

Beyond Ethnic Blackness: Black Transnational Consciousness (BTC) and the Practice of Black Intertextuality

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This essay studies the practice of intertextuality by Black writers of the Harlem Renaissance, Haitian Indigénisme, and Negritude Movements. Specifically, from the 1920s to the 1940s, writers of in the United States, Franco-Caribbean Haiti, and Franco-African community in France produced literatures articulating a continuity of vision, and intertextual motif of the Black presence and experience in the world (Senghor 1948; Dash 1981, 1998; Garrett 1963; Wilder 2005, 2015). They responded ideologically to the common social and political struggles, or shared historical realities haunting people of African descent, continentally and diasporically. Notwithstanding their geographical border or distance nor any fundamental differences along the lines of national context, language, culture, and ideas, these writers established an international community and formed an intellectual culture of cooperation during the events of two European “World” Wars and the United States occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934 (Dash 1997; Jackson 1981). As a result, the emergence of a Black transnational collective understanding and cross-cultural politics reconceptualized and reconfigured the very nature of the Black Atlantic (Gilroy 1993; Appiah 1993; Subrahmanyam 1997).

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In the first half of the 20th century, communities of the African Diaspora witnessed the blossoming of various literary and cultural movements that are often treated separately and distinctly, but in fact reveal striking parallels and connections when closely studied. Thus, this essay explores some of the connective linkages, confluences, and similarities between the coeval movements known as the Harlem Renaissance, Negritude, and Haitian Indigénisme (Wintz 1996; Wright 2004). Specifically, it seeks to respond to the following question: In what specific ways did these movements shape discourses on history, race, class, gender, citizenship, universal emancipation, culture, and identity in the 20th century? The essay is thus also an attempt to reconfigure theoretically and intellectually the practices of Black transnationalism through the exploratory trope of Black intertextuality for a new and creative reading of Black internationalism within the framework of connected historiography in African diasporic texts (Bayly 2009; Greene 2008; Davies 1994).

My attempt in this study is to bring together the writers, discourses, institutional practices, and cultural networks of these coeval movements, and to view them as constructing a common ideological and cultural project. I have developed a model phrased Black Transnational Consciousness (BTC) as a way to understand the relationships between these thinkers and movements. Although I do not entirely reject the idea that local and particularistic concerns and linguistic frames fragmented some possibilities of a common view, or that Black Nationalist ideologies, for example, were bound to a notion of race that was itself implicated in European colonialism and enslavement, my emphasis is on the emancipatory potential and content of BTC. Thus, in this essay I consider writers and intellectual-activists such as Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and Claude McKay of the Harlem Renaissance; Jacques Roumain, Jean Price-Mars, Emile Roumer, Jean F. Briere, Leon Laleau of the Haitian Indigénisme; and Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Léon-Gontran Damas of the Negritude Movement (Dash 1981; Fabre 2001; Kennedy 1975; Kestelot 1991; Depestre 1980). I also briefly consider the writings of René Depestre (1980, 1998), whose work has been tremendously influenced by all three movements. Collectively, these Black thinkers not only sought/seek to deconstruct the merit of White reason and White supremacy, but they also interrogated/interrogate the geographical boundary of nation-states, and challenge the Western logic of race and the epistemology supporting it.

It is from this angle, I propose, that the practice of Black intertextuality by Black authors influenced the Harlem Renaissance, Negritude, and Haitian Indigénisme Movements and accounted perhaps for the development of stylistic and rhythmic similarities, comparable themes, motifs, and parallel ideas embedded in Black Atlantic texts. I argue that the use of intertextuality was further a reciprocal activity among the writers of these movements, therefore suggesting an intentional doing that established the idea of mutual interpenetration and general interdependence. In such case, Black internationalism should be viewed within the context of BTC as a cross-cultural dialogue and transnational practice between Black Atlantic writers and

intellectuals. Briefly, BTC seeks to demonstrate *how* and *why* the writers of the Harlem Renaissance, Haitian Indigénisme, and Negritude Movements are connected through intellectual influence and interdependence, literary linkages and parallelisms, and direct and indirect participation and collaboration in the production of a Black Atlantic print culture foregrounding “the themes of the African diaspora” in ways that few other writers—or racial and ethnic communities—are (Hanchard 1999, 117).

Inasmuch, the first part of this essay looks closely at the link between Black internationalism and the idea of connected historiography or connected histories. Second, based on the inferences drawn from the above analysis, it introduces the new subject known as the BTC model. Finally, I bring this study to a closure with an exegetical reading of the practice of intertextuality by Black writers associated with the three coeval movements of interest—Harlem Renaissance, Negritude, and Haitian Indigénisme—by providing various examples of the practice.

The Logic of Connected Historiography and Black Internationalism

In this section, I reflect on some possible links between the philosophy of Black internationalism and the Black diaspora as formulations of the same modern history. In observing potential connections, it is possible to excavate basic assumptions, parallel ideas, and similar patterns in Black internationalist narratives across the African diaspora. First, Joseph E. Harris (1993) defines the African diaspora in the following way:

The African diaspora concept subsumes the following: The global dispersion (voluntary and involuntary) of Africans throughout history; the emergence of a cultural identity abroad based on origin and social condition; and the psychological or physical return to the homeland, Africa. Thus viewed, the African diaspora assumes the character of a dynamic, continuous, and complex phenomenon stretching across time, geography, class, and gender. (3-4)

Harris’s recognition of the Black diaspora as both a construction and a condition is reminiscent of the description of Black internationalism as a categorical concept. Harris further highlights three important steps in the process of diaspora-making; that is, a large-scale scattering, the genesis of Black cultural identity in the host land, and the psychological or physical return to continental Africa. From this framework, one can begin to speak of Black internationalism as a manifestation of the collective African diaspora and its efforts to reunite globally. Kim D. Butler (2001), for instance, conceives the very diaspora as a discourse on the interrelationships and dynamics between segments and members of a diaspora, thereby linking the various dispersed communities. Butler states that “contacts between communities of the diaspora, independent of contacts with the homeland, is vital in forging diaspora consciousness, institutions, and networks” (207).

