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Mimicry, Double-Consciousness and Hybridity in Caryl Phillips' The Pagan Coast

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Abstract:

This article examines closely the literary implications of the concepts of "mimicry," "double-consciousness" and "hybridity" as philosophized by the postmodern critic Homi Bhabha and the Black American critic W. E. Du Bois, respectively. We have chosen author Caryl Phillips' novel *Crossing the River*, its first episode in particular- "The Pagan Coast," for we find what these terms connote is felt in the up-and-down development of the character named Nash Williams. First, the article quotes from Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* to show how "mimicry" displaces imperialism from the center by exposing the imperil ideology from within. This center will eventually encompass some other discourses coming from the margin. Then the argument delves deep into the various narratologicl voices and focal perspectives, be they black or white, that Nash passes through to reflect the radical changes in his identity. We quote the Bible to highlight the similarities between the imperial ideology and Nash's discourse. Secondly, "double-consciousness" is included as referred to by Du Bois in his *The Souls of Black Folk*. The article discusses how "double-consciousness" paves the way for "hybridity" to be the essence of a new culture since it calls for maintaining cultural

aspects different cultures take in. A thematically third section is Bhabha's "hybridity" back again to *The Location of Culture,* as a solution to the warring clashes in unstable identities. The article reaches the conclusion that "mimicry" and "hybridity" are the tools for a "double-conscious" reconciliation which is not following a single ideology but a hybridized one. The literary manifestations of this hybrid culture are growing a garden with American seeds and tools on the African land and educating the native Africans in reading and writing besides sustaining the Liberian cultural codes with Christianity.

Keywords: mimicry, double-consciousness, hybridity, colonial, post-colonial

The aesthetics that brightened the horizon of the British, the French, and the Spanish Empires were put to question with the disintegration of their far-flung kingdoms. With losing their military valor and overseas colonial settlements, the Empires also wasted the power to name and control terminology. The Western absolutism over defining cultural concepts which shaped history since the discovery of the New World is now itself being debated to cope with the ebb and flow of a newly reworked world. At the dawn of postmodernity, the theoretical controversy has become the property of the imperialized and the colonized. Suddenly, it is their turn to master and manipulate the domain of theories. In the light of this, there is an impossibility on the part of terminology to reflect on the composition of a postmodern world without itself being revised. In postmodern philosophy, the notions of mimicry, double-consciousness, and hybridity are agents for such a radical change. This article starts with mimicry and follows with double-consciousness and hybridity as the new weapons of postcolonial subversion.

The postmodern critic Homi Bhabha claims that mimicry is responsible for displacing the dominant discourse away from the center making more space for the marginal discourse to emerge. In the *Location of Culture,* Bhabha says mimicry is "the sign of a double articulation." It is:

> the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.* Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. (86)

Mimicry is a mode of representation which penetrates the imperial ideology from within to deviate it from the center it grants to itself. It emerges from a failure on the part of the

imperialized subject to reproduce an identical replica of the master narrative. "The *menace* of mimicry is its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority," says Bhabha (*Location* 88).

This theoretical frame applies to one of the characters of Caryl Phillips' novel *Crossing the River*. Nash Williams is Phillips' mimicry man whom we meet in the first episode, "The Pagan Coast." The building up of Nash Williams as a character "disrupts" the "authority" Bhabha is talking about. His movement between an imperil center, America, and an imperialized place, Africa, enables him at various stages of his life to be a representative of both discourses. Nash is the black Christian freed ex-slave missionary who is sent from America to Africa to build a Christian church. As this article progresses, the cited excerpts will demonstrate how Nash intrinsically disturbs the universalized Western ideology to glorify the cultural African heritage. He parrots the ethos of Western rationality and Enlightenment, but deconstructs them later on.

Nash has the opportunity to be raised on imperial instructions when serving as a slave in America. Imperialism in Nash's case is in the form of religious teachings. In the letters he sends to his ex-master, Nash talks through more than one point of view. In addition to the third person narrator and its various perspectives, there are Nash's contradicting declarations. Nash remains a homodiegetic narrator throughout the telling though the focalization he speaks through changes. [1] There is uncertainty about his feelings towards America and Africa, which places him in an unresting conflict. This conflict is in charge of the emergence of a new discourse which is not the Empire's but equally and even more important. Interestingly, the new discourse shares the center with what was used to be a prevailing discourse.

