national consciousness.[30] In "The Masters and the Slaves," Gilberto Freyre, a sociologist from the Northeast Region of Brazil, asserted that "the hierarchical nature of cultural relations within a hybrid and presumably harmonious society" came "with maximum profitability from the native culture for the benefit of the more advanced people" (qtd. in Bishop-Sanchez 46). Freyre's argument acknowledges that though local heritage is ranked lower by white

[30] While arguing cultural policy and popular culture of the Vargas regime, Shaw further points out that Brazilianness turned to be a powerful xenophobic tool: "The brasilidade campaign led to the closure of foreign-language schools, and the use of the Portuguese language was made compulsory throughout the Brazilian press" (Shaw 30). This xenophobic wave "particularly targeted the German and Italian immigrant communities of the south, and the Japanese and Italians who had settled in São Paulo state" (Shaw 30). As we can see here, Brazilian cultural nationalism in the 1930s exclusively fetishized the white Portuguese influence and excluded other European (though white) cultures. Japanese immigrants had relocated to Brazil after the Meiji Restoration (1865). They, however, were not regarded as Brazilians. Moreover, this racial intolerance was especially focused on immigrants of the southern states, a fact exposing that cultural integration was nothing but an illusion. The discrimination against the South still existed in this new national identity.

supremacy, it is still beneficial to the white populace in a mutually integrated and respectful society. This interpretation seems to recognize the cultural influence of Afro-Brazilians and other ethnic groups on privileged whites, yet it does not challenge the power relations that define whites as superior and people of color as inferior. Though samba music was popular on the radio in the 1930s, its lyrics had been sanitized so that the upper classes would accept it. Miranda's virtuosity in singing samba and her white ethnicity, which set her apart from other samba singers, helped make samba marketable to the white upper classes. Looking at how samba—as one product of Brazilian native heritage—became a national emblem not only shows how marginal groups gained visibility but also shows how such cultural artifacts were appropriated to support white hegemony in Brazil.

Within this nationalist climate, Miranda's racial and class background permitted her to be a communicator and representative of Brazilianness through her stage performances. In racially divided Brazil, white elite groups easily accepted Miranda, whom they recognized as a white Portuguese and therefore a member of the dominant class. This racial identification allowed Miranda to popularize her samba dance and the *baiana* costume in white nightclubs and films. White-skinned Miranda had the privilege of passing, and so she successfully appropriated the *baiana* dress, dressed it up, and animated it in her performances. Miranda was not the first performer to wear the *baiana* costume on stage. The mulatto actress Araci Cortes often wore a *baiana* outfit on stage in the 1920s. What made Miranda's *baiana* performances so complicated was her ability to cross the racial line between black and white. Her appropriation of the *baiana* costume was both an act of whitening Afro-Brazilianness for cultural acceptance by the upper

classes and a call for embracing Afro-Brazilianness in the emerging cultural identity. However, since she came from a lower-class immigrant family, Miranda was not completely "elite" or "white." On the racial and economic spectrum, Miranda was closer to those deprived black/mulatto classes than to privileged white elites. Her humble origins established her affinity with Afro-Brazilians, positioning her as their cultural representative when she performed samba. For black Brazilians, Miranda's singing "was the world of the poor," because she "shared their milieu and understood them" (Gil-Montero 21). As Davis argues, Miranda's identity as a negotiator among different Brazilian cultures, "allowed her to play a crucial role in bringing Brazilians of all ethnicities together through music" (184).

The ethnic inclusiveness of Brazilianness not only masks racist discourse existing in Brazil but also elevates Brazil as a utopian nation of color blindness for African Americans. When the African-American coloratura soprano Anita Patti Brown toured in Brazil in 1916, the *Chicago Defender*, a Chicago-based weekly newspaper mainly for African-American readers, reported on her performances and characterized Brazil as the "'elysian field of the Black people,' where black men owned the wealthiest corporations, governed the country, and lived in harmony with their white fellow citizens."[31]. One week later, a front-page headline in the *Defender* read, "Brazil Wants Educated Black Men." Compared to the US under Jim Crow, life for blacks in Brazil looked very good. In Nella Larsen's novella *Passing* (1929), which explores how race intersected with sexuality and class in Harlem and Chicago in the 1920s, Irene Redfield's husband Brian

[31] See Micol Seigel, "Nation Drag: Uses of the Exotic" in *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 1.1 (2019): 10.

romanticizes Brazil as an Eden that is colorblind and open to homosexuality.[32] For Irene, "Brian doesn't care for ladies, especially sick ones. . . . It is South America that attracts him" (*Passing* 173). Irene wishes Brian were not "so lonely that that old queer, unhappy restlessness had begun again within him" because she often feels "that strange, and to her fantastic, notion of Brian's of going off to Brazil, which, though unmentioned, yet lived within him" (*Passing* 178, 187).[33] Unlike Irene, whose skin color is lighter, Brian is much darker and cannot pass for white. Though he is middle-class, with a good job as a surgeon in New York City, he still faces racial hostility and discrimination. Throughout the novella, Brian is quite disappointed with America's racial ideology, and his latent homosexual desire troubles his relationship with Irene. Understanding the historical construction of Brazilianness, however, complicates the fictional Brian's facile admiration for Brazil's openness. Brian's idealization of Brazil is not unlike the Caribbean travel fantasy described in Chapter Three, though instead of a recreational paradise, Brian is picturing a land of racial equality and sexual freedom. Brian wishes to be in "an Afro-centric sphere in which a man need not provide for a woman and where men may love each other freely" (Blackmore 481), but these imaginary representations erase the actual inequalities in Brazil and romanticize Brazil as a dreamland able and ready to shelter African Americans.

Miranda helped to introduce Brazil to the world and to do so constructed her own Brazilian identity through a combination of samba dancing and the *baiana* costume. She said:

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[32] I thank my advisor, Prof. Mary Wood, for pointing out the intertextuality between *Passing* and the cultural politics in Brazil at the beginning of the twentieth century.

[33] As the *OED* indicates, the word "queer" being used to refer to a person's homosexuality can be traced back to 1914.

> It was given to me the great opportunity and the great honor of being the interpreter of Brazilian things. This will be the first important chance for our samba. That's why I'll employ all my efforts so that everything works out, and that Brazil's popular music conquers North America, which would be the way for its victory worldwide.[34]

In this public statement, Miranda offers up samba as a Brazilian cultural icon worth promoting, and promises to devote herself to sharing it with the world. At the beginning of the twentieth century, samba was still a little-known dance style of marginalized Afro-Brazilian communities, but as a white, working-class, female performer, Miranda was able to bring samba to a performance level, thus making it easier for white audiences to accept its cultural value. Her samba and her costume allowed her to create a multiethnic Brazilian national identity, and with her as cultural ambassador, Brazilian people of all classes and races could bond through the Brazilianness of samba. Before departing for the US in 1939, Miranda brought "six keen *baiana*s, six costumes representing the people of Bonfim (Bohia)," intending to do all she could "to turn the music and the *baiana* into a success in that land" (qtd. in Freire-Medeiros 21). Dancing her samba in a *baiana* costume, Miranda hoped to bridge the gap between white and black, construct an icon of Brazilian identity, and export this Brazilian national art form to other countries.

However, we need to examine the populist rhetoric embedded in Miranda's performative gesture. In the context of the *Estado Novo* (the New State)[35], the *baiana* costume and samba had been fabricated as cultural artifacts that the Vargas authoritarian

[34] Qtd. in Bianca Freire-Medeiros, "Star in the House of Mirrors: Contrasting Images of Carmen Miranda in Brazil and the United States" in *Limina: A Journal of Historical and Cultural Studies* 12 (2006): 21-27, 21.

[35] The *Estado Novo* was the authoritarian regime Getúlio Vargas established that lasted from 1937 to 1945" (Shaw 190).

regime could use to promote a new Brazilian identity. In his various roles as senator, president, and dictator between 1930 and 1954, Getúlio Vargas played an important role in shaping Brazilianness through the cultural industry of constructing the *Estado Novo*. The regime propagated "state paternalism and protection" and presented Vargas as "the benefactor of the working classes" (Freire-Medeiros 23). The *Estado Novo* policy imposed "media censorship, banning of political parties, and dissolving of all legislative bodies" (Freire-Medeiros 23). In other words, the cultural significance of samba was appropriated to support the rhetoric of nation building, and Vargas had hoped to enlist Miranda as a "strategic partner" (Freire-Medeiros 23). The implicit conspiracy between Miranda's performative staging and the Estado Novo, I contend, should not be invisible when we discuss Miranda's representativeness of the ethnicities of Brazil. It is this symbiosis between Miranda's performances and the Brazilian national discourse that makes Miranda's Hollywood images a metaphor of Pan Americanism within the context of "the Good Neighbor Policy."

From Hollywood's perspective, the way that Miranda's persona represented the tropical Other could be used to market Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Good Neighbor Policy", and its goal of establishing harmonious relationships with Latin America during World War II. Ana López argues that during the years of the Good Neighbor Policy,

> Hollywood [and the United States] needed to posit a complex "otherness" as the flip side of wartime patriotism and nationalism and in order to assert and protect its economic interests. A special kind of "other" was needed to reinforce the wartime national self—unlike the German or Japanese "other"— . . . . [It needed to be] non-threatening, potentially but not practically assimilable (that is,

> nonpolluting to the purity of the race), friendly, fun-loving, and not deemed insulting to Latin American eyes and ears.[36]

In order for the Good Neighbor Policy to work, the desired Other could not be more powerful than an American or perceived as a threat. Instead, it had to act as a foil to American national identity while attending to the representation of Latin Americans within the construction of the US nationalism. For López, the military threat a German or Japanese Other carried was so frightening, it could not be a proper foil in the consolidation of American power. The Good Neighbor Policy needed a tame, amiable, and hospitable Other. In this national rhetoric, the US is personified as a masculine body capable of protecting national and economic interests, while the Other is represented as a non-threatening feminine body subjugated to the nation-building narrative without posing any menacing challenges. An easygoing Latin American, preferably female, character would support this national myth, and Miranda fit the bill. She dressed Brazilian, but her white Portuguese background and coloring made her fit into the American cultural landscape more easily. She was nicknamed "The Brazilian Bombshell" because she radiated Latin attractiveness. Miranda's Hollywood performances delighted US audiences without triggering racial anxiety. The visual excess of Miranda's performance, from her ethnic costume and dance to the tropical subtexts, from her musicality to her big smile and rolling eyes, embodied the relationship between the US and Latin America. This, in turn, was embedded within a binary, gendered hierarchy. As Lisa Shaw and Maite Conde argue, in musical films produced by Twentieth Century Fox, Miranda "is

[36] Ana M. López, "Are All Latins from Manhattan?: Hollywood, Ethnography and Cultural Colonialism" in *Films and Nationalism*, ed. Alan Williams (Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2002): 195-216, 210.

incorporated as an 'exotic' entertainer and is thus denied a valid narrative function."[37] Miranda's performance, for Shaw and Conde, exposes the imbalanced relationship between two Americas: though the Good Neighbor Policy seemingly proposed that the US and Latin America cooperate with each other to further both sides' economic interests, it in fact only relegated Latin America to the role of imagined feminine, tropical Other and supported America's sense of self-congratulation and potency.

The opening scene of *The Gang's All Here* (1943) exposes the underlying logic of the Good Neighbor Policy. Latin America is portrayed as a land of (tropical) abundance. in this Technicolor musical that tells the story of the various love affairs and confusions among Andy Mason (James Ellison), Eadie Allen (Alice Faye), and Vivian Potter (Sheila Ryan). Miranda, in the supporting role of Dorita, "spices" up the narrative of love entanglements. For the American characters and the audience, Miranda's character highlights the contrast between the US and Latin America. Though the film is structured as a romance story, with dancing and singing numbers interspersed, certain aspects reveal Hollywood's alignment with the spirit of the Good Neighbor Policy. In this film, Andy serves as a sergeant in the Army and is given a medal for his distinguished service on the battles of the South Pacific. Andy's military identification represents US military power over its neighbors and the fact that he is distinguished for serving in the South Pacific signifies the continued popularity of Pan-Americanism. Thus, the geopolitical entanglement between the US and Latin America is discreetly woven into the entertaining narrative.

[37] Lisa Shaw and Maite Conde, ed., "Brazil through Hollywood's Gaze: From the Silent Screen to the Good Neighbor Policy Era" in *Latin American Cinema*, ed. Shaw and Dennison: 180-208, 199.

The film's opening scene (fig. 3.4) figures Brazil as a virgin land of raw materials and tropicalizes Miranda. After an opera singer sings, "Aquarela do Brasil" in Portuguese, a popular song later used in Disney's animated film *Saludos Amigos* (1942), a huge ship named as the *S. S. Brazil* anchors in the New York harbor. Many passengers wearing traveling suits walk down the deck, while sugar, coffee, and fresh produce are unloaded.

Figure 3.4 Carmen Miranda in the opening scene of *The Gang's All Here*, directed by Busby Berkeley, Twentieth Century Fox, 1943.

After the camera zooms in on the last basket of fruits, Miranda appears from the bottom of the screen, dressed in her *baiana* outfit and fresh fruit hat, smiling and dancing to the song "Brazil." In his important critical book *The Black Atlantic*, Paul,Gilroy characterizes a ship as "a living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion" and emphasizes the economic, cultural, and political exchanges ships have facilitated across the Atlantic

since the beginning of the modern period (4). The *S. S. Brazil*, a mode of intra-hemispheric transportation that not only ferries goods and passengers but also represents Brazil as a source of raw materials and entertainment for American consumption. Miranda appears from the bottom of the screen—moving northward to mirror her arrival from the less developed (global) South, exporters of raw materials and human labor, to the (global) North, which is more industrially advanced.[38] Thus, within the first minutes of the film, the *S. S. Brazil* and Miranda's performance already symbolize the uneven relationship between Latin America and the US. Miranda's hair under her turban, rolled into two small buns like Minnie Mouse's ears, gives her a soft and amiable look. Her big gold bracelets and multi-layered bead necklaces add shine to her costume, which she dresses up with a purple velvet robe and her signature platform shoes. Miranda's bright red lipstick and polished manicure both strengthen her femininity and make the fresh fruits on her head more enticing. In her performance, she acts as an ambassador for Brazilian tropicality and fruits, implying that the American government employs a cooperative approach to build up its connections with Latin America. Latin America is represented as an "exotic" Other, and not a threatening force, to the United States. At the end of this opening scene, the mayor (the nightclub host) concludes by saying, "Well, there's your Good Neighbor Policy."[39]

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[38] Shaw and Conde remind us that the Vargas regime "reconstructed the [Brazilian] economy to incorporate exports of raw materials to the United States" because the US was the only market that could accept an increase in the quota of imported coffee (and other raw materials) when the European markets were under the threat of war (190). This economic reality explains why Brazil was often exploited by Hollywood as a signifier of tropicality.

[39] In fact, the end of the opening scene reveals that Miranda's performance is actually a stage performance in a nightclub.

Like Baker and her bananas, Miranda wears a fruit-laden turban that accentuates the tropicality of her native Brazil. This trademark turban was a transformed appropriation of the basket of fruit that Afro-Brazilian female street vendors carried on their heads. Her *baiana* outfits consisted of oversized beads and bracelets, frilly bikini tops, and five-inch-high heels. While she sang and danced, her colorful, sequined *baiana* outfit drew attention to her abdomen. This erogenous zone, argues Priscilla Ovalle, is the solar plexus, which acts not only as "the source of her [Miranda's] charisma, channeled from her belly, transmitted through her voice, and united through her body as a spectacular performance of excess," but also as "the center of a dancer's balance and a singer's breath."[40] Ovalle argues that the exposure of Miranda's solar plexus highlights her sensuality, inviting the audience to enjoy the bodily sensations and vitality demonstrated in her performances. I would argue that Miranda's fruit turban, which included pineapples, mangoes, oranges, grapes, bananas, is another focal point that emphasized her sensational qualities. Her dance, like the tropical fruits she wears, is fresh and wild. The slight shaking of the fruits during her dance refreshed the audience. Miranda's stage performance coupled sexuality with the tropics.

Miranda's body symbolically represented Brazil. Critics were surprised at Miranda's hypersexual performances. Robert Sullivan wrote: "First, there is the impact of Carmen's costumes, . . . always covering her thoroughly with the exception of a space between the seventh rib and a point at about the waistline. This expanse is known at the

[40] Priscilla Peña Ovalle, *Dance and the Hollywood Latina: Race, Sex, and Stardom* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2011), 53.

Torrid Zone."[41] Equating Miranda's solar plexus with the Torrid Zone imagines Miranda's body as Brazilian territory, which is crossed by both the Equator and the Tropic of Capricorn. The Torrid Zone, which is hotter than other geographic areas, suggests that Miranda's stage sensuality and passion originates from her homeland, where the indigenous people are represented as more stereotypically primitive and wild. Though Miranda is white, her body serves as a fine form on which to map the exotic, erotic global South. Miranda's body on the stage become a synecdoche for the broad territory south of the US, ready to be conquered, ready to be consumed and gazed upon and enjoyed by a US audience.

"The Lady in the Tutti Frutti Hat" scene in *The Gang's All Here* exaggerates Miranda's signature stage look by casting her in the role of "The Brazilian Bombshell." Unlike her previous fruit turbans, which did not single out the banana, here, gigantic bananas are ubiquitous. Paired with a banana plantation background and chorus girls wearing bright yellow turbans and banana skirts, this scene is designed to make viewers hungry—for bananas and the performers. I see, however, in the disturbing narrative and excessive performance how Miranda's "bombshell" image creates tensions between affective associations and camp exaggerations. Susan Sontag's "Notes on 'Camp'" helps to explain how the exaggeration in Miranda's stage image potentially immobilizes the exchange of affect between Miranda's banana performance and the audience's voyeuristic desire.[42] The excess of Miranda's performance in the tutti-frutti scene—the

[41] Qtd. in Shari Roberts, "'The Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat': Carmen Miranda, A Spectacle of Ethnicity" in *Cinema Journal* 32.2 (1993): 3-23, 11.

[42] Susan Sontag, "Notes on 'Camp'," in *Partisan Review* (1964): 54-64.

camp of it—uncovers the constructed nature of her tropicality and defies the racial and sexual stereotypes with which she and the banana have been endowed.

Hollywood, as an ethnographer, creates Miranda as an exotic Other in order to perpetuate the Good Neighbor Policy through the gigantic banana scene. The logic behind the Good Neighbor Policy actually follows what the United Fruit Company had been doing in Latin America: exploiting raw materials and human labor for US economic and national interest. In this mise-en-scène performance, "The Lady in the Tutti Frutti Hat" is a nightclub show watched by the characters of *The Gang's All Here*. That is, the film narrative already reveals the nature of this tutti-frutti scene as a product of creation. While a swing band plays the theme melody of "The Lady in the Tutti Frutti Hat," an organ-grinder coaxes a monkey to climb onto one of the banana trees. The camera pans over to a number of young girls with short tops and banana skirts lying in sexually suggestive poses on sand dunes amid rows of banana trees. Into this never-never land enters Miranda, sitting on bananas piled on an oxcart, escorted by a group of brown-skinned men. Wearing a banana headdress and a *baiana* costume dotted with strawberries, Miranda starts to sing "The Lady in the Tutti Frutti Hat" (fig. 3.5):

Figure 3.5 Carmen Miranda in the opening scene of *The Gang's All Here*, directed by Busby Berkeley, Twentieth Century Fox, 1943.

Her trademark big smile, rolling eyes, and Portuguese-accented English intensify her exoticism, and her sensational dance is the kind of dance stereotypically expected of a Latin American woman. After dancing a sequence choreographed with gigantic bananas, the slender, young girls, most of whom are white, lie on the sand dunes as they did at the beginning. Finally Miranda fades out from the screen with her body dwarfed by a massive banana tree and two rows of huge strawberries, suggesting that Miranda has a pivotal role in the interhemispheric relationship between Latin America and the US.

In this scene, Miranda is like a walking fetish. Her femininity and exaggerated costume and the choreographed dances and stylistic setting validate her Latin Americanness and turn her performance into a spectacle (López 206–7). "The Lady in the Tutti Frutti Hat" epitomizes how the gazing process subordinates Latin America as an object of pleasure. In this song, Miranda sings the following lyrics:

> Americanos tell me that my hat is high
> Because I will not take it off to kiss a guy
> But if I ever start to take it off, ay, ay!
> I do that once for Johnny Smith
> And he is very happy with
> The lady in the tutti-frutti hat. (14–19)

Though Miranda's towering banana headdress is high, it is enrapturing to the American audience. It is not a threat to US viewers, but, rather, a lure enticing them. Laura Mulvey argues convincingly that an American male spectator watching this film is able to exploit

Miranda's sexual femininity to satisfy his voyeurism and to align with the norm of heterosexuality—and that the banana is central to the portrayal.[43]

Meanwhile Miranda's performance self-parodies the one-way, male-dominant structure of visual pleasure. While describing what the (male) audience wants the lady in the tutti-frutti hat to do, Miranda responds:

> The gentlemen, they want to make me say, "Si, si"
>
> But I don't tell them that, I tell them, "Yes, sir-ee"
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Some people say I dress too gay
>
> But ev'ry day, I feel so gay
>
> And when I'm gay, I dress that way
>
> Is something wrong with that? (5-6, 9-12)

The lady in fruit hat is not passive; she talks back to the male spectators. Miranda's rolling eyes and swinging body emphasize the dynamic of how the lady has the agency to deny a gentleman's request. The lyrics further challenge the heterosexual structure Mulvey relies on.[44] According to the *OED*, the word "gay" can refer to "finely and showily dressed," "hedonistic," or "homosexual" (traced back to 1922 in US slang). The rhymed "gay" words in line 9 and 10 refer to multiple meanings: the lady in the tutti frutti

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[43] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989): 14-27.

[44] Based on the psychoanalytic theory of sexual differences, it is understandable that Mulvey followed the trajectory of male perspective to write "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in 1975. Later film critics have discussed other possibilities of gaze. For example, Mary Ann Donne and Teresa de Lauretis propose a female gaze to articulate how a female spectator recognizes her positionality, while Ian Scott Todd sees a queer gaze when he revisits blonde characters in Hitchcock's films. See de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987); and Todd, "Hitchcock's 'Good-looking Blondes': First Glimpses and Second Glances" in *Situating the Feminist Gaze and Spectatorship in Postwar Cinema*, ed. Marceline Block (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2019: 52-66).

hat dresses "finely and showily" to exhibit her "hedonistic" character. "Gay" could potentially also refer to homosexual, since the lady does not think it is problematic if she is open to social pleasures or if she is a female with same-sex desires. This stanza can be read as Miranda's lightweight self-parody, ridiculing her hyperbolic staging and costume, or it can be read as a serious questioning of the heterosexual hegemony in film narrative.

In *The Gang's All Here*, visual excess and overdramatized theatricality subvert the hypersexual representation in Miranda's performance. Sontag's concept of camp offers a critical angle from which to analyze the complexity of Miranda's act—a performance in which she shows a degree of agency. Sontag contends that camp counters traditional aesthetics of harmony, beauty, and intellectual faculty but emphasizes the effects produced by "the degree of artifice, of stylization" (55). Camp relates to the act of deceiving, and, as Sontag observes, "to camp is a mode of seduction—one which employs flamboyant mannerisms susceptible of a double interpretation" and "gestures full of duplicity" (57). For Sontag, camp is rooted in an act of construction, showing objects or demonstrating bodies with exaggerated style and extraordinary degree. "All camp objects, and persons, contain a large element of artifice," Sontag makes clear. The constructiveness camp carries, fueled with the love of exaggeration, unsettles the oppositions we have been familiar with but causes unsatisfying feelings or uncertainties. Sontag's articulation about camp proves helpful in explicating how Miranda's exaggerated performance in the scene of "The Lady in the Tutti Frutti Hat" parodies her coded identity as the exotic Other. As I stated above, this scene is a performance within a performance, a show designed to be watched by film characters. At the very beginning, the essence of the tutti-frutti scene is constructiveness—the setting, storyline, and acting

are fabricated to entertain film characters, as well as the film's audience. Miranda's camp, including her exaggerated banana hat, strawberry decorations, and facial expressions, confuses the audience about the degree of authenticity represented in her staging.[45] As the lyric states: "I wonder why does ev'rybody look at me / And then begin to talk about a Christmas tree?" (1–2). The question reveals an irony in which the artificial Miranda image exceeds the audience's understanding. This irony, masked by "a mode of seduction," is the power of artifice, which challenges the validity of Miranda's supposed exotic otherness.

Exaggeration and excess in Miranda's performance in the tutti-frutti scene further destabilize the affective economy, and reduce Miranda's eroticism. Throughout Miranda's performance, the bananas' tropicality intensifies her exoticism and eroticism, yet the large bananas themselves have phallic significance. Miranda's hyperbolic performance and the exaggerated representations of enormous bananas produce an excess of significance, which nullifies the affective circulation in which signs are unable to accumulate affective value. After Miranda sings half of "The Lady in the Tutti Frutti Hat," the camera turns to the chorus girls, who dance while holding the gigantic bananas. Sometime the bananas cross each other while the young girls stand facing each other or stand back-to-back; sometimes they circle around a star formation created by strawberries and swing bananas back and forth. The excessive choreography exemplifies the logic of camp—"the spirit of extravagance" (Sontag 58). This extravagance, I contend, is excess

[45] After Sontag's theorization of camp, critics and theorists have expanded this notion to gender theory, performative subjectivity, and popular culture. Judith Butler writes about performativity as an act to construct gender identity in *Gender Trouble* (1990), while Pamela Robertson articulates feminist perspectives with gender parody and spectatorship. See Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); and Robertson, *Guilty Pleasures: Feminist Camp from Mae West to Madonna* (Durham: Duke UP, 1996).

of significance that destroys the circuit of affective exchange. The pleasure, fantasy, and fun that fill this scene invite a number of questions: How can this tropical Other and bananas be represented in a such sensational way? Are her performance and the exaggerated banana representations a fabricated creation or an authentic representation? The more excessive the pleasure that Miranda's performance provides, the more the affective economy stagnates.

Miss Chiquita's Tutti Frutti Hat as a Transnational Trademark

Piggybacking on the commercial success of Carmen Miranda and her signature fruit hats, the United Fruit Company commissioned an artist to make a cartoon-like female mascot, "Miss Chiquita" (fig. 3.6) to use to help market bananas. Miss Chiquita's "tutti-frutti" hat immediately recalls Miranda's turban, as do her winking eyes, sweet smile, gestures, embroidered blouse, long skirt, singing style, and Portuguese accent. Miss Chiquita reinforces that association already established between tropical, exotic femininity of the Latin American woman and the tropical exoticism of the banana.

Figure 3.6 Reproduction of "Miss Chiquita" (www.chiquita.com)

The United Fruit Company used Miss Chiquita to connect tropical femininity with Miranda and to promote it to American women consumers. In 1944, when Miranda was still popular in Hollywood musicals and American theaters, the United Fruit Company advertising department created the half-woman, half-banana cartoon character with a fruit bowl reminiscent of the headdress Miranda wears in the film when she disembarks from the *S. S. Brazil*. Her white embroidered sleeves and red flared skirt play off of Miranda's *baiana* costume, while her red, round lips and big eyes are a nod to Miranda's amiable facial expression. Miss Chiquita was designed to be like a miniature Miranda, able to walk into the hearts and minds of American families in order to market bananas. Miss Chiquita's calypso song is "one of the very first examples of a new twentieth-century art form: the singing commercial" (Bishop-Sanchez 201). The original commercial for Chiquita Bananas almost follows the setting and narrative of *The Gang's All Here*. Miss Chiquita walks down from the deck, toward guest tables (presumably at a nightclub), and sings the following:

I am Chiquita Banana
And I've come to say
Bananas have to ripen
In a certain way.
When they are fleck'd with brown
And have a golden hue
Bananas taste the best
And are the best for you. (1–8)

While singing this brisk calypso song, Miss Chiquita waves her hands and swings her body as if she were the real Miranda performing in front of the audience. Each line of the song is quite short and rhymed, so the audience can easily catch the meaning and remember it. In fact, what the lyric expresses is the same information the United Fruit Company advertised in their cookbooks at the beginning of the twentieth century. When Miss Chiquita sings about how to prepare bananas in a salad or a pie, she extends plates to the guests. She also interacts with a baby sitting in a high chair, while telling the audience that the banana is good for babies. As Cynthia Enloe observes, "United Fruit sales strategies set out to do the impossible—to create in housewives a brand-name loyalty for a generic fruit" (129). Now Miss Chiquita is the key: "between the woman consumer and the fruit there now was only a corporation with the friendly face of a bouncy Latin American market woman" (Enloe 129).

The creation of Miss Chiquita can be read as a strategy employed by the United Fruit Company to erase Miranda's ethnicity from pop culture. However, I argue that Miss Chiquita's Portuguese accent, which is exaggerated in the jingle, proves that the success of the United Fruit Company is based on the exploitation of the banana plantation economy in Latin America. In Miss Chiquita's jingle, the pronunciation of "or," as shown in "equator" and "refrigerator," is particularly stressed and lengthened to imitate Miranda's accented English. Miranda was rather conscious of how to manipulate the power of language, as López indicates: "Miranda's excessive manipulation of accents—the obviously shifting registers of tone and pitch between her spoken and sung English and between her English and Portuguese—inflates the fetish, cracking its surface while simultaneously aggrandizing it" (209). This is another camp strategy Miranda adopted to

parody stereotypical imaginings applied to her. Miranda's code and tone switching between two languages and two performative environments show her keen sense of knowing how her public images were fashioned under the spotlight. She "employs flamboyant mannerisms susceptible of a double interpretation: gestures full of duplicity" (Sontag 57). In other words, Miranda's linguistic performativity carries this double-ness: what she performs embodies masquerading and manipulating. The Portuguese accent in Miss Chiquita's singing continues this self-parody: through dramatizing the pronunciation of "equator," she reminds the audience of the exploitative history of banana plantations, which was being ignored, downplayed, or hidden by the United Fruit Company. The tropical equator is the place where the banana is from but is an invisible geographic area for Americans. Miss Chiquita's Portuguese accent cautions us that "it would be a mistake to confine an investigation of regional politics or international agribusiness to male foreign-policy officials . . . . Omitting sexualized images, women as consumers and women as agribusiness workers, leaves us with a political analysis that is incomplete, even naïve" (Enloe 2). Here, Miss Chiquita's tropical femininity and foreign accent explain what has been overlooked and exploited in the circuit of international commerce with national politics.

Conclusion

This chapter has investigated how the banana, a cross-national commodity, exposes the double-ness in the performances of Josephine Baker, Carmen Miranda, and Miss Chiquita. Baker was an African-American female performer and Miranda was nicknamed "The Brazilian Bombshell," but both of their stage representations played on

racial stereotypes and sexual myths. However, their staging strategies and manipulation of the audience's emotions empowered them to resist those fantasies. Ahmed's pleasure theory and Sontag's camp perspective help shed light on that dynamic. Finally, Miss Chiquita's Miranda-like attractiveness and Portuguese accent remind us of how understanding sexual politics is indispensable when critiquing the marketing strategies of transnational enterprises like the United Fruit Company.

CHAPTER V

CODA

When Japan colonized Taiwan, it treated the small island to the south as a virgin land from which to extract and export raw materials. For fifty years, it exploited Taiwan for sugar, rice, and bananas. After Japan's defeat at the end of World War II, it lost sovereignty over Taiwan, but the transnational banana trade continued, since Taiwanese farmers needed the money they would get from the Japanese market, where bananas were in demand. For most Taiwanese people in the 1950s and 1960s, the banana was more a commodity than a daily food. A friend of mine, who is a research fellow at Academia Sinica, told me that one of his college classmates, who married a Japanese man, burst into tears when her mother-in-law gave her bananas after labor. For the Japanese, the banana is a precious and delicious tropical fruit. For the Taiwanese, however, the banana represents colonial history and long-term exploitation. When, as a Taiwanese student studying English literature in an American university, I first encountered Claude McKay's "The Tropics of New York," I had a personal and visceral reaction that echoed that of the speaker, lamenting and weeping over the colonial stories hidden in the overpriced bananas in New York City.

That the poem resonates with me so strongly all these years after it was written bespeaks of the persistence of colonial structures that are felt to this day. In her book *Coloniality of Diasporas: Rethinking Intra-Colonial Migrations in a Pan-Caribbean Context*, Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel contends that the postcolonial theory produced from Anglo perspectives is inadequate for addressing the Caribbean situation, because "this theoretical gesture eventually displaces the debates and terms that have been

produced locally to propose different responses to the colonial context in the Caribbean" (5). She further proposes using the term "extended colonialism" to "refer to experiences of colonialism in the Caribbean . . . that began in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and lasted until the twentieth century (and sometimes until today), and that frequently include the coexistence of more than one colonial system" (6). For Martínez-San Miguel, examining the insular Caribbean migration caused by multiple colonial powers (Spain, France, Britain) provides "a suitable comparative framework within a relatively small region to revisit the validity of the colonial and postcolonial debate" (7).

Martínez-San Miguel's concept of extended colonialism undergirds the scope of my dissertation, which covers the practices and impact of the United Fruit Company, its relationship with US mass consumerism, the response of early twentieth-century Caribbean diasporic authors, and the influence it has had on transnational mass entertainment. This dissertation project claims that the banana as a cultural artifact interweaves gender assumptions, geographical imaginings, and affective associations. My project analyzes representations of the banana from three cultural sources—banana cookbooks, Caribbean writing, and stage performances—in order to demonstrate the different ways Americans conceptualize this fruit, which is, at the same time, both foreign and American, exotic and common, precious and ubiquitous. In my first chapter, "'Yes! 100 Ways to Enjoy Bananas': The Commodification of Bananas in Print and the Formation of American Womanhood," I explored how bananas were introduced into American food culture and daily life through cookbooks at the turn of the twentieth century—an era marked by the rise of consumption culture and nutrition discourse. These cooking records reveal how banana consumption gradually became popular in American

eating culture and show that how bananas were prepared corresponded to the interest in home economics and nutritional education prominent in middle-class periodicals of the 1920s. I consider how materials targeted to women helped reinforce the role of middle-class housewives as guardians of their family's nutrition and empowered and knowledgeable consumers. My second chapter, "Claude McKay and the Poetry of Jamaican Identity: Tourism, Caribbean Diasporic Writing, and Resistance," analyzed how the banana's transnational trade, invisible to Americans as they consume the imported fruit, represents Caribbean exploitation. McKay's poem reveals the entanglement between the foodways of tropical fruits and the speaker's own diasporic journey and laments how their transnational journeys have estranged both. The third chapter, "'Bananas Is My Business': From Josephine Baker's Skirt to Miss Chiquita's Tutti Frutti Hat," examined the images of the banana in the costumes and stage and screen performances of Baker, Carmen Miranda, and the United Fruit Company's cartoon mascot, Miss Chiquita. The often erotic performances by Baker and Miranda in their exaggerated Latin American personae for (largely) male European and American audiences brought pleasure, arousal, and shock, and—together with Miss Chiquita in the "Miss Chiquita" jingle—challenged audiences to confront the divide between the elite self and the tropical other, colonizer and subjugated, and white desire and brown body. By guiding and manipulating the desires of her voyeuristic audience, Baker established her agency. That chapter considered the role, message, and racial implications of the banana in Baker's banana skirt, Miranda's *baiana* outfit and in Miss Chiquita's fruit turban. Miranda used her sensual body, decorated with bananas, to recall hot, tropical Latin America, ready for American audiences to consume, and her success inspired the

creation of Miss Chiquita, whose marketing success confirmed the commercial association between tropical femininity and the banana. I also interrogated the excess and camp in Miranda's performance as "The Brazilian Bombshell" and in the comic tropicality of the half-banana/half-woman Miss Chiquita, looking for connections between the otherness of the women and the fruit, and the sexual, geographical, and racial implications of fruit-costume-triggered sexual fantasies. I hope that my methodological approach of mapping transnational connections outside of conventional modernist trajectory using foodways studies and affect studies has offered innovative perspectives with which to revisit American modernist literature with cross-national insight.

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