The people of the African diaspora are knowingly or unknowingly connected from being “on the move”, and know each other as a collective group “coalesced around ‘Blackness’ and share ancestral histories of enslavement and New World oppression” (Butler 2001, 207). Thus, the collective identity and common history said to have been translated in the constructed idea of

“Blackness” was a necessary component of the African diaspora; it transformed the people of African ancestry “from the physical reality of dispersal into the psychosocial reality of diaspora” (207). Therefore, it is plausible to theorize Black internationalism as a historical condition of the African diaspora and as a product of modernity dependent upon a particular historical understanding and framework. Black internationalism is an extension of the African diaspora in its embodiments of expression, complexity, and irregularity.

Yet, Brent Edwards (2003) complicates the nature of Black internationalism by negating the historical intersections and links between Black interlocutors on the national and international levels. Edwards further argues against the notion of a common grammar of Blackness in his analysis of the literature of the Harlem Renaissance and Pre-Négritude. He describes Black internationalism and transnational exchanges between the writers of the two movements as “abortive” and “adversarial internationalisms” (Edwards 2003, 8-9). Edwards’s erudite text revolves around four theoretical concepts: Diaspora, literature, translation, and Black internationalism; however, the weight is given to translation. He first informs us about his motivation, that he is interested in a “vision of internationalism...though not exactly ‘worldwide Black unity’” (5). He next notes that, “the term diaspora...makes possible an analysis of the institutional formations of Black internationalism that attends to their constitutive differences” (11). Then, with a focus on translation as methodology, he posits that the concept of diaspora “marks the ways that internationalism is pursued by translation,” necessarily involving “a process of linking or connecting across gaps—a practice we might term articulation” (11). In other words, Edwards frames diasporic difference rather than connectivity through translation, an interpretive device central to his theorizing regarding Black internationalism. He presumes that “The cultures of Black internationalism can be seen only in translation” (7).

In addition, by using the French term, *décalage*, which could be *literally* translated as “gap,” “discrepancy,” “time-lag,” or “interval,” from this particular angle, Edwards then describes the nature of Black internationalism and the exchanges between Black transnationalists as reflecting the *décalage* concept. Thus, he would state that “*Décalage* indicates the reestablishment of a prior unevenness or diversity...*Décalage* provides a model for what resists or escapes translation through the African diaspora. It directs our attention to the ‘antithetical structure’ of the term diaspora, its risky intervention” (Edwards 2003, 14-15). Accordingly, translation as a singular technique does not obliterate difference but rather imposes and defers to it (Hanchard 1999, 113). In other words, the act of focusing on translational difference is indicative of one’s assertion of diasporic hybridity instead of unity in global Blackness. Because of Edwards’s strong accent on the concept of translation in Black Atlantic print culture, Black internationalism for Edwards (2003) “is first and foremost premised on the crossing of spatial and linguistic boundaries” (Hanchard 1999, 114). These observations above illustrate the one-dimensional aspect of Edwards’s analysis and articulation of Black internationalism. Arguably, “the acts and process of translation that are so critical to Edwards’s vision of Black transnationalism are actually a subset or instrument of a broader, more deeply structuring process of politics itself” (115). Translation is just one of the modalities for understanding Black internationalism, thus, Edwards has ignored a host of other means and expressions that constitute the full dimension and discourse of Black internationalism in the first half of the 20th century—

such as Black cosmopolitanism, Black humanism, Black consciousness, and Pan Africanism or Black solidarity.

Furthermore, Edwards and other critics have overlooked a critical feature of Black internationalists in their attempt to bridge the multiple cultural worlds and negotiate the cultural distinctions of the Black Atlantic. Case in point, the idea of ‘cultural and intellectual bridge’ is indicative of Senghor’s enormous contributions to the idea of Black transnationalism and the Black diaspora. In his attempt to reconcile Black difference and diversity, Senghor (1964) defined Negritude as “the spirit of Negro-African civilization, the sum total of the cultural values of the Black world” (9). Senghor’s particular edict of Negritude had a substantial impact on modern Afrocentrists, Blacks activists and anticolonial fighters. Further, his idea of a homogenous and transnational Black cultural identity has proven useful in the rejection of Western or European imperialism, worldview, values, interpretations and hegemony.

For instance, McKay’s (1987, 1929) Black internationalism, as articulated both in his *Home to Harlem* and *Banjo: A Story without a Plot*, is an attempt to work through Black diasporic tension and misunderstandings. The objective of both novels is to form diasporic linkages and bonds, and to orchestrate transatlantic conversations and collaborations between members of the Black Atlantic intelligentsia in the 20th century. The writings of Jean F. Brierre, Léon Laleau, Langston Hughes, and Jacques Roumain are also telling in their efforts toward cultivating and communicating the reality, idea of, or desire for a global vision of Blackness. As Michelle Stephens (2005a) observes, “To say that the Black internationalism is structured by difference and by the tensions of the national is to some degree a given and our starting point; it has certainly been the starting point for Black internationalists eager to image the race as a single global community throughout the twentieth century” (103). Also, Black internationalism “asked not only how we can create linkages within the race, but also what are the forces that create many of the differences that make up a heterogeneous Blackness,” and “They also asked how we might eradicate those specifically national differences by articulating them to broader transnational histories and structures” (Stephens 2005b, 6), particularly since the onset of European colonialism and imperialism.

Transnational Networks and Black Mobility

Afro-Caribbeans and intellectuals living in metropolitan cities in Paris, London, and Harlem at the height of the two European World Wars had an analogous experience. In the heyday of Garveyism and the New Negro Movement, the processes of displacement and alienation from Africa as homeland, especially for Caribbean Blacks, created the possibility for mobilization and unification of transnational Black communities, notwithstanding Black writers. In the same time frame, what is called the Great Migration of African Americans from the South to the North due to higher unemployment, racial violence, and discrimination in the Southern region culminated with the need for industrial labor at the close of the 19th century and created the environment for Blacks to further unite and raise racial and class consciousness in the United States. Furthermore, aggressive U.S. American military imposition in Haiti in 1914 together with

European colonization of Africa until the 1960s had preconditioned Black people in the United States, the Caribbean, and elsewhere residing in the Western world to the need to fight against racial oppression and imperialist powers, forge cultural and intellectual relationships, and make new national and cross-cultural alliances, including transnational frameworks of identity (Wilder 2005; Stoval 1996; Stephens 2005).

The relocation of people of African descent to various metropolitan areas at the beginning of European World War I to the post-Euro-World War II era also hastened the need for Black intellectuals, writers, and activists to connect, mobilize, support each other, and orchestrate models of Black self-determination, Black internationalisms, and other “conceptual categories that might document their multifarious experiences” as White-centered governments continuously factored Black communities out of reconstructive focus (Stephens 2005, 3). In addition, the Russian Revolution in 1917, which grounded revolutionary identity not in national but international proletarian solidarity, brought Black intellectuals and internationalists together for a common cause beyond the politics of the nation-state and ethnic Blackness. Black internationalists were able to use this particular historical event as means to “strengthen their individual nationalist struggles and aspirations through international racial formations, transnational race-based networks conceived in terms of communism, diaspora, or even imperialism” (Stephens 2005, 3). In other words, Marxism and communism were in many ways constitutive in the development of Black internationalist politics. It is good to highlight here that Black transnationalism was the result of various cultural formations and intersections, and of complex relationships and social forces. What I call Black internationalism located in intellectual and creative texts was also expressed in other cultural, social, political, as well as religious ways.

Regardless of the mode of expression, the point being made here is that the phenomenon of Black mobility, sometimes by voluntary action but many other times due to historical moments and processes of racist hostility, war, etc., as referenced above, was instrumental in the project of Black transnationalism of the 1920s-1960s, including as a category of the Negritude Movement in Paris and its counterparts in the United States (the Harlem Renaissance) and Haiti (Haitian Indigénisme). Michelle Wright (2004) reiterates that cross-cultural “Black identity has been produced in contradiction” to modernity (1). Both Henry Louis Gates (2010) and Paul Gilroy (1993) also affirm Black radical traditions or revolutionary ideas and activisms as counter discourses to the hegemonic domination and the cultural values of White American-Western powers (e.g., Gilroy, 1-40; Gates, 33-164). However, while principles of Black transnationalism also operated within Euro-American models and schools of thought—such as Marxism, socialism, communism, psychoanalysis, surrealism, etc.—the latter did not fully contextualize the various thoughts and ideologies necessary to address the Black condition and challenge those traditions in return. Can we then speak of the “Black” in Black internationalism only in the “transitional” or “provisional” sense? Assuredly, no. The respective writers of the associated Black literary movements of the 20th century interrogated the meaning of “Blackness” and simultaneously sought the language to articulate Black subjectivity and Black existence in and of itself, as well as in relation to the racist, imperialist situation seeking to undermine and subvert Blackness (Davies 1994, p. 8). Indicatively, within the framework of Black globality generally,

and Black internationalism in the manifestations of Negritude, the Harlem Renaissance, and the Haitian Indigénisme particularities might be construed as a “product of consciousness, that is, the conscious interconnection and interlocution of Black struggles across man-made and natural boundaries including the boundaries of nations, empires, continents, oceans, and seas” (West, Martin and Wilkins 2009, 1).

The idea of “connections” further elucidates that there are various interactions and different types of “transatlantic Black contacts” among Black internationalists and transnationalists to consider. The comparative literature of the literary and socio-political movements of Negritude, the Harlem Renaissance, and Haitian Indigénisme stand as witness(es). Thus would Patrick Manning (2010) note that “Africa and [the] African diaspora provide a geographic and social space within which numerous elements and personalities have interacted, serving to unite but also to transform the patterns of the whole” (9). Manning is correct to affirm the hybrid nature of the Black diaspora. Black internationalism as a subset of the African diaspora has maintained and renewed itself as a broad cross-cultural phenomenon of shared identity through connections among international groups and transnational communities (9). For instance, the Negritude writers of 1930s Paris came from different geographical locations of the Black diaspora: Aimé Césaire from Martinique, Léon Damas from French Guinea, and Léopold Senghor from Senegal. Collectively, however, they created what I call a “transnational local community.” Their group was “local” because Paris is a very specific location in France, and yet it was also “transnational” because the Negritude cohort originated from three different countries and two different continents that gave birth to the movement. In this sense, it is logical to speak first of the Negritude Movement not so much as a school of thought, but as a transatlantic dialogue; and further as a crossing or meeting point intrinsic to the “integrated Atlantic world” (Elliott 2006, 219).

Negritude and its counterparts in the Harlem Renaissance and Haitian Indigénisme are cultural and intellectual expressions of Black modernity that stand to be “placed in a frame of interconnections, or networks, of peoples, and places that transcends the boundaries” within the overriding discourses of nation-state and nationality (Bhabra 2009, 152). Additionally, the idea of international routes, movements, and travels preconditioned and were significant contributive factors in the creation of Black internationalism. Black transnationalism in this respect emphasizes overlapping historical parallels and convergences as dynamic connection points expressed in the literature of Black people in the Atlantic world. It also attests to their relations with hegemonic Euro-American powers, African rapport with non-African communities despite Euro-American hegemony, and, the social and cultural mixing of Black and other communities. In other words, Black internationalism might be conceived as a hybrid, syncretic, and creolized phenomenon through the processes of connected histories and intercrossing that nevertheless accepts *Black* transnationalism. That is, “connected histories” is an alternative way of thinking about the modern world, particularly of Black internationalism, and in addressing the experiences of Black internationalists of these coeval movements across the geographic space without reducing individual and collective experiences to either the notion of total commonality nor “deviant particularity” (Bhabra 2009, 146-7). Likewise, as the Black Atlantic is a modern invention of the imperialist, European history across the Atlantic, Black internationalism can also

be thought of as “a system of Blacks, a world within a world,” powerfully promoting the notion of and need for Black connection and subjectivity (Dubois and Scott 2010, x).

The Logic of Connected History

In recent years, historians and social scientists have explained the birth of the modern world through the paradigm of connected history, or shared historiography. For example, Charles Verlinden describes the connected history of the Atlantic civilization in this manner:

It is certain that an Atlantic civilization exists today and that the nations of western Europe as well as the two Americas and South Africa are daily becoming more completely integrated within it. A civilization nourished by and based on ideas, institutions, and forms of organization and work of common origins had developed gradually on the two coasts of the new Mediterranean of our time: the Atlantic Ocean. (Qtd. in Bayly 2009, 19)

Accordingly, the terms “connected” or “connection” pertaining to the Atlantic civilization bears the idea of “integral bindings between common economic and institutional structures and cultural life,” even if hegemonic on one hand, “and [people of the Atlantic world are] more conscious of their mutual interests and interrelations” in time (Qtd. in Bayly, 20). Sanjay Subrahmanyam (1997) was probably one of the first Asian historians to use the phrase “connected histories” in a tour-de-force article to study the dynamic relations and exchanges between Europe, North Africa, and South Asia in early modern time. Like other historians who have favored the connected history or comparable history paradigm to examine the formation of the modern world, Subrahmanyam complains that “nationalism has blinded us to the possibility of connection” between peoples, cultures, and nations (761).

Connected histories reject the idea that any history begins from a singular vantage point or from the narrative of the “exceptional” nation, group, or race. Rather, the method suggests that a network of interdependent histories and interrelationships between peoples and nations surfaces the interconnectedness of the world we inhabit (Bhambra 2009, 30-1). For instance, Subrahmanyam (1997) describes how the Atlantic world was historically connected by identifying some “unifying features” that were present in the formation of modern nations in the advent of modernity that decenters the particularistic, supremacist European trajectory (737). The causes for global interactions and historical connectedness in early modern Eurasia could be explained, according to Subrahmanyam, via voyages of exploration, shared eschatological religious frameworks, and the development of networks of commercial exchange as well as the concomitant development of travel-literature as a literary genre (737-746). He notes that *in addition to these* the acts of European “discovery” and colonization, notions of universal empire or imperial expansion, and symbolic and ideological constructs (e.g., millenarian visions of empire) were among the most contributing forces to the genesis of the connected modern world in which we now live. Subrahmanyam further observes that modern ideas of universalism and humanism did not in fact “unite the early modern world” under the major contributive forces of modernity, but instead lead to new or intensified forms of hierarchy, domination and separation (739).

Particularly, Subrahmanyam posits that people in the beginning of the 16th century began to bond through “ideas and mental constructs across political boundaries in that world , and—even if they found specific locations—enable us to see that what we are dealing with are not separate and comparable, but connected histories” (748). That is to say, one should understand modernity existing in parallel (i.e. “parallel modernities”), describing the simultaneous and yet interdependent processes between nation-states, peoples, and cultures. British historian C.A. Bayly (2009) has studied multiple historical trends and sequences that have often been treated separately and most of the time as national histories, from the beginning of the European Revolutionary Age ca. 1780 to the beginning of the First European World War in 1914.

Bayly argues that the contemporary idea of globalization which began after 1945 continues the works of “interconnectedness and interdependence of political and social changes across the world,” and “as world events became more interconnected and interdependent, so forms of human actions adjusted to each other and came to resemble each other across the world” (1). He reports that the “rapidly developing connections between different human societies and cultures during the nineteenth century created hybrid polities, mixed ideologies, and complex forms of global economic activity” (1). Bayly is particularly concerned with how the phenomenon of “global uniformities” manifests in the state, religion, political ideologies, and economic life (e.g., 86-112, 245-281, 325-363). For example, in the “old world,” he contends favorably that global links were developed through ideologies and bodily practices, as observed in Euro-Asia and the Arab world. He also makes some further insightful observations that are particularly relevant to the politics of Black internationalism and Black transnationalism being discussed in this essay.

Bayly remarks that (imperial) religion—particularly missionary Christianity—as a global phenomenon forging bonds and creating imaginative links between peoples across space and time contributed markedly to the concept of global uniformity. Further, as race theory was purported to be a global historical phenomenon, it also became dominant and globalized at the end of the 19th century (237). In the 20th century, Black reaction to scientific race theories and to the oppressive practices of religion such as missionary Christianity, coupled with Western programs of so-called modernization in Africa and the Caribbean, had also conditioned the genesis of Black internationalism. Moreover, parallel experiences despite sensibilities of difference, as he states, in fact gave rise to a united front across the world and created global links (4). It is from this angle that Bayly has maintained the position over the years that the world in the 19th century was a “complex of overlapping networks of global reach” (476-7). And certainly, we have observed the continued patterns in the 20th century’s culture and intellectual life in the West—in the forms of intellectual convergence, cross-breeding of ideas and cross-cultural sensibilities, each enmeshed in the West's traditions of racism, and “dividing and conquering”.

Many critics in the recent field of study surrounding the “New Atlantic Worlds” following the line of thoughts such as those argued by Manning (2010), Bayly (2009), and Subrahmanyam (1997), promote transnational comparisons and [trans-] Atlantic perspectives to history to explain early encounters and continuous dynamics between people of various origins

and backgrounds in the so-called New World. Further, advocates of the model of *histoire croisée* to the study of Atlantic history have put forth the theoretical notions of crossing, intercrossing, or intersection towards reconfiguration of events, peoples, and cultures. Unfortunately, this new way of thinking about the modern world and its peoples does not consider or critique for the problems in human or cross-cultural interaction laced with profound variations and differences on the issues of cooperation versus competition, desire for unity versus diversity, etc.

However, some historians have argued that “the history of the Black Atlantic highlight the complicated conclusions, itineraries and trajectories taken by people, ideas, objects, images, rumors, and hopes in a highly connected, if differentiated world” (Dubois and Scott 2010, 3). Consequently, the Atlantic paradigm can provides a deeper appreciation for comparative history, comparative literature, and transnational orientation in the modern world, and particularly the history and literature of the African Atlantic. The latter is an integrated construction of Atlantic history focused on the Black experience as seen or written from the Black viewpoint—in its broad historical dimensions and multifarious interactions—as being in constant dialogue with the “New Atlantic Worlds” rather than silenced or subsumed by others. Imperial Atlantic history, it may be said, gave birth to the African Atlantic principle. Further, the notion of “African Atlantic” should not be confused with Gilroy’s (1993) theory of “The Black Atlantic,” which he articulated in his seminal text, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity & Double Consciousness*. The bulk of Gilroy’s study is in North America among African American writers, whereas the contours of the African Atlantic are broad and constitute the varying geographical worlds and locations of Black people, transnationally and cross-culturally. I contend that we need a model of the Black Atlantic that goes beyond Gilroy’s North American emphasis and vision, for one that could bring Africa, North America, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Europe into conversation.

Thus, the BTC model is an attempt to bridge the gap. I prefer the “African Atlantic” connotation than the North American-centric “Black Atlantic,” as, by consequence, it is more logical that the concept of Black internationalism or transnationalism should be studied within the framework of the African Atlantic and the history(ies) of the entire African diaspora in interactive dimensions and border crossings. Henceforth, it should be noted that, when I use the Black Atlantic as a category, I use it interchangeably with the African Diaspora as a concept.

I propose that Black internationalism as a strategy should be rethought as a constitutive structure of the Atlantic world. Along the same line, one can also judge that Black internationalism is a “community of circulation rather than one based on permanent attachment to a single territory” (Greene and Morgan 2008, 12). Black internationalism in the timeframe covered in this project is based on temporal connectedness, yet may also be seen today as an ongoing event, and furthermore as the “unfinished task of Black globality.” That is to say, the Atlantic world is not static; but it is a phenomenon of motion (Greene and Morgan, 18). I therefore offer that Black internationalism of the African Atlantic during the historical moments of the coeval movements of Negritude, the Harlem Renaissance and Haitian Indigénisme was always in process; and continues to be in motion. Its general pattern thereby exhibited the necessary irregularities in content, form, and execution manifested in or reflected by Black diasporic intellectual thought, creativity and activism. Finally, Black transnationalism in the

context of these movements was a(nother) critical era in Black emancipation and Black self-determination politics, related to constant references to the Haitian Revolution as a singular event in modernity, the African Atlantic world, and the entire African world.

Considering all of these important ideas, events, and forces in the founding of the modern world generally and the Black Atlantic world specifically, several factors may be highlighted in terms of the constitutions of Black transnationalism and the BTC model. Firstly, mutual translability or reciprocity, convergences, confluences, parallel modes of expression, and uniformity were defining factors of the era in which Black transnationalism and Black internationalism of the Negritude Movement, the Harlem Renaissance, and Haitian Indigénisme were manifested. Secondly, the method of “connected histories” pertaining to the various Atlantic communities including those of the African Atlantic is analogous to the discourse of Black cross-cultural dialogue and the idea of transnational Blackness. At this juncture, it would be viable to explore in the remaining pages of this essay how specifically the discourse of Black internationalism was “transnational” and “border crossing,” as the Harlem Renaissance, Negritude, and Haitian Indigénisme emerged from specific geographical, cultural and national contexts of North America, France, and the Caribbean, i.e. Haiti. This study will further venture to analyze how the subject of Black internationalism, Black transnationalism and BTC might fit contextually and textually into the contemporary African Atlantic and global landscape.

The Discourse of BTC as Strategy and Practice

I suggest that a significant number of the writers in the coeval Harlem Renaissance, Haitian Indigénisme and Negritude Movements, deployed BTC as a strategy and practice, demonstrating a particular Black connected history. Therefore, the phenomenon of BTC belongs to the inner complexity and workings of the modern world and the Black Atlantic. It might be defined as a system of thought-relations, a network of communication, and a web of discursive interconnections shared between African peoples. From a historical perspective, BTC presupposes the logic of connected historiography for the modern world, continental Africa, and the African Atlantic diaspora, and promotes the effective applicability of theoretical concepts, methods, and paradigms toward creative action for human emancipation, especially the freedom of Black people and the valorization of Black humanity, while championing the dignity of all people. The BTC model not only rejects White supremacy, White racism, White violence, and Western colonialism, but it also interrogates their meaning in the process of Black liberation and the freedom of all oppressed people in the world. Further, BTC insists that the machinations of colonial powers, including aggressive Western capitalism supported by White supremacists, is a direct threat to human flourishing, universal peace, and brotherhood. Let us now briefly investigate the idea of BTC and its constitutive components for proper interrogation of the three major Black literary movements of the previous century.

Practically, BTC is a critical embracement of the processes of hybridity, creolization, and the cultural *métissage* that shape and reshape the communities in the African diaspora, and their historically constituted elements in the give-and take process between people of African ancestry

and other peoples. This particular model takes into account a series of intersecting and intercrossing relationships and cultural intertextuality. It affirms the African presence in the diaspora and the continual practices of African traditions, customs, and values without diminishing other traditions and experiences that shape and reshape its content.

From a literary and aesthetic point of view, BTC emphasizes the theory of intertextuality, the comparative method, and the commonly shared literary motifs, themes, and parallelisms in Black diasporic texts. In its liberative intent and potential, BTC rejects all forms of human oppression including racism, classism, sexism, and neo-imperial colonization, that is, the subjection of peoples by dominant forces or hegemonic nations. I am not asserting that the Harlem Renaissance, Haitian Indigénisme, or Negritude Movements had successfully achieved liberation through BTC. Indeed, the various forms of oppression listed above continue to haunt individuals and nations even in the postcolonial, anti-White supremacist moment. Rather, I am emphasizing their inclinations in the realization of these projects.

The commitment of BTC is toward the connectedness of histories, things, events, people, movements, and ultimately, of human values, beliefs, and cultures. Thus, BTC is a theory of crisscrossing, meaning the cross-fertilization of literature and ideas written or otherwise transmitted by people of African ancestry. The question that must be asked is this: Did the pertinent writers of the coeval movements, the Harlem Renaissance, Negritude, and the Haitian Renaissance, practice BTC? Or stated differently, was the BTC model a “conscious” intellectual strategy of the Black diasporic intelligentsia during the first half of the 20th century? To investigate further, I have identified below six characteristics that define the content, form, and rhetoric of BTC. They are as follows:

- (1) The Practice of Black Intertextuality
- (2) The Practice of Black Translation
- (3) The Role of Black Journals
- (4) The Role of Black Anthologies
- (5) Haitianism and The Meaning of Haiti in Black Thought
- (6) Africanism and The Meaning of Africa in Black Texts

Therefore, the critical reader is able to develop a coherent narrative around the BTC concept—as it pertains to African Atlantic thought and the practice of the intellectual diasporic community. My contention is that the phenomenon of BTC unveils a clear and major turning point in Black diasporic texts and Black Atlantic intellectual culture. Since this current article focuses on the first characteristic, let us now consider its content or features in greater depth.

Focusing on The Practice of Intertextuality

This section of the essay seeks to demonstrate that the literary method of intertextuality can be detected in the writings of three major Black movements. The theory of intertextuality was first articulated by Julia Kristeva (1986), in her interpretive reading of the central ideas in

Mikhail Bakhtin's works for the Western literary guild. Kristeva (1986) analyzes Bakhtin's notions of "dialogism" and "carnivalism," as the conceptual spheres wherein texts interplay, echo, and allude to each other as well as "contradict and relativise each other through extensive use of repetition..." (34-35). She acknowledges that it was Bakhtin who proposed that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another," and further that, "The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity and poetic language is read as at least double" (37). Kristeva expounds on the notion of dialogical relationships between texts and remarks that, "dialogue is the sphere possible for language" (39). Accordingly, dialogism is both "subjectivity and communication," the logic of intertextuality (39). Because the text is perceived as "multi-disciplinary and multi-subjective" or already of a plurality of other texts, and of infinite lost codes whose origins are unknown, to Roland Barthes (1972, 1974, 1975), intertextuality can be construed as semiotic filiation between texts, or dialogue between texts, and intertextuality codes as a "mirage of quotations" (Cullen, 1991, 2).

Moreover, there are a number of textual interplays involved in the hermeneutical process of intertextuality, including (1) the metaphor of textual influence and filiation; (2) allusions or echoes; and (3) direct, indirect, implicit, and explicit references and quotations between texts. Harold Bloom (1973) thus declared that "Poems are not things but only words that refer to other words and those words refer to still other words, and so on into the densely overpopulated world of literary language. Any poem is an inter-poem, and any reading of a poem is an inter-reading" (2). And finally, Richard B. Hays (1989) defined echo as a metaphorical way of talking about a hermeneutical event in the act of reading (or interpreting), and as the intertextual fusion that causes new textual meaning (26).

The Case for Black Intertextuality in the BTC Model

The writers of the Harlem Renaissance, Haitian Indigénisme, and the Negritude Movements deployed a number of varieties and possibilities of intertextuality including intertextual connections, allusive echoes and fusions. I am proposing the thought that within the tradition of the Black Atlantic canon, Black texts "speak to each other" across time and space through the theoretical construct of Black intertextuality in the manner in which they communicate similar and in many instances parallel ideas.¹

Both Houston Baker (1984) and Henry Louis Gates (1989) in their respective works on literary criticism and theory within the African American literary tradition—writing from a linguistic post-structuralist perspective—also articulate the assertion that Black texts do in fact converse with each other. Take for example, Léopold Senghor of the Negritude Movement who as one of the most illustrious Black internationalists intentionally practiced the art of intertextuality and the theory of BTC through his careful reading and comparison of the poetic diction of James Weldon Johnson and Marshall Davis, Hughes and McKay, Hughes and Cullen, Roumain and Césaire, Paul Nizer and Césaire, Depestre and Césaire, and Depestre, Birago Diop,

¹ In my perspective, Black writers tend to be more vocal and intentional in addressing or articulating

and Damas.² He also analyzed Jean Toomer's creative novel *Cane*, seeking for shared literary motifs and stylistic similarities that substantiate the transnational poetics of Negritude. Senghor's comparative approach to translating Black texts in the French language had a definitive goal: The conscious creation of a sound Black international literary corpus and common consciousness of Blackness. In a word, or rather acronym, BTC.

Secondly, Langston Hughes of the Harlem Renaissance practiced the literary technique of intertextuality. In an article, "The Twenties: Harlem and Its Negritude," Hughes (1966) claimed for himself and for other popular poets of the New Negro Movement the epithet "negritude poets" before *la lettre*. Specifically, he wrote, "Had the word negritude been in use in Harlem in the twenties, Cullen, as well as McKay, Johnson, Toomer, and I, might have been called poets of negritude" (Wintz, 1996, 408). Hughes explored the intertextual allusions of Negritude in various examined poems, and by comparing McKay and Cullen, as well as his own poetry to that of Waring Cuney (408-409).

Thirdly, in his beautiful poem "*Et Tombent Les Murailles de Chine*" (translated, "And The Walls of China Fall Down"), Haitian Indigenist writer, Jean F. Briere (1948) deployed the literary strategy of intertextual fusion and allusion to integrate the poetic voice of Hughes's "Afro-American Fragment," Damas's "Black Label," and Césaire's triple reference of Negritude in *Cahier*. The practice of intertextuality is a calculated literary tradition as well as a profound poetic meditation on African Atlantic literature that many writers of the coeval movements employed consciously. And as will be further observed in the subsequent examples, intertextuality also informs us about both conscious and unconscious literary borrowings among Black Atlantic writers and others working outside of this tradition.

Echoes and Allusions in BTC Literature

The first observation made pertains to an intertextual echo between Jean Price-Mars of the Haitian Indigénisme community and Léopold Senghor of Negritude. Their subject matter was Africa and the living African traditions in the diaspora. Speaking to the Haitian elite and intellectuals in the 1920s who were ashamed of their African identity and the valorization of African traditions on Haitian soil, Price-Mars (1928) warns:

1. "Our only chance to be ourselves is by not repudiating (renouncing) any part of our ancestral heritage" (204).

To which Senghor (1993) declares:

2. "*Il n'est pire ignorance que l'ignorance de soi*" ("It is worse than ignorance of the self") (15).

Foremost, Senghor's allusive echo in the entitled, *Liberté 5. Le dialogue des cultures* (*Freedom Vol. 5: The Dialogue of Cultures*), is a possible reference to Price-Mars's statement,

² See for example, Senghor's (1950, 1952) essays, "La poésie Negro-Américaine," and "Temoignages."

indicating a common literary tradition. Contextually, both Price-Mars and Senghor had argued that the African survivals in the Americas and Europe are the result of diasporic heritages and cultural productions (and reproductions) of Black people. The statements above echo each other for dealing explicitly with the issue of Africanisms in the Black diaspora—both in Europe and the Americas. Additional historical context to the text above is that Price-Mars's famous statement was spoken in a lecture in the 1920s to a group of Haitian intellectuals in Port-au-Prince. In the 1920s—the period of Haitian Indigénisme and American occupation in Haiti—Haiti's "mulatto" class as well as the country's educated elite were in a profound psychological crisis. They had refused to identify themselves with anything African and totally rejected the living African traditions and elements on Haitian soil. They claimed themselves to be "French colored men," as Price-Mars calls them. Hence, they embraced the French-Western values and culture. It is in light of this psychological, cultural, and intellectual dilemma that Price-Mars had robustly campaigned for national unity among Haitians based on the recognition of the common African heritage in Haiti. He encouraged the Haitian elite to also accept their African ancestry as part of their collective identity.

Moreover, in the same lecture, he reminded them that the majority of the Haitian population has inherited traditions, customs, and beliefs from continental Africa. Consequently, he could say, "Well, our chance to be ourselves is by not repudiating any part of our ancestral heritage. And! As for this heritage, eight-tenths of it is a gift from Africa" (Price-Mars, 1928, 204). Again, Senghor's statement from the coeval Negritude group is alluding to the same issue and position. His pronouncement was delivered in a lecture to mostly French-speaking Black students in Paris at Sorbonne. Senghor's warning to those colonial students was that they should not reject their African cultural traditions and values for those of the West.

Haiti Particularly in BTC Literature

The first example below pertaining to revolutionary Haiti comes from Negritude writer, Aimé Césaire (2001). Specifically, he associated the very genesis of Negritude as a concept with the Haitian Revolution in his long poem of 1939, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (*Notebook of return to my native land*). Césaire proclaims:

1. "Haiti where negritude rose for the first time and stated that it believed in its humanity" (15).

In echo, Senghor (1991) also refers to Haiti and the Haitian Renaissance as an inspiration for the Negritude philosophy and as a point of reference for intertextual dialogue about Black subjectivity and Black freedom in his 1945 poem, *Prière de paix* (*Prayer for peace*). That is, in the same line of thought, Senghor practices intertextual allusion by appealing to the Haitian revolution and Haiti's contribution to universal human emancipation and the declaration of equality for all. He pronounces:

2. "Haiti who dared proclaim man before the Tyrant" (69).

In the “Cahier” (“Notebook”) poem where Césaire’s statement is recorded, the anticolonial poet is using the Haitian Revolution as a counter response to Western colonization and enslavement or structural system of oppression. Césaire also presents the Haitian hero Toussaint L’Ouverture as the antithesis to Western hegemony in the way that he had valiantly fought three European forces (Spain, English, French) to emancipate enslaved Blacks in Saint-Domingue. In other words, Césaire is arguing that revolutionary Haiti is an example of Black resistance, self-assertion, and Black subjectivity. Similarly, in Senghor’s thought, the word “tyrant,” is synonymous with any type of oppression such as Western colonialism and racial enslavement, which revolutionary Haiti stood against. Particularly, in *Priere de Pere*, where the phrase “Haiti who dared proclaim man before the Tyrant” is registered, Senghor in effect chronicles the suffering of the Black race under enslavement and colonization. In summary, for both authors, it was in the pivotal and historic moment of the Haitian Revolution that the African individual, not only Haitians as a singular African Atlantic community, had affirmed his/her subjectivity (“Haiti who dared proclaim man”) and regained his/her freedom and rights as a human being.

Let us now look at a final intertextual relation between Césaire and Senghor. These founders of the Negritude Movement proclaim human solidarity by rejecting cycles of hatred and oppression characteristic to human relations with Europeans via White supremacy and the colonial program. Further, both statements occur in the context of a prayer. Césaire (2001) pronounces:

1. “Do not make me into that man of hatred for whom I feel only hatred” (38).

And in the same manner, Senghor (1991) declares:

2. “This mask of meanness and hate that I can only hate—And I can surely hate Evil” (71).

Hence, Black humanism and Black cosmopolitanism should be understood as complementary features of BTC as demonstrated above by the writers of the seminal Negritude Movement.

Africa in BTC Literature

What occurs in the four quotations given as examples below on the presence of Africa in the coeval literature of the Harlem Renaissance to that of Haitian Indigénisme and Negritude is what Richard Hays (1989) described textually as when, “Allusive echo functions to suggest to the reader that text **B** should be understood in light of a broad interplay with text **A**, encompassing aspects of **A** beyond those explicitly echoed” (20). A comparable phenomenon of intertextual fusion can be observed between Jacques Roumain of Haitian Indigénisme and Langston Hughes of the Harlem Renaissance. The subject matter in this case is diasporic affiliation with continental Africa and the quest for paternal/maternal identity rooted in the African imagination and the perception of a common grammar of Blackness. In both instances, the poets speak as the voice of the people, linking the present African diaspora to the African past. I begin with Hughes (1995, 129) verse:

So long,
So far away
Is Africa.
There comes this song
I do not understand
This song of atavistic land
So long,
So far way
Is Africa's Dark face

Roumain echoes in Hughes, Langston and Bontemps (1970, 365):

It's the long road to Guinea
Listen to the sound of the wind in its long hair
of eternal night
In the dark land of dark men

What is remarkable about the language of both poems is the striking affirmation of racial affiliation and pride and the writers' clear pronouncement of their Africanness, even in otherwise ambiguous terms (see Table 1 below). Both poets identify themselves with ancestral Africa and Blackness. Africa is metaphorically depicted as distinctively "dark," the "atavistic land," and as the geographical reference for and place of Black people (e.g., "Africa's Dark face" and "In the dark land of dark men"). In the negative sense, Africa contributed both to the spiritual and psychological distress of the poets, yet the longing for Africa is immense in the language. In the positive sense, Africa contributed to the self-discovery and self-consciousness of the poets of being "Black" or "dark" just like Africa is simultaneously portrayed as Black and dark. This observation is particularly relevant in Hughes's celebration of his Blackness and Roumain's self-identification as a "Negro" and "Black Haitian" (both Roumain and Hughes were men of mixed races). There is also a sense of exile, nostalgia, and estrangement communicated through the poetic voice, rhythm, and repetition (e.g., "So long, /So far away/ Is Africa" and "It's long the road to Guinea"). Further, these lines in the full poems occur three times and each one begins the next stanza reinforcing the poetic sensibility and the crafted message.

To complement our thesis here, Elene Koutrianou (2009) comments that intertextuality as a property of both literature and communication is based on the intertextual disposition of the writer, of the text, and at the same time, on the interaction between text and reader. She also states that "in every act of human communication, the sender and the receiver share a certain degree of mutuality. This means that they have to select a mutual cognitive environment, which they must share in order for any assumption to become mutually manifest" (150). Let us now consider another facet of this exchange; that which could be interpreted as an intertextual dialogue in Black Atlantic texts among the writers of the three movements. Foremost, Senghor

Table 1: Intertextual echoes in Hughes’s “Afro-American Fragment” and Roumain’s *Guinea*.
 Source: Hughes and Bontemps (1970).

Hughes’s <i>Afro-American Fragment</i>	Roumain’s <i>Guinea</i>
So long, /So far away/ Is Africa.	It’s the long road to Guinea
There comes this song I do not understand/ This song of atavistic land	Listen to the sound of the wind in its long hair/ of eternal night
In the dark land of dark men	So far way Is Africa’s Dark face

(1977) reminds us that the *telos* of Black texts is to generate conversation, and that the Black poem, discourse, or novel is not a “monologue” but a “dialogue” (“*Le poème nègre, le roman nègre, voire le discours nègre n’ est pas monologue, mais dialogue*”) (401). I divide this conversation into three parts in the logical pattern of (1) the question, (2) the response, and (3) the action. The format is intended to be read via “the call-and-response” principle.

Black Liberation as the Ultimate Intertextual Goal of BTC

In this juncture of the paper, I want to consider the liberative aspect of BTC. First, the “question” signifies the longing quest for identity as revealed in intertextual allusions. Second, the “response” provides the answer to the question posed and seeks creative ways to pronounce freedom and subjectivity. Finally, the “action” is motivated both by the interrogation and the answer supplied. What we will observe in these intertexts is the attempt by Black writers of the Harlem Renaissance, Haitian Indigénisme, and Negritude Movements to produce imaginatively what might be called an emancipative approach to intertextuality, as they consciously spoke and speak as translators of the voice of the people, the Black race. Note that the common perceptible themes and motifs are identification with Africa, cultural identity, Blackness, revolt, triumph, hope, and newness. Let us now view examples of the ultimate intertextual goal of BTC—liberation—through the writers’ use of literary allusions:

The Question

Jean Price-Mars (1928) asks, “Who are we — Frenchmen or Africans?” (115); Aimé Césaire (2001) also asks, “Who and what are we?” (18); and Emile Roumer inquires, “Of me you know nothing. Am I Arab? Sheikh?” (Cited in Kennedy 1975, 28). Roumain, Damas, Hughes, Senghor and several others respond decisively as follows below.

The Response(s)

What follows is a survey of responses extracted from Black writers of the coeval movements of interest, each ostensibly answering the central question of BTC as stated above. The response begins with quotes from Roumain and close with words from McKay.

Jacques Roumain (2003, 21 ; 29) replies:

Nos ancêtres ne sont pas des Gaulois (Our ancestors are not the Gauls)
Afrique j'ai gardé ta mémoire Afrique (Africa, I have kept you in my memory)
tu es en moi (you are in me)

Léon Damas (2001, 59) responds:

... Tout en moi (Everything within me)
aspire à n'être que negre (aspires to be only Black)
autant que mon Afrique (as Black as my Africa)
qu'ils ont cambriolée (they burglarized)

Langston Hughes (1995, 24) further responds:

I am a Negro:
Black as the night is Black,
Black like the depths of my Africa.

Léopold Senghor (1991, 34) offers in kind:

Already homesick for my Black Land

Léon Laleau echoes (Cited in Kennedy 1975, 15):

This heart that came to me from Senegal?

Césaire (2001, 18) gives:

I have become a Congo resounding with forests and rivers

Countee Cullen (1991, 201) rejoins:

“Lo, I am dark, but comely,” Sheba sings.
“And we were Black,” three shades reply, “but kings.”

René Depestre (1998, 25) with:

Fils de l'Afrique lointaine (Son of far-away Africa)

And finally, Claude McKay (Cited in Johnson 1922) offering:

Am I not Africa's son, Black of the Black
land where Black deeds are done?

The Action

What becomes of the interrogation and answers concluding it is the action, or actions to be taken toward the ultimate, liberative goal of BTC. Thus would we receive the following from many of the same writers as covered above.

Roumain (2003, 23-24) proposes:

Nous rebâtirons... (We will rebuild...)
Nous proclamons l'unité de la souffrance (We will proclaim the unity of suffering)
et de la révolte (and of revolt)
de tous les peuples sur toute la surface de la terre (of all people on the face of the earth)

Hughes (1995, 330) suggests:

... We should have a land of joy,
Of love and joy and wine and song,
And not this land where joy is wrong.

Damas (1947, 66) volunteers:

... Ma voix qui pour eux chante (...My voice which sings for them)
est douce à ravir (is sweet enough to calm)
L'âme triste (the soul saddened)
de leur por- (by their por-)
no- (no-)
gra- (gra-)
phie (phy)

Césaire (2001, 12) announces:

My mouth shall be the mouth of those calamities that have
no mouth, my voice the freedom of those who break down in the prison holes of despair

Senghor (1991, 30) proclaims:

My duty is to reconquer distant lands bordering the Empire
of Blood...My duty is to reconquer the farthest-flung drops of your
blood

Depestre (1998, 30) claims or perhaps urges that:

Ils se lèveront les espoirs ensoleillés (They will rise the sunny hopes)
ils sortiront des fantômes de la nuit... (they will come out of the ghosts of the night...)
la lune des nuits de combats (the moon nights of struggle)
fera se lever le jour (will make rise the day)

Finally, McKay (1999, 122) proclaims:

...I am bound with you in your mean graves,
O Black men, simple slaves of ruthless slaves

Observably, in Roumain's response/action, the inclination toward universal solidarity and revolt against universal oppression among all oppressed and suffering people in the world is an expression of Black cosmopolitanism, while Hughes's response/action reveals the nationalist's sentiment. Seeing Hughes and Roumain in (shared) perspective, the longing for peace and a desire for freedom, both at the national and international levels, are observable. I have emphasized the communicative theory of the call-and-response of Black intertextuality because the enacting message through the voice of Black poets is centered on the community and the collective interest of Black people for social justice and wholeness, universal justice notwithstanding. The BTC literary method thus identifies the intersection of historical experience *and* the search for freedom. Further, as Molefi Kete Asante (1987) aptly noted, "One can easily assume, when one listens to the experience, that it is the speaker calling and the audience responding. These roles, however, often shift, but most of the time the audience calls and the speaker responds..." (193). Yet, in the literary tradition, it is the voice of the speaker through the crafted language of the writer that performs and effects the action.

Conclusion

Black transnational consciousness (BTC) promotes the positivism of a unity of thought in Black diversity expressed in literature and connected history(ies) of ideas; it is the attempt to engage intelligently the various social forces and unprecedented events that affected the lives and parallel experiences of the people in the African diaspora in the given period of interest. BTC is further a theoretical synthesis which critically seeks to engage the hermeneutics of Black

internationalism—through critical reflections on particular Black movements and their literary expressions—as well as the narrative of Black texts that speak closely to each other across time.

BTC does not undermine the plurality and diversity in thought and action of Black internationalists and transnationalists in the coeval era of Negritude, the Harlem Renaissance, and Haitian Indigénisme, nor does it discount tensions and divergences among represented authors of these movements. It recognizes instead that they might be helpful and are perhaps healthy in the development of human relations and cross-cultural contacts. The project of BTC seeks ultimately to remap the boundaries and interplays between Black (and other) literary movements, establishing comparative thought, interpenetration, parallel paths, and convergences that describe their connected yet respective social locations in the first half of the 20th century, toward liberation in the 21st.

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