In "The Pagan Coast," the beginning is with a third person narrator and a white Christian point of view. The third person narrator introduces Nash and approves of his righteous and moral character. Then he penetrates the mind of Edward, the master, to verbalize his anxiety about his relation with Nash, Amelia, his father, and his white fellows. We even know about Edward's motives and his dogma. Interrupting the narratological flow

[1] For more information on focalization and narrators, see Ronen Ruth's *Possible Worlds of Literary Theory*. He defines focalization to be "a principle according to which elements of the fictional world are arranged from a certain perspective or from a specific position" (179). The homodiegetic narrator tells his personal story as a character in it.

of the third narration is a group of letters sent by Nash to his master and the ones intended by Edward to Nash. In these letters, we witness an unsettling oscillation in Nash's personality. The initial letters written by Nash are a first person narrative with a white perspective.

In his first letter to Edward, Nash assures his master about his loyalty to Christianity as a religion, America as a culture, and Edward as a teacher and a "Father." Nash repeats whatever ideas rooted in his character while being bred in America to be a good and virtuous missionary. Some portions in Nash's letters to Edward echo to a large degree other portions in Edward's letters to Nash. For instance, in one of his letters, Edward urges Nash to stand firm before impediments and privation: "Before you left America, I reminded you of the sacrifices that our good Lord Jesus Christ made for us all, and urged you to consider the situation of Christianity in this new country that you inhabit" (10). Edward continues to say "Christ's sacrifices were many, but surely your acquaintance with the Good Book will have revealed to you that they were calculated" (11). He goes on with his commandments: "Do not disappoint me, or yourself, by falling short of the high standards that you have already set yourself" (11). Nash assures his master about holding to the principles he is expected to be up to. "The burden you placed upon us of repeating the Ten Commandments, which we considered a form of punishment, has proved of the utmost importance in meeting the pain of these trying times," writes Nash (18).

Nash even becomes a better spokesman of religious authority than Edward: "for as the Scripture says, train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (21). It is notable that Nash approves of pain as an influential technique to fashion the people of the repressed culture. His writing reminds of:

> the notions about bringing civilization to primitive or barbaric peoples, the disturbingly familiar ideas about flogging or death or extended punishment being required when 'they' misbehaved or became rebellious, because 'they' mainly understood force or violence best; 'they' were not like 'us', and for that reason deserved to be ruled. (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* xi- xii)

This is the "rational" rhetoric behind the massacres that obliterated unforetold numbers of indigenous people around the world when the Westerners decided to illuminate the world. Like the Empire, Nash feels he has an inner vocation to enlighten the dark souls of the ignorant world: "I subscribe myself a servant of God, and the friend of my fellow men" (28). He adds to the rational discourse of the Empire religious submissiveness, pain and suffering.

He is docile enough to enact the biblical scriptures that exalt the position of those who grieve and suffer to that of Christ. He is ready to sacrifice his earthly life to a rewarded and eternal one in God's heaven: "then I trust that we shall be amongst that number that John saw surrounding the Throne of the Lamb, where sorrow, pain and death are neither felt nor feared no more" (21). A perfect performer of the biblical "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (*New International Version*, Ro. 8.18), Nash writes to his father the following lines:

> I hope to meet in Heaven with my dearly departed Sally and my only boy, York, and thereafter dwell with them forever. This blessed hope, to meet where there will be no further trouble, no vainglorious toil, no more parting, and to sing the praises of God and the Lamb for ever and ever! (26)

Significantly, Nash believes in his Christian mission on earth as much as he believes in Edward's: "I pray that the Lord may bless, protect and defend you through life by his unerring counsel, and that when the voyage of life is over and He has no more for you to do on earth, He will take you to live with Him in glory" (26). This tells that Edward has purposefully convinced Nash of the civilizing mission American civilization and before it the European one have burdened themselves with. Foolishly, Nash believes he is carrying out the same task Edward devotes his life to.

Acting out the above rationale, Nash establishes his family on the basis it might benefit his missionary work. For this, he never uses the word "family" when talking about the missionary wife he marries after the death of his wife Sally and his child York:

> It became clear that I would have to look for one who was willing and able to help me in my labors amongst the heathen flock. To this end, I traveled to Monrovia, where I engaged a young lady who was recently arrived from America, being formerly the property of a Mr. Young of Pennsylvania. (34)

Nash's attitude is reminiscent of what the Bible says about sacrifice: "That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (*New International Version*, 2 Co. 12:10). This strength comes from God's promise that those who labor will suffer no more in the afterlife; it justifies Nash's deep gratitude to his master, Edward, for raising him on Christianity and choosing him to perform God's mission and be a messenger of God on Earth. Nash says in his first letter to Edward:

> I praise his holy name that I was fortunate enough to be born in a Christian country, amongst Christian parents and friends, and that you were kind enough to take me, a foolish child, from my parents and bring me up in your own dwelling as something more akin to son than servant. (21)

Frightening Nash with the punishment entailing the violation of the Ten Commandments is behind holding Edward and his wife in high regard. He honors his "father" and his "mother" since the Holy Scripture says "Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you" (*New International Version*, Ex. 20:12). In one of his letters, Nash thanks Edward for making him toil with memorizing the Ten Commandments. In another letter, he reassures Edward about his total obedience: "I remain your affectionate son, Nash Williams" (42). As for his "mother," he treats her with the same respect: "I would be happy if you could give her my regards, and inform her that there are many in this dark country of Liberia for whom she represents the highest achievement in womankind" (29).

Nash is not only easy in consenting to Edward's dubious vision, but he is compliant enough to ask his fellow servants to follow him. He asks Edward to read the following in front of his fellow slaves:

> There are those servants who, having served their master for more than fifty years, are not rewarded with their liberty, but are instead sold at auction to the highest bidder. How good the Almighty is to have blessed you with such a master as this, for there is not another under Heaven such as your master. (20)

Nash goes on to advise his master on how to deal with the slaves who refuse to submit completely to Edward's vision: "dear Father. If they should refuse to attend school or heed your words, you must punish them, whether young or old, for as I have already observed in these parts, too much pleasure brings on sin and ruin" (21).

As for Africa, Nash thinks of it as the West does; a heart of darkness where human beings are "naturally" corrupted by the inhuman humid weather:

> And perhaps you have already heard, by means of some other source, that old brother Taylor and sister Nancy have both lost all religion. The former has in addition turned out to be a great and scandalous drunkard. He is accused of habitual intoxication, much nocturnal revelling, lewdness, and in fact everything that characterizes the immoral man. (29-30)

The discourse that permeates Edward's letters with its first person narrative and white perspective is doubly implemented; once in Edward's letters, and another in Nash's letters. However, this reiteration is not a perfectly compatible copy for a first person narration with a black perspective interrupts with a contrasting perspective, causing ambivalence in the dominant discourse.

Upon arrival, Nash's first impression about the land is a pre-made stereotype of what he is already told in America. He believes the land is dark and the natives are backward and retarded. In his mind, he conceives of the indigenous population as thieves willing to steal because of their —"naturally" deformed morality. When Nash is being loyal to Edward, he is being loyal to the system Edward is part of: "Though we are separated by wide waters and steep mountains, you, my dear father, are forever with me in my mind" (17). Nonetheless, there are seeds of consciousness in Nash's first letter to Edward. Though he still believes in the inferiority of Africa to the superiority of America, he starts to be aware of Liberia's more democratic atmosphere:

> I doubt if I shall ever consent to return again to America. Liberia, the beautiful land of my forefathers, is a place where persons of color may enjoy their freedom. It is the home of our race, and a country in which industry and perseverance are required to make a man happy and wealthy. Its laws are founded upon justice and equality, and here we may sit under the palm tree and enjoy the same privileges as our white brethren in America. Liberia is the star in the East for the free colored man. It is truly our only home. (18)

The inner conflict Nash has now in his body and soul is due to his sense of belonging to a land he is completely convinced is immoral. Many times, Nash refers to Liberia as the only home for the colored men, which betokens a sense of estrangement he must have experienced in America. Definitely, Nash does not belong to the American land despite of his trials to be an obedient servant to American culture and its imperial enterprises. A black man on a land for white men, Nash cannot experience freedom and security but in Liberia, with his fellow natives.

Although his writings reveal he is not welcomed in America, Nash still clings to an American identity given to him to fulfill dirty adventures he is unaware of. He proudly asserts himself as "*Mr. Williams*" an American family name, and an American title (33). But gradually as he spends more time in Liberia, Nash moves from ridiculing Africans and

distancing himself from them to adopting their life style and forgetting about America which he no longer values. "At times like this, it is strange to think that these people of Africa are called our ancestors, for with some of them you may do all you can but they still will be your enemy," says Nash condemning Africa not in an unfamiliar tone (32). Later on in the same letter he praises Africa: ―It was intended that Africa should be a land of freedom, for where else can the man of color enjoy his liberty? Not in Haiti or in Canada.‖ (32)

Imperial brainwashing is not the only reason for Nash to reject absolute allegiance to Africa and its people. The "crude dialect" of the natives (23) and the extremely tough weather increase his alienation: "This rainy season that we presently endure will, I fear, eventually prove the most injurious portion of the year with reference to my constitution." (19) However, this ambivalence does not last a long time as Nash pursues an African identity. The more he travels into the interior of Africa, the more he constructs himself as an African figure. Since reaching Africa, Nash commences on a journey of identity building that starts with parroting American spirits and ends with severing connections with Americanness and its tools, Christianity and morality.

Practical everyday life destabilizes Nash's beliefs about the permittivity of Africa. The change in perspective is significant since he is considered to be a white man by the natives. His early realization that "Liberia is a fine place to live in," and that he is now "accustomed to these strange sights" opens up the possibility that he is no more blinded by religious ideology (18). It is at this moment that the mimicry man produces his "slippage" from the imperial discourse. By beginning to oppose his white perspective, Nash starts a traumatic journey in which his own transformation from an imperial product to a native African subverts the hypocrisy of the American and Christian white culture. Through his journey, Nash has mixed feelings about Liberia; his intimacy with the African land is in opposition with what Christian religious education dictates. Nash's fluctuation between praising Liberia and condemning it is a double-consciousness that torments his presence.

Double-consciousness is the famous allegorical collocation of the Black American critic W. E. Du Bois. Double-consciousness indicates the dualistic sidedness of a single identity:

> After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the

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> other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (Du Bois, *Souls* 10-11)

So, Nash's imperial prejudice is the first side of his double-consciousness while pride of African culture is the second.

In previous passages, Nash visualizes Liberia to be in need for only "perseverance" and "industry" to "prosper " It is on purpose that Phillips wants one of his characters to reveal the capacity of the African society to develop and change. He wants to confirm that it is not static and thereby deserves to be ruled but developing and needs time. Europe has accused Africa of being a perpetually dark place that has had no potential to develop and has been necessarily in need for the supervision of the whites to be a human society. Therefore, Nash's discovery about Africa goes against what Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel says in his *The Philosophy of History* about the fixity of the African society. Hegel even denies the presence of an African culture that is worth mentioning:

> At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it — that is in its northern part — belong to the Asiatic or European World. [. . .] What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World's History. (117)

The security Nash feels on the land and the safe companionship of its people make him reach the conclusion that Africa needs not the circumlocutory theorization of European and American superficial doctrines. While the utmost priority for Nash, the missionary, is to baptize the heathens, Nash, the African, prioritizes the prolificness of the African land to aid him, his family, and the fellow natives in surviving life's hard times.

At the beginning, the farming work accompanies constructing the missionary school in order to find a source of living for Nash and his "brothers": "The first of these [significant improvements] has involved the construction of a primitive school building under the

watchful supervision of myself" (23). Nash continues "and now this heathen village has a mission school where I am able to instruct in writing intelligibly, in the Bible, in arithmetic, and in geography" (24).

As for the second important achievement, it "relates to efforts to till the soil" (24). While Nash is still perseverant to go on with his missionary work as said in his third letter, Nash forgets about his missionary work as it is apparently obvious in the later letters. In his third letter, Nash says "I have now fourteen boys in school and two girls, all of whom are making some progress in reading the word of God" (31). However, this changes into a sudden cease in his fourth and fifth letters where Nash announces he is no more part of this missionary work. He declares he no longer wants to coercively impose the alien religion of Christianity onto the African land, for it has proved itself abortive:

> This missionary work, this process of persuasion, is futile amongst these people, for they never truly pray to the Christian God, they merely pray to their own gods in Christian guise, for the American God does not even resemble them in that most fundamental of features. The truth is, our religion, in its purest and least diluted form, can never take root in this country. (62)

Nash completely quits the missionary work at the end, and chooses a real job that benefits the country. He chooses for himself a better life, a farmer's life with a native style of living: "Farming is now our main occupation, the numbers at the mission school having fallen off in a dramatic manner." (39) Quitting his missionary work goes hand in hand with repudiating a culture in which Nash has been a complete outsider. After the collapse of the religious work, Nash is more into another culture that embraces him without being told he is black. Like any native farmer, Nash looks for a wife, a woman, not a messenger of God, to take care of him. Whereas the previous wives were chosen on the premise of being righteous and Christian, this one is talented in conducting the needs of a *family*. He says of his first native wife: "She faithfully discharges the office of mother to a child I possess by another, less successful, connection, and she remains an industrious woman who performs all the duties relative to house-keeping, including making clothes for her *family*." (38) One wife is not enough to tend the cattle and raise the crops; consequently, Nash takes two additional wives and considers taking a fourth following the rule of the African land. Nash regains his unique identity when he affirms himself as an African.

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Now, Nash is an African person who is at home on an African land with its people, language, and even climate. Surviving these rites of passage pushes him farther away from the American culture and much closer to the African. Educating himself in the African language means he consents to accept the codes of the culture he criticizes at the beginning. Passing through the seasoning period is the best evidence that Nash can belong to Africa: "Having long passed through the acclimatizing process, and having watched others do so with equal success, I am glad that I can say that I love this country more than I did at first." (39)

Belonging helps Nash transform his personality from a passive man into a full individual capable of judging cultural attitudes. He disproves the superiority of American culture over the African when he understands that African culture has a better social system. Nash credits Liberia for justice rather than darkness. Liberia needs only coordination and cooperation with the West to be a prosperous place. The natives are "good workers," but they "require a stern and watchful supervision" (27).

Nash tries to convince the natives about learning reading and writing. Though they believe their gods detain them from that, they agree to learn. This endeavor to convince the natives about being educated in writing and reading reflects the necessity to start a cultural dialogue between the two cultures. Such a mission is the function of the hybrids:

> In conversing with the natives, I often ask them how it is they cannot read and write like the white man (they call us all white man), and I generally receive reply that their gods had asked them to choose between the land and their livestock, or books, and they had chosen the former. At this juncture I often protest, and talk about the ingenious nature of native embroidery and craft, my contention being that our God has blessed the native with as much sense as any white man if only they would put this in exercise. (32)

Phillips' mimicry man makes the imperial authority ambivalent by displacing its logic. He launches the harshest criticism against America by abandoning his missionary work and going native. After experiencing the futility of converting the natives into Christians, Nash stops caring about baptizing the heathens. Another reason for giving up Christianization is that Nash finds his fellow heathens entertain more noble ethos than American people. The difference Phillips' mimicry man produces systematically reaches with the readers the conclusion that "Liberia is doing her part in improving human affairs, and stands now tall and

proud with other regions of the civilized world" (36). In case there is hindrance in the progress of the country's development, it is simply because it is similar to other countries that endure drastic crises in the phase of establishment: "Things can be both inconvenient and uphill, and many hardships will no doubt be experienced, but such problems are common to the first settlement in any country." (61)

Nash's story ends after he undermines the same ideology he has praised once. His fourth letter is a turning point in his journey of self-realization. It is where Nash defends Liberians, as a sign of his utmost form of identification with African culture:

> Are we not in Africa? This is what I constantly asked of the blacks. But it appeared they felt I merely sought to justify my *native* style of living. I counter-rallied and made it plain that I have nothing to justify, for amongst the emigrants I am indisputably the proudest holder of my race, but I soon found myself effectively shunned by my fellow Americans, many of whom privately mock African civilization. (40-41)

Now, he is grateful to Liberia that has opened his eyes to what religious imperialism has camouflaged. This civilized place does not thrive for the supervision of the West:

> To most colored men, who reside here in liberty, and would expect liberty to encompass all of Africa, this dark land of our forefathers, this American protectionism is a disgrace to our dignity, and a stain on the name of our country. (41)

The third person narrator tells us before we read the story "Nash Williams had conveyed, by means of an intermediary, an abrupt message making it plain that he had no desire ever to hear again from his former master, and informing him that his own communications would now cease" (8). He merges himself into African land as his only home. However, going native can by no means imply that Nash has also gone essentialist; he believes in Jesus Christ and he is living on the nutrients of his American-African garden. Nash's physical journey from America to Africa is synchronous with a spiritual one in which he restores his own sense of being. Its most important fruit is that he demonstrates how the black men of Liberia have a role in world civilization. Nash's final letter leaves Edward and the readers with Nash's most important utterance in the novel: "We, the colored man, have been oppressed long enough. We need to contend for our rights, stand our ground, and feel the love of liberty that can never be found in your America" (61).

Nash's ambivalent attitude towards African and American cultures betokens his double-consciousness; his "two unreconciled strivings" must be reconciled, for it is the only way out for him. Reconciliation in Nash's story cannot be the assimilation of the contradictions within his personality, which usually guarantees the hegemony of the powerful side on the less powerful; rather, it is hybridity, hybridity of cultures.

Cultural hybridity is that Nash has to understand his reality and announce his individuality through double perspectives and to be functional at the same time. He possesses what Bhabha calls a "non-sovereign notion of self" (Rutherford 212). This non-sovereignty drives him to hybridize cultures, meaning that he takes sublime ideas from both cultures and opens up a new one, a third culture that refutes the lies about the African land and its inhabitants. He resolves the tension inside of him and at the same time he preserves the innate grappling forces. This has been suggested earlier by W. E. Du Bois:

> The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face. (*Souls* 11)

The tension is still there in Nash's body but positively differently. He is now the controller of this tension; he is the master of the new self he himself has built up in Africa. He stops to be an imperial object easily monitored by Edward and his system. Nash successfully transforms himself into a postcolonial subject capable of benefiting of what he learnt in the metropolitan center. At this very particular stage of his life, he combines his Africanness and Americanness and develops a hybrid culture.

Nash is an encapsulation of "a syncretic pattern in which the styles and forms of the Caribbean, the United States, and Africa have been reworked and reinscribed" (*Black Atlantic* 3). As readers we have the impression that in the end Nash becomes a transnational and transcultural product of "the circulation of ideas and activists as well as the movement of key cultural and political artefacts" (*Black Atlantic* 4).

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Previously, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* opens the door for hybridity to be a positive carrier of hope. Early in postcolonial criticism, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin spot the potential of the hybrid to form resistance against those who have made his displacement possible:

> When we observe the actual complexities of the cultural interchanges in imperial relationships and, in particular, the activities of the supposed passive subjects of imperialism, we find the beginnings of existing global energies for interchange, circulation and transformation. These energies may become the weapons of resistance, not merely the tools of control. (217)

The word mixture is no longer the best word to characterize hybridity, and the hybrids are not mere alien entities that inhabit spaces other than the clearly demarked ones because of their "impure" cultural tendencies or skin color.

As a term, hybridity gains more positive connotations in the theories of Bhabha. Bhabha praises the hybrid formations in the postmodern world where edges overlap to visualize a new cultural heritage that belongs not solely to a particular place. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha defines hybridity as follows:

> Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal [. . .]. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. It unsettles the mimetic of narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power. (112)

Far from being a simple amalgamation, Bhabha confirms that hybridity is a complex process that "reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority- its rules of recognition" (114). These quotations do not provide a substantial or a conclusive definition of hybridity in as much as they specify the working mechanisms of hybridity and its issuing results.

The first example about Nash combining his Africanness and Americanness is his Christian attitude. