

A surreal, high-contrast illustration in black, white, and deep blue. A central figure, a person seen from behind, stands on a path through dense, dark foliage. The figure's body is covered in a complex, repeating geometric pattern of circles and dots. They are looking out over a body of water towards a distant, dark shoreline under a vast, dark blue sky with swirling clouds. On the left, a large, detailed palm frond hangs down. The overall mood is mysterious and evocative.

TROPICAL *
AESTHETICS *
OF *
BLACK *
MODERNISM

Samantha A. Noël

**TROPICAL
AESTHETICS
OF
BLACK
MODERNISM**

BUY

THE VISUAL ARTS OF AFRICA AND ITS DIASPORAS

A series edited by Kellie Jones and Steven Nelson

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TROPICAL

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AESTHETICS

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INTRODUCTION * *Tropicality, Modernity,
and the African Diaspora*

A photograph by Carl Van Vechten, the famed Harlem Renaissance photographer, features an arresting portrait of acclaimed Trinidadian dancer and choreographer Beryl McBurnie (figure I.1). Wearing a black long-sleeved sweater, a gold choker, and a multicolored beaded necklace, McBurnie is positioned in three-quarter view facing to her right, while her head is tilted in the opposite direction. Her hair is elaborately coiffed and accented with a colorful band. Her training as a dancer is reflected in her pose, which seems to echo a choreographed stance and conveys her natural penchant for corporeal expression. This color Kodachrome of McBurnie is one of more than one thousand portraits from “Living Portraits: Carl Van Vechten’s Color Photographs of African Americans, 1939–1964.”¹ Although not African American, her inclusion in the collection is indicative of her prominent position in the New York art and cultural scene, and of the diasporic reaches of the Harlem-based cultural movement. In 1941, the year Van Vechten took this photograph, McBurnie headed to New York to continue her studies in dance. She eventually gained significant acclaim for her creative talents, being hailed as one of the first female calypso singers in the United States, using the sobriquet La Belle Rosette. McBurnie is also considered a major influence in the evolution of American modern dance.²

While we can sense McBurnie’s affinity to transcultural malleability as a modern colonial subject from Trinidad, visual cues like the straw hat and colorful necklace seem to also convey her as embodying a prescribed tropical persona. The inclusion of the straw hat, for example, as a prop was most likely due to Van Vechten’s curious approach to the rendering of many of his sitters. Yet when La Belle Rosette performed at the Museum of Modern Art and other venues, McBurnie may have represented the tropical, exotic, and primitive other. During the early years of the calypso craze in America, Black calypso entertainers from the Caribbean



1.1 Carl Van Vechten, *La Belle Rosette*, 1941. © Van Vechten Trust. Carl Van Vechten Papers Relating to African American Arts and Letters, James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

were expected to embody an exoticized Black other that made them distinct from their American counterparts yet akin to the servitude typical in Caribbean tourist destinations.³ However, in Van Vechten's photograph, McBurnie seems to be circumscribed within a primitive-versus-modern dialectic. Defying categorization and geographic specificity, McBurnie exemplifies a cosmopolitan, Pan-African sensibility that was quite prevalent in the first half of the twentieth century. McBurnie's portrait evinces the overwhelming presence of visual references and various accoutrements in the arts and popular culture of the early twentieth century that can be attributed to the tropics. This tropicalia was also visible or sug-

gested in literature, theater productions, and film, and they all inferred the non-West, nontemperate regions of the world. In a number of ways, McBurnie's presentation in the photograph embodies the creative manifestations of Black modernism of this era, given how it conveys the ways in which tropicality functioned as a key unifying element among peoples of the Black Atlantic. She exemplifies the unique yet complex relationship that Black people have with the terrain they inhabit.

At the same time, the tropicality-oriented exoticism that McBurnie embodies in the photograph and would have embodied in her calypso performances can to a certain extent signify what Martinican writer René Ménéil referred to as colonial exoticism. This is a type of exoticism in which "Caribbean people have an exotic vision of themselves and offer up an exotic expression of themselves," a condition that for Ménéil stems from the colonial situation.⁴ Ménéil declared that the essential characteristics of a person's existence in a colonial society are separation from oneself as well as an exile and even an alienation from oneself that ultimately suppresses its particular national soul and is eventually replaced by the "soul-of-the-mainland-other."⁵ Although McBurnie's comportment is one of a woman who is self-aware and possesses a sense of purpose, given the immense accomplishments she would achieve in years to come, the straw hat she holds behind her head along with the beaded necklace are markers of an imposed representation of Caribbeanness that was prevalent in the early to mid-twentieth century. While there was a concerted effort in the Caribbean region to define the parameters of a cultural nationalism that countered the imposed exoticism of the West, of which McBurnie was certainly a part, what often emerged was a "form of an anti-exoticism that unfortunately is itself situated in exoticism."⁶ This tendency of anti-exoticized exoticization that rendered Caribbean people picturesque also included the overall practice of exoticizing any art conveying the tropical landscape, so much so that one develops an exotic vision of one's own environment.

This could often lead to a kind of trivialization of oneself and one's natural surroundings. Ménéil astutely expressed the importance of an individual existing in her own terrain as a profound and rich subject. Such an endeavor has tended to be challenging for people of African descent, particularly in the Americas, given the legacy of slavery and colonialism. These two institutions had an immense effect on Black people of the Western Hemisphere and ultimately affected their relationship to nature. Compounding this predicament is the troubling characterization of African people's affinity to nature as being vile, backward, and therefore infe-

rior to what transpires in Europe. Yet efforts to challenge this delineation of Black people's connectivity to nature by means of a counternarrative emerged in the writings of Martinican Suzanne Césaire that were concurrent to McBurnie's New York years. As I examine in chapter 2, Césaire's concept of the "plant-man" venerates a way of living that is nature-centered as well as a source of empowerment and self-awareness.⁷

This book aims to make sense of these overlooked cultural phenomena and conundrums. In particular, it seeks to illuminate the imaginative ways in which Black visual artists and performers of the Caribbean and the United States sought to create art that was representative of their respective milieus in the early twentieth century. *Tropical Aesthetics of Black Modernism* offers a thorough investigation of how Caribbean and American artists of the early twentieth century responded to the colonial and hegemonic regimes through visual and performative tropicalist representation. It privileges the land and how a sense of place is critical in the identity formation of early twentieth-century artists as well as their creative processes. While this book offers ideas about Black modernism that are new to the discipline of art history in particular, it is important to acknowledge its address to studies of Black modernity more broadly.⁸

By proposing an alternative understanding of the tropics, this book shows how Aaron Douglas, Wifredo Lam, Josephine Baker, Maya Angelou, and some masqueraders and designers of Trinidad Carnival effectively contributed to the development of Black modernity and even Black sonic modernity. My theoretical intervention demonstrates how tropicality calls for a new understanding of the African diasporic experience, a unifying element connecting the Black Atlantic that is not generic but creates a linkage between this enclave and the land of origin—Africa. This notion of tropicality thus disrupts the construction of Africa as the antithesis of Europe and the embodiment of the past and renders the Pan-African world as a purposeful interlocutor of modern life.

In his formative work *The Other America*, literary scholar J. Michael Dash grapples with the reductive conceptualization of the New World within the realm of the natural. For him, the conventional idea that Europe is the domain of culture will always be a crucial aspect of the exotic discourse imposed on any attempt to engender a counterdiscourse situating the New World and more specifically the Caribbean in terms of culture. More importantly, "since the realm of nature within which the New World is inscribed is itself the product of representation . . . the natural will become a significant and problematic terrain within which a counterdis-

cursive practice will be situated.”⁹ *Tropical Aesthetics of Black Modernism* recognizes this conundrum and examines these challenges, given the disposition from which tropical and subtropical terrains and the Black bodies that occupy them have been perceived and represented by European interlopers over time. Despite the predicament that works of art and literature have consistently represented these regions in a singular manner, this book aims to show how Black Atlantic visual artists and performers of the early twentieth century unabashedly set about not only redefining themselves but also recontextualizing the portrayals of equatorial territories with which they are often associated.

This book grapples with the ways in which visual tropes of tropicality complicated the conveyance of modernity for Black people in different locations throughout the Black Atlantic. For this reason, the crucial artworks of the Caribbean modern art movement and of the Harlem Renaissance ought not be viewed as being particular to their geopolitical parameters but as part of a larger African diasporic mission. As Brent Hayes Edwards reminds us, the Pan-Africanist movement that emerged in the advent of the twentieth century was both political and cultural in its efforts to fully galvanize the people of African descent around the world.¹⁰ Pan-Africanism is also viewed as being at the forefront of the global movement against imperialism. Furthermore, Black radicals connected the struggles of Black people in the West to those in Africa.¹¹ Given this reality, I contend that this discourse of internationalism also existed in the realm of visual art. This book therefore examines the creative manifestations of Black modernism in the early twentieth century and explicates how tropicality functioned as a key unifying element in African diasporic art. By examining the works of Wifredo Lam, Aaron Douglas, Maya Angelou, and Josephine Baker as well as the costumed bands prevalent in Trinidad Carnival, I explicate how their representations of tropical and subtropical landscapes are reflective of the unique yet complex relationship that Black people of these respective regions have with the terrain they inhabit—land on which many of their enslaved ancestors labored.

Despite this traumatic legacy, these works nonetheless show how this land is revered by its inhabitants, who recognize it for its beauty, with the intention not to transform it but to accept it. This ideological heeding of nature should be viewed as an alternative modernity that counters the idea of transforming “undeveloped” nature for the sake of capitalist expansion.¹² In so doing, there is a particular political enterprise at stake, one that dissociates the land with the history of slavery and thereby reclaims

it. Artists such as Wifredo Lam and Josephine Baker are thus highlighting the internationalist ethos of Pan-Africanism through their visual and performed explorations of landscapes—terrains that are mostly tropical—and are therefore geopolitically uniting areas such as the southern United States and the Caribbean. Ultimately, this book seeks to illuminate the desire for early twentieth-century Black Atlantic peoples to engender a sense of belonging to the citizenry and a particular kind of claim to the land that they inhabit, which speaks to a desire for home.

TROPICALIZING THE LANDSCAPE

Historically, the relationship between Europe and the non-West has always been characterized by discourses of imperialism and colonialism. The power dynamic thus established the West as the dominant and superior power that stood in opposition to the non-West as the inferior other. Much scholarship has examined the political, cultural, and historical paradigms of this relationship and how it has shaped the ways in which non-Europeans are viewed.¹³ However, the physical environments where these people resided possessed just as much significance in the way non-Western people and their cultures have been represented. The Europeans considered these landscapes to be quite alien and a major contributing factor to the supposed degeneracy and savagery of these alien peoples.¹⁴ This kind of geographical discourse undoubtedly justified the view that it was the Western world's utmost responsibility to bring these terrains and the people who occupied them into assiduous subordination.

It is for this reason that the Caribbean and the southern region of the North American continent have been designated as part of the tropics. The tropics are located in the middle latitudes of Earth between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn and also go beyond these latitudes to include proximate areas that experience tropical and subtropical conditions. The tropics can thus be interpreted as a Western way of stating difference and unfamiliarity in cultural forms and environment, cultures and landscapes that are distinctly alien from the normality of the northern temperate zone. This is implied in the use of the word *tropic* in the name of the latitudinal lines differentiating the tropical and temperate zones of the world; the word is an institutionalized term that has become part of the English language. Still, tropicality is a form of othering that encapsulates “an ambivalent body of ideas, representations, and experiences,” all of which exist



1.2 *Golden Vale*, ca. 1913. From *Jamaica: British West Indies* (Boston: United Fruit Company, 1913).

in mental juxtaposition to something else; or, simply stated, tropicality is a social construction rather than a material reality.¹⁵

Since the fifteenth century, Europeans viewed these zones as tropical Edens characterized by an exotic otherness, since for them the tropical world invoked images of the Garden of Eden and reflected an abundance of nature (figure 1.2). Visitors to places like the Caribbean and South Asia were so amazed by the bountiful vegetation and the diversity of tropical birds and animals, so much so that equatorial regions constituted the antithesis of the bleak existence of the humanized environment in the temperate regions of the world. Their perception of non-Western peoples who lived in harmony with their environment contrasted the destruction of the environment by European intervention, and an abundance seemed to contrast a Europe that was scarcely free of famine and plague. However, by the eighteenth century, an association between tropical climate and disease was established since the term *tropical* now connoted negativity and darkness.¹⁶ A similar perception emerged in the United States, where the semitropical environments of the rural South were characterized by swamps, jungles, and marshes. The nationalist romanticism once reserved for terrains of the North slowly attenuated and was eventually

replaced by escapist connotations, most notably with the subtropical locales of the South. In fact, it was the imagery of the swamp that captivated people's interest, and it was interpreted as an elusive environment. The American swamp was the domain of sin, death, decay, the locale for witchcraft as well as ferocious creatures.¹⁷

It is clear that what was perceived as tropical was rooted in the mind's eye. The German traveler and naturalist Alexander von Humboldt was more influential than any other figure in Europe in his invention of the notions of the tropics both "as a field of scientific enquiry and an aesthetic domain."¹⁸ From 1799 to 1804, Humboldt embarked on an extensive scientific exploration of the New World. Eventually, he published thirty volumes on these findings in 1827, and he lectured widely throughout Europe.¹⁹ His writings reflect the awe of his experience of the tropics, which he saw as being full of "organic richness" and "abundant fertility." Humboldt firmly declared that the tropics epitomized the wonders of nature: "Nowhere does she more deeply impress us with a sense of her greatness, nowhere does she speak to us more forcibly."²⁰ In fact, he was far more inspired by the landscape than the inhabitants while traveling throughout the Americas in the late eighteenth century.²¹

While tropicalia was an imposing spectacle for people like Humboldt, it proved to be an adverse environment for others. Noted figures such as Walter Raleigh grew weary of the dangers of thunder and lightning, earthquakes, diseases, and the many beasts that roam the forests. Indeed, disease became a defining characteristic of the tropics in the minds of Europeans, since many worried that the heat and humidity would likely produce gruesome miasmas that could have devastating effects on the European body. It was also believed that the tropical climate elicited physical laxity and relaxed one's moral fiber.²² In one account of the Jamaican landscape, Raleigh's disposition is heightened by fear and apprehension due to a supposed parasitic plant that is represented as an all-encompassing means of death and likened to a voracious animal.²³ And, as with the jungles of the tropical world, many believed in the morbid implications from what lurked beneath the swamp's waters of the southern United States. William Wirt experienced Virginia's and North Carolina's Great Dismal Swamp as "an immense morass" that "had become the secure retreat of ten thousand beasts of prey."²⁴ Such disparaging imagery conjured from these interpretations of the southern United States and the Caribbean speak to the extent to which tropical regions were constructed from a psychological urge on the part of these writers who greatly influenced visual artists

to create psychological landscape paintings. Since writers, explorers, and scientists began to view various natural elements as no longer utopic but more unnerving, these terrains soon encouraged efforts to look inward and explore oneself beyond the province of social conventions.²⁵

Given the visual and experiential mode in which the tropics have been interpreted by the West historically, I am interested in the sensory and intellectual reaches of viewing the tropics as “a realm of aesthetic experience.”²⁶ It is clear that from very early on, visitors to tropical regions were fully engaged with the imagistic features of the equatorial landscape. However, when artists and writers who ventured to tropical zones represented these terrains, their perceptions of the physical arrangements were compounded by projections of values and ideals as well as certain fears and prejudices.²⁷ Historian Nancy Leys Stepan reminds us that the word *landscape* refers to “a manner of perceiving space in terms of a scene situated at a distance from the observer [that] is rooted . . . in a Western way of organizing the visual field” and that the “designation of a site as one of ‘nature’ often results in our ignoring the social matrices that frame or produce it . . . or the realities and textures of human activities necessary to make it work as a site of nature.”²⁸ Undeniably, this is what artists who aspired to render their visual perception of the tropics sought to accomplish. Frederic E. Church, a prominent nineteenth-century American landscape painter associated with the Hudson River School, was among the first group of artists who traveled to South America and the Caribbean to explore the aesthetic possibilities of tropical terrains, paying particular attention to mountain scenery. The writings of Humboldt proved to be a significant impetus for this sojourn, especially the scientist’s challenge that artists “should be enabled far in the interior of continents, in humid mountain valleys of the tropical world, to seize . . . on the true image of the varied forms of nature.”²⁹ Humboldt’s writings celebrated the link between physical life on Earth and the character of its inhabitants, and Americans would have taken those ideas to heart during the age of Manifest Destiny.³⁰

Over the course of several months, Church traversed tropical territories creating works such as *The Heart of the Andes* (1857), *The Veil of St. Thomas, Jamaica* (1867), and *Morning in the Tropics* (1876). Church’s compositions featured grandiose panoramas of tropical scenery, painted with microscopic detail and a level of accuracy that reflected the prevailing geological theory of the time. A key philosophical notion among the Hudson River School was a privileging of nature that many believed to be syn-

onymous with God. This kind of Christianized naturalism transcended theological parameters that separated God and nature, thereby replacing the Bible with nature.³¹ Constructing a landscape composition was thus a moral endeavor, and tropical landscapes were often composed of dark and shadowy regions of jungle in the lower portions that gave way to sun-drenched and sublime heights of the mountain ranges and sky. Church, however, was far too enthusiastic about the visual appeal of tropical vegetation to convey the supposed macabre elements of the jungle.³² Also, for late nineteenth-century American landscape painters and photographers alike, a key aspect of creating these compositions was offering viewers the “best general view” that quantifies the natural formations of the terrain, thereby asserting a European American value system that stipulated that certain features exemplified what were perceived as the unique qualities of the environment.³³ These paintings that showcased the panoramic vistas of tropical foliage and seascapes therefore shaped the signification of this type of imagery for years to come.

Eventually, idealized perceptions of the tropics influenced how natural landscapes in tropical parts of the world were reconstituted to meet these expectations. In *An Eye for the Tropics*, art historian Krista Thompson defines such constructions of “place-images” as they pertain to the Anglophone Caribbean as tropicalization. The term refers to “the complex visual systems through which the islands were imaged for tourist consumption and the social and political implications of these representations on actual physical space on the islands and their inhabitants.”³⁴ Hoteliers, colonial administrators, and local white mercantile elites physically transformed or tropicalized many aspects of the islands so that they mimicked picturesque, photographic representations created by British, American, and local photographers that became symbolic of specific islands. These picturesque images rendered the terrain as rural, exotic, primitive, and unmodern.³⁵

This preoccupation with tropicalia continued well into the twentieth century. Artists such as Henri Rousseau of France created lush jungle scenes full of exotic vegetation and wild animals on canvases. Rousseau’s *The Dream* (1907) was not painted in the tropics but was inspired by the Jardin des Plantes in Paris, from where he was able to envisage a tropical vision that was experiential at its core.³⁶ Many artists of the Art Deco style also incorporated tropical elements into their work. This iconic style found in the design and architecture of the 1920s and 1930s was created out of concern that the new century should produce an appropriate style. Much inspiration for Art Deco came from the imagery of empire present

in the picture palaces and amusements halls of late Victorian Britain, for example, as well as ancient Egyptian and Native American imagery.³⁷

The bas-relief created for the Musée des Colonies, which was the only permanent edifice built for the 1931 Colonial Exposition in Paris, epitomizes such imagery of colonial empire that was prevalent in early twentieth-century Europe. Alfred Janniot's bas-reliefs featured colonial subjects of Africa and Asia immersed in agricultural and artisan work, laboring to exploit the colony's natural bounty for the good of the metropole.³⁸ Indeed, these European artists aestheticized the Western construct of the tropics as a means to visually convey an "experience" of being in an exotic location, which was characterized by colonial conquest and capitalist exploitation. And these sites located in the non-West epitomize, according to cultural theorist Édouard Glissant, "antispaces" that are limited in scope yet "diverse enough to multiply it into infinity. It is . . . like an anthology of landscapes."³⁹ Like the conflation of African and Asian rain forests in Janniot's bas-reliefs, visual renderings of tropicality were universalizing, with each tropical image rendered indistinguishable.⁴⁰ Furthermore, exoticism became the discursive means through which Europe could decipher the strange terrains and cultures it colonized.⁴¹ And the exotic otherness of the colonies also provided avant-garde artists and writers a chance to embody that romanticist primitivism they believed the inhabitants possessed.

ON BLACK MODERNISM

Nonetheless, how are we to interpret the conveyance of tropicality by members of a racial group often associated with tropical terrains? In what ways can one identify and grapple with the aesthetic register of tropicality, and, more important, what can this tell us about the Black Atlantic experience in the first half of the twentieth century, which was unmistakably modern yet not always perceived in this way? Although the artistic and cultural forms of Africa and its diaspora contributed significantly to the development of modernism, they were seldom seen as having a fundamental role in the shaping of modernism.⁴² Studies of modernism often omit the Harlem Renaissance or *négritude*, for example, thereby never considering the circulation of artists and ideas across regions, continents, and racial and cultural lines.⁴³

Modernism is often described as the rebellious artistic and literary movements of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europeans and European Americans, whose sense of dissatisfaction with indus-

trialization was reflected in the breakdown of the representational in art and literature. Nonetheless, modernism is concomitant with the sociological processes referred to as modernity, which is defined as social forces such as industrialization, urbanization, commodification, and technological innovations that reflect the rise of the machine age in Western Europe and America. Yet when histories of colonial conquest, the annihilation of indigenous populations, and the enslavement of African peoples are considered in the historical mapping of modernity, as literary scholar Simon Gikandi attests, Eurocentric narratives of modernity are postulated as that which happens to rather than that which is effected by non-European peoples.⁴⁴

Undoubtedly, artists of the African diaspora were united in their steadfastness to visualize the complications of Black modernism and in so doing contributed to an existing global modern art movement. In the Caribbean, the desire for evidence of Black indigeneity that fueled cultural nationalist and anticolonialist movements went hand in hand with substantiating claims that the respective islands of the Anglophone Caribbean, for example, could be self-governed modern nation-states. Soon the iconography that was instituted in artworks became emblematic of Caribbeanness as well as a particular modern Caribbean aesthetic. Similarly, the development of an aesthetic that reflected the ethos of African American identity was key to the ideological framework of the New Negro movement. Alain Locke, the leading figure of the movement, expertly recognized a new self-awareness among Black Americans that was akin to modernity in the early decades of the twentieth century.⁴⁵ Yet artists and performers were able to go beyond these nationalist preoccupations and offer through their work a visual rendering of a unified African diasporic experience.

A number of scholars have pushed for a more pluralistic approach to the canonical framing of modernism through their articulations of African diasporic modernisms, and these often call for a privileging of the social, political, and economic underpinnings of cultural production. Art historian Richard J. Powell identifies Black modernism as the conveyance of modernity filtered through the colored lens and focus of a subjective, African American urban perspective, which would often incorporate cubist and expressionist forms in addition to an African American–derived “blues aesthetic” into scenographies.⁴⁶ Literary scholar Houston A. Baker Jr. recognizes the rise of Booker T. Washington as a national leader as the dawn of African American modernism.⁴⁷ Caribbean modernism, accord-

ing to J. Michael Dash, begins with the 1804 Haitian Revolution, since this is the first time Caribbean thought challenged the “reductive mystification of colonialism.”⁴⁸ And modern art in the Caribbean, as art historian Veerle Poupeye attests, also features representations that are particular to the development of cultural nationalism in already independent countries such as Haiti and Cuba, as well as the conveyance of the desire for independence from still-colonized entities such as Martinique and Barbados.⁴⁹

But these competing modernisms are nationalist and regionalist in their concerns. Rather than reprise the marginalizing tactics of the Eurocentric model, Glissant calls for alternative modernisms to be more collective and not singular in their rethinking of these narratives. And he encourages these constructions to embrace the complications that already exist: “They must include all at once struggle, aggressiveness, belonging, lucidity, distrust of self, absolute love, contours of the landscape, emptiness of the cities, victories, and confrontations. That is what I call our irruption into modernity.”⁵⁰ This line of inquiry speaks to the importance of recognizing a diversity of experiences in modernism but in particular the diverse experiences of Black modernism. As Glissant further elucidates, the human spirit yearns for a cross-cultural relationship without universalist transcendence, and diversity requires the presence of peoples with the intention of creating a new relationship.⁵¹ In this vein, art historian Kobena Mercer characterizes modernism as global or cosmopolitan, given the interactive relationships that have always been present between the Western center and societies hitherto placed on the periphery.⁵² Given these realities, art historian Lowery Stokes Sims argues that, for Black artists, “modernism affirmed the notion that a modern individual could be an agent of change or transformation. Whereas for white artists modernism was reflected in the breakdown of the representational and the familiar in literature and art, for Black artists that rupture represented a potential revolution in self-definition and self-image as they assumed the role of proactive rather than reactive agents in contemporary society.”⁵³

Sims’s bold assertion intimates the potentiality and promise of identity formation and self-making that the creative community throughout the Black Atlantic recognized in modernism. Apart from revealing the manifold experiences of Black Atlantic peoples of the early twentieth century that Glissant and Mercer explicate, the visual art and performances examined in this book offer transformative meditations of the terrains on which Black people occupied and, in so doing, conceive a new understanding of

“home” that went in tandem with the new ways in which Black people perceived themselves.

TROPICAL AESTHETICS

The tropics along with the values the term connoted in the West were always considered to be antithetical to the European models of civilization, industrialization, and progress.⁵⁴ At the same time, because of efforts by avant-garde artists to challenge the art establishment’s parameters of what constitutes art, tropical flora and other natural motifs became integral in the development of modern art and design movements such as Arts and Crafts, Art Deco, Art Nouveau, and Jugendstil (German version of Art Nouveau). From the late nineteenth century, the use of tropical plants to accent the interior design of one’s living quarters was a key indicator of one’s socioeconomic status.⁵⁵

Undeniably, the artists and performers I discuss in this book created artistic evocations of tropicality that were in dialogue with parallel explorations of the intersection of tropicality and the Black experience of the early twentieth century in literature and theater. A fecundity of tropicality was present in novels such as *Cane* by Jean Toomer, *Porgy* by DuBose Heyward, *Tropic Death* by Guyanese-born Eric Walrond, and *Banana Bottom* by Jamaican-born Claude McKay. However, much of these meditations echoed predominant conceptions of the tropical landscape in the Western imaginary. Other early twentieth-century artists of the Black Atlantic have incorporated tropical aesthetics to expound their own experiences of Black modernism. American Doris Ulmann’s photography conveyed how a southern Black subjectivity hinged with a southern landscape encapsulated what Powell calls “a modern ‘ancestorism.’”⁵⁶ This emphasis of the cultural bond these subjects have with their ancestors is evident in photographs such as *Nun with Girl, New Orleans*; there is an undeniable recognition of the common Black folk and their cultural importance. While Ulmann’s imagery captured early twentieth-century African Americans who retained their cultural heritage, it also celebrated the quiet tenacity of a people who persevered through great political, social, and economic transformations. Alternatively, African American Richmond Barthé’s sculptural representations of African-descended peoples were largely informed by reductive perceptions of Africa and other tropical locations as exotic yet fearsome.⁵⁷

Jamaican sculptor Edna Manley created arresting carvings that celebrated the Black working class. During the impassioned 1930s that were characterized by the West Indian labor movement during which working-class men and women protested relentlessly for better working conditions and fair wages in the workplace, Manley's sculptures such as *Negro Aroused* echoed the sentiments of the anticolonialist movement and a modernity that was quintessentially Caribbean.⁵⁸ Known mostly for paintings he created during his stay in Haiti, African American artist William Edouard Scott also created American landscape paintings that feature the subtropical terrains of South Carolina and West Virginia with introspective portrayals of its Black inhabitants.⁵⁹ The striking compositions of Haitian artist Hector Hyppolite present imagery associated with the Vodun religion, of which he was a devout practitioner. Using bright colors and visionary scenes, Hyppolite's art is an example of cultural nationalism, the movement that saw the cultural contribution of the Black masses as indigenous to the region and intrinsic in modern Caribbean art.⁶⁰ The manifestation of tropicalia in the African American imaginary of this era emerged in theater productions such as *Voodoo Macbeth* (1936) and *Haiti* (1938). Josephine Baker's performances at Les Folies Bergère and Théâtre des Champs-Élysées featured primitivist embodiments of blackness that incited in her Parisian audience a reductive reading of the "other." These provocative performances, often staged in a tropical setting, were largely characterized by a history of European colonial conquest. Yet they reflected Baker's ability to transform herself and exert a level of self-agency as a modern Black woman.⁶¹

The works created by these artists are clearly interconnected and reveal evident exchanges that would have occurred across space and medium. This dialogic interplay between literature, theater, blues, and even calypso was crucial to the evolution of creative movements such as Black modernism in the early twentieth century. Furthermore, the intersectionalities of these various disciplines of the arts confirm the benefits to be gained by art history once other artistic constituents are seen as integral to its evolution. This book thus aspires to broaden the epistemological reaches of the discipline of art history by acknowledging the interdisciplinarity inherent in the study of creative production of any kind.

Apart from challenging the parameters of art-making, Black Atlantic artists such as Wifredo Lam and Maya Angelou defied early twentieth-century conventional understandings of tropicalia by re-presenting tropi-

cal terrains in art and performance in new and radical ways. They employed what I call “tropical aesthetics” in an effort to enact the *naming of place*. Women’s studies scholar Katherine McKittrick asserts that such naming, “regardless of expressive method and technique . . . is also a process of self-assertion and humanization.”⁶² The tropical aesthetics that these artists and performers use function in this vein, proving to be an aesthetic that makes possible a “sayability” of geography that enables agency; there is no aspiration for “material ownership and Black repossession but rather . . . a grammar of liberation.”⁶³ Tropical aesthetics thus allowed these artists to visually articulate a different way of knowing and imagining the world.⁶⁴ Since geography in a material and discursive sense is never fully secure, given that three-dimensional space is socially produced, the idea that belonging to a place could lead to a sociospatial liberation is seldom realized for many Black people.⁶⁵

Due to these limitations, tropical aesthetics allows for a critical imaging and reclaiming of space, and through art one can reify social geographies through the manifestation of what McKittrick calls alternative geographic formulations. Indeed, as the artists and performers explored in this book have proven, art can bring into fruition a different sense of place. This was certainly needed in the United States during the dreaded Jim Crow era that Black Americans endured in the South.⁶⁶ The Great Migration ultimately proved to be a feasible means of defying the limitations that African Americans experienced of being reduced to an ungeographic existence. Their traversing across the American continent from the south to the north was a means of attaining sociospatial liberation. For Caribbean peoples, migrating from rural to urban centers within respective islands or to other islands in the archipelago as well as to the neighboring continents of North and Central America were all endured to escape poverty, servitude, and the institutionalized oppression that colonization mandated in order to achieve the same sociospatial liberation.⁶⁷ At the quotidian level, these Black Atlantic peoples created alternative geographic formulations in order to have a sense of place, a rootedness they desired in order to attain some semblance of sovereignty. Although their new environments may not have resembled what they were accustomed to, they could still envisage the possibility of agency and realize the promise of freedom in their natural surroundings. These notions are fully present in the works of Wifredo Lam, Aaron Douglas, Maya Angelou, Josephine Baker, and early twentieth-century Trinidad Carnival through the employment of tropical aesthetics.

The surrealist notion of the *marvelous real* is a crucial means through which tropical aesthetics can be galvanized. Cuban critic and novelist Alejo Carpentier asserted that the marvelous “arises from an unexpected alteration of reality (the miracle), from a privileged revelation of reality . . . an amplification of the scale and categories of reality, perceived with particular intensity by virtue of an exaltation of the spirit that leads it to a kind of extreme state.”⁶⁸ René Ménil considered how one’s relationship with the terrain can be recuperated through this notion. For him, the land of the marvelous is a stunning revenge against a disheartened life, since everything becomes possible in this existence. One can overcome spatial boundaries and therefore cross infinite distances, and one can also transcend temporal limitations, since, in the event of an inadvertent death, one can “be reborn into a more beautiful life.”⁶⁹ Ménil believed that dreams ensure the advent of the marvelous and this imagined marvelous actualizes in time and space through the human body.⁷⁰ This empowering discursive trajectory is in tandem with the spirit of self-definition and transformation Black people believed modernism symbolized for them at the dawn of the twentieth century.

It can be argued that artists and performers I explore were looking to tropicity as a foundation for an aesthetic register through which they could visually grapple with the Black Atlantic experience. Despite the pejoration with which Black people, along with their histories and cultural practices, were viewed, tropical aesthetics offers an emboldened means to project affirmative identity politics for a people so often linked to equatorial regions of the world that were also disparaged. And the marvelous real would have certainly aided in fashioning the desired affinity Black people sought to have with the various spaces they inhabited in the early twentieth century. At times, Black people in the United States may have enacted the marvelous real to render temperate terrains of the northern metropolises subtropical, such as the landscapes of the rural South. And, like their American counterparts, Black people in the Caribbean could subvert their dehumanizing predicaments by crossing into the threshold of the marvelous to transform their experiences and emerge reborn.

On a more fundamental level, tropical aesthetics can be a strategic method used to disrupt the touristic gaze through which the Caribbean archipelago, for example, is viewed, given its potential for inducing agency and imagining new possibilities for one’s natural surroundings. By eradicating reductive visual representations of Black Atlantic peoples and the land they inhabit, tropical aesthetics brings about a reclamation humanity

and dignity. Tropical aesthetics can also aid in the reimagining of the landscapes Black people live on with Black folk in mind, and, via the marvelous real, it can actualize the connectedness these landscapes have with other lands that members of the Black Atlantic occupy. In the realm of performance, tropical aesthetics stimulated an imperative in Black performers of the modern era who transformed their predicament not only through self-reinvention but also through reorienting their relationship with the physical world. Their bodily movements were means through which they created new ways of thinking about themselves as communities in their home countries or even in locations abroad.⁷¹ These performances thus elicited a sense of symbolic belonging to Pan-Africa, since the countries in which they lived did not fully accept them as part of the citizenry or the nation-state. Indeed, many artists, intellectuals, and activists of this historical moment have articulated how restricting the classifications of nationality and ethnic affiliation were to their ambitious pursuits. Tropical aesthetics can certainly aid in understanding how various social and political movements sought to mobilize people of the Black Atlantic during the early twentieth century, thereby allowing artists to experience a marvelous liberation.⁷²



Through the examination of a phenomenon that has gone more or less unnoticed, *Tropical Aesthetics of Black Modernism* makes a substantial contribution to our understanding of Black people's relationship with their environment during the age of modernism and how this in turn contributed to their self-definition in the early twentieth century. This book strives to consider how early twentieth-century Black Atlantic visual artists, performers, and masqueraders were expressing the desire for a sense of belonging to the tropicalist terrains by redefining and thus claiming it through visual representation, embodied performances, or even simply by masquerading on the terrain.

Chapter 1 examines the work of artist Aaron Douglas. A number of Douglas's earlier works from the 1920s to the 1940s prioritized representations of urbanity in an effort to emphasize African Americans' participation in American modernist enterprise. In this chapter, I argue that the compositions in which the natural landscapes predominate should be viewed not as a visual rebuttal of modernism but as a Black modernist re-presentation that envisages tropicalia as monumental and integral to early twentieth-century Black self-definition. One can certainly asso-

ciate Douglas's tropical landscapes of the southern United States and of the Caribbean as evocations of the tropical regions of sub-Saharan Africa. For him, Africa was the common thread that connected Black people of all nationalities. And his tropical scenery served as an intermediary that geologically linked the southern United States and the Caribbean to the continent. I also explore artworks that reflect what I view as Douglas's aspiration to convey a people who desire an alternative to the capitalist order of the land, an alternative modernity that is not monopolizing but is egalitarian. Through the use of a tropical aesthetic, I demonstrate how Douglas's art makes visible and quite perceptible the complicated relationship that members of the Black Atlantic have with their environment, one that can be empowering despite history and integral to their self-definition.

A crucial aspect of blacks attaining self-definition in the early twentieth century was the belief in the possibility of Black political autonomy. Aspirations of Black sovereignty are certainly present in the works of Wifredo Lam, who created art upon his return to Cuba in the 1940s that reflected a desire to reclaim the landscape for the sake of gaining political autonomy, particularly for the Black masses. Building on the idea of the monumentality of the tropical terrain, chapter 2 investigates the ways the artist reinvented the Cuban landscape, particularly given how his compositions rendered a new kind of modernity that privileges nature and man's relationship with it. Given Lam's preoccupation with the land of Cuba and with Black Cuban culture, the chapter illuminates Lam's effort to insightfully represent the environment with a sense of rootedness, a sense of place for Black Cubans, many of whom were diminished by poverty and exploitation. The art he created is imbued with a call for a radical shift in the way Black people mold their identities, insisting that one develops a strong sense of place in this endeavor. In this chapter, I demonstrate how Lam's art reflects his belief that despite the histories of slavery, colonization, and European cultural imperialism the Caribbean has endured, the art and culture emerging from the region can help shape a new disposition. The compositions he created during this period masterfully eradicate reductive visual representations of Caribbean people and the land they inhabit in an effort to reclaim humanity and dignity. Lam referred to his art as an "art of decolonization" and urged all artists with a similar background to sever all ties with the colonial culture. With this in mind, I examine the ways in which Lam and his art encompass the proactive and transformative nature of Black modernism, emphasizing the fundamental purpose of the terrain in this venture.

To further underscore the immense potential of Black modernism in all its configurations, chapter 3 considers how performance can be recognized as a form of visual representation, given the primacy of the body as a medium of visual expression and an immediate means through which the body as a creative force can readily accomplish a direct connection with the terrain and thereby enact a *naming of place*. Through the examination of early to mid-twentieth-century performances of Trinidad Carnival, I interrogate the ways in which Trinidad Carnival of this period functioned as an articulation of Pan-Africanism. The chapter examines the emergence of the Jamette Carnival of the late nineteenth century that was a reflection of the members of the Black underclass who predominated the festivities. I explore the history of the term *jamette* and how it was first a descriptor for an entire class of people and eventually became a term that encompassed the debased traits of a certain type of woman in mid-twentieth-century Trinidad. I use feminist theory to discuss how during Carnival, jamettes defied Victorian principles that relegated women to subservience. The chapter also considers efforts by the colonial authorities to “clean up” the Carnival in an effort to institutionalize it in the early twentieth century and explores ways in which the Black working class and burgeoning Black middle class found ways to challenge these efforts through Carnival performances, costuming, and music. Despite the predicament of antidemocratic colonial policies, many Black Trinidadians found resolve in the proliferation of Ethiopianism and Garveyism, the labor movement that dealt specifically with issues that working men and women faced, as well as the anticolonialism movement. All of this provided much fodder for Carnival celebrations during this era and made possible a carnivalesque yet subversive performance of Black modernism. I also explicate how the festival engendered a type of corporeal expression that on the one hand is creatively oriented and on the other is political in its affect as a strategy of space-making. Carnival provided a visceral means of performatively reclaiming the land belonging to the colonizer while also engaging with the tropical terrain.

The realms of music and theater provide noteworthy examples of how Black bodily articulations can be powerful and effective means of making space, even if the tropical landscape is simulated and tropicalized Black subjectivities are performed. In chapter 4, I examine the ways in which the stage and screen performances of Josephine Baker and Maya Angelou highlight the internationalist ethos of Pan-Africanism through their corporeal venerations of tropicality. Through song and dance, Baker and

Angelou practiced an imperative of the modern era by transforming their predicament not only through self-reinvention but also through reorienting their relationship with the physical world. During the early twentieth century, Black performers such as Baker migrated from the United States, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa to the major European metropolises in order to capitalize on the negrophilia of the time. And in the same way Black Atlantic peoples in Paris vehemently took on structures of cultural power with the narratives they performed that explored the dimensions of these structures and sought opportunities for manipulation and reshaping them, they also defied notions of cartographic reason through their reification of Black people's geography within these geographies of domination.⁷³ Similarly, during the calypso craze that took America by storm in the 1950s, attempts by Black American calypso performers to mimic the Black primitive other symbolize a need to affiliate themselves with diasporic Black peoples. I explore key performances by Angelou and Baker that exemplify tropical aesthetics.

The book's conclusion encourages a consideration of contemporary iterations of tropicity evident in art and visual culture. This chapter first acknowledges the significance of the Tropicalismo movement of Brazil, spearheaded by artist Hélio Oiticica in the 1960s, which aimed to "cannibalize" foreign modern and contemporary artistic styles and, in turn, redeploy this power of the colonizers in an effort to create a new art of exotic Brazil. While this movement is particular to the idiosyncrasies of the Brazilian art world of the mid-twentieth century, it does serve as an example of a larger cultural effort to challenge the reductive connotations of cultural forms imposed by the West and redefine these meanings to create a new signification. Continuing in this trajectory, this chapter aims to examine works by contemporary artists Wangechi Mutu and Edouard Duval-Carrié. I also consider the Black speculative reaches of tropical aesthetics as they manifest in Mutu's works, which situate tropical aesthetics within a larger artistic and political practice that speculates on Black Atlantic pasts, presents, and futures.⁷⁴

The imagined geographies investigated in *Tropical Aesthetics of Black Modernism* are urgent calls to inquire into the extent to which the discipline of art history can be pushed when geography comes into play. How can an attuned awareness of geography inform one's reading of art that ponders the Black experience? In addition, this book tackles the following question: How can the portrayal of the natural be constituted so that it functions as a counterdiscourse to the claim that only Europe is

the domain of culture and therefore superior to non-Western parts of the world?⁷⁵ This book seeks to illuminate how artists and performers conjure the tropical landscape in order to delineate the various experiences, complexities, and affectations ever present in the terrain, thereby not reducing its value to mere physical properties that can be exploited for monetary gain.

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INTRODUCTION

- 1 “Living Portraits: Carl Van Vechten’s Color Photographs of African Americans, 1939–1964,” Carl Van Vechten Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, accessed April 13, 2020, <https://beinecke.library.yale.edu/collections/highlights/living-portraits-carl-van-vechtens-color-photographs-african-americans-1939>.
- 2 Raymond, *Beryl McBurnie*; Sörgel, *Dancing Postcolonialism*, 58–66.
- 3 Eldridge, “Bop Girl Goes Calypso,” 11.
- 4 Ménéil, “Concerning Colonial Exoticism,” 177.
- 5 Ménéil, “Concerning Colonial Exoticism,” 177.
- 6 Ménéil, “Concerning Colonial Exoticism,” 177.
- 7 S. Césaire, “A Civilization’s Discourse,” 97; S. Césaire, *The Great Camouflage*, 112–27.
- 8 A number of important texts have offered substantial scholarship on the notion of tropicity as a social and cultural construct: most notably David Arnold’s *Problem of Nature* (1996), J. Michael Dash’s *Other America* (1998), and David C. Miller’s *Dark Eden* (1989). In terms of my specific focus on how black diasporic artists challenge Western representations of tropicity in art, I am particularly in dialogue with, and indebted to, Krista Thompson’s *Eye for the Tropics* (2006). However, none of these scholars offer a thorough investigation of how Caribbean and American artists of the early twentieth century responded to the colonial and hegemonic regimes through visual and performative tropicalist representation.
- 9 Dash, *Other America*, 29.
- 10 Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*, 20–27.
- 11 Andrews, “Beyond Pan-Africanism.”
- 12 See Niblett, “Arc of the ‘Other America,’” for an extensive literary investigation of how the Caribbean and Latin American terrains have provided alternative visions of nature for their inhabitants.
- 13 Said, *Orientalism*, 202–4.
- 14 Rogers, *Jungle Fever*, 5–17; D. Arnold, *Problem of Nature*, 142.
- 15 D. Arnold, *Problem of Nature*, 141–43.
- 16 D. Arnold, *Problem of Nature*, 147–52; Rogers, *Jungle Fever*, 72–88.
- 17 Enright, *Maximum of Wilderness*, 38–50; Wilson, *Shadow and Shelter*, 4–12; D. Miller, *Dark Eden*, 1–3.

- 18 Baron Alexander von Humboldt; D. Arnold, *Problem of Nature*, 146.
- 19 Enright, *Maximum of Wilderness*, 7; Murray, *Islands and the Sea*, 152.
- 20 Humboldt, *Cosmos*, 1:13.
- 21 Rogers, *Jungle Fever*, 3; Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 119–21.
- 22 Rogers, *Jungle Fever*, 62–89; D. Arnold, *Problem of Nature*, 150–54.
- 23 Walter Raleigh, “Natural Scenery in Jamaica,” *The Crayon*, May 23, 1855, 396, quoted in D. Miller, *Dark Eden*, 121.
- 24 Wirt, *Letters of the British Spy*, 105–6.
- 25 See Dash, *Other America*, 24–25, for more on the reconstruction of the Caribbean not from observation but from a psychological urge. For a discussion of the shift in creating psychological landscapes, see D. Miller, *Dark Eden*, 121.
- 26 Bowd and Clayton, “Tropicality,” 302.
- 27 Enright, *Maximum of Wilderness*, 9–13; D. Miller, *Dark Eden*, 2.
- 28 Stepan, *Picturing Tropical Nature*, 25.
- 29 Humboldt, *Cosmos*, 2:93.
- 30 Ferber, *Hudson River School*, 9–11.
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- 32 Kornhauser and Manthorne, *Fern Hunting*, 2–6; D. Miller, *Dark Eden*, 110–13.
- 33 Berger, *Sight Unseen*, 44–48, 50.
- 34 K. Thompson, *Eye for the Tropics*, 5.
- 35 K. Thompson, *Eye for the Tropics*, 5, 10–13.
- 36 K. Thompson, *Eye for the Tropics*, 20–21.
- 37 Wolf, *Art Deco*, 103–28; Hillier and Escritt, *Art Deco Style*, 21–22, 37–38.
- 38 Morton, *Hybrid Modernities*, 273, 290–96.
- 39 Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 159–60.
- 40 Benítez-Rojo, *Repeating Island*, 5–6.
- 41 Dash, *Other America*, 32.
- 42 Gikandi, “Picasso.”
- 43 Wilks, *Race*, 6–7.
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- 53 Sims, “Post-modern Modernism,” 87.
- 54 D. Arnold, *Problem of Nature*, 128.
- 55 Massey, *Interior Design since 1900*, 36.
- 56 S. Gillespie, *Vernacular Modernism*, 3; Powell, “Re/birth of a Nation,” 25.

- 57 Vendryes, *Barthé*, 51–58; Powell, *Black Art*, 60.
- 58 D. Cullen and Fuentes, *Caribbean*, 17–23; Poupeye, *Caribbean Art*, 73.
- 59 Hartman, “William Edouard Scott Remembered,” 134–35.
- 60 D. Cullen and Fuentes, *Caribbean*, 22; Poupeye, *Caribbean Art*, 81.
- 61 Cheng, *Second Skin*, 23.
- 62 McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, xxii.
- 63 McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, xxiii.
- 64 McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, xxvi.
- 65 McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, xi, xiii, xx.
- 66 Franklin and Moss, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 281–84.
- 67 T. Martin, *Caribbean History*, 197–234.
- 68 Carpentier, “On the Marvelous Real in America,” 86.
- 69 Ménil, “Introduction to the Marvellous,” 91.
- 70 Ménil, “Introduction to the Marvellous,” 93–94.
- 71 Batiste, *Darkening Mirrors*, 25; Kummels, “Staging the Caribbean,” 142.
- 72 Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 19.
- 73 Batiste, *Darkening Mirrors*, 7.
- 74 For more on this topic, see Commander, *Afro-Atlantic Flight*.
- 75 Dash, *Other America*.

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- 1 McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, xxii.
- 2 See Adkins, “Vigilant Torch.” See also, Powell, “Aaron Douglas Effect,” 63.
- 3 Snaith, “C. L. R. James,” 219.
- 4 Byrd and Gates, “Afterword—‘Song of the Son,’” 209.
- 5 Nicholls, “Jean Toomer’s *Cane*,” 158; Snaith, “C. L. R. James.”
- 6 Nicholls, “Jean Toomer’s *Cane*,” 164.
- 7 Toomer, *Cane*, 97.
- 8 Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 75.
- 9 Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 57, 66.
- 10 My thanks to Kimberly Juanita Brown for bringing this quality in Toomer’s work to my attention.
- 11 McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, xxvi.
- 12 Ménil, “Introduction to the Marvellous,” 91.
- 13 McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, xx.
- 14 Noël, “Envisioning New Worlds,” 77.
- 15 J. Johnson, *Book of American Negro Poetry*, 9.
- 16 Alain Locke, “The Legacy of Ancestral Arts,” in Locke, *New Negro*, 255.
- 17 Powell, “Aaron Douglas Effect,” 60.
- 18 Powell, “Re/birth of a Nation,” 16.
- 19 Earle, “Harlem, Modernism, and Beyond,” 28.
- 20 Kirschke, *Aaron Douglas*, 123; Patton, *African American Art*, 139.
- 21 Powell, “Paint That Thing!,” 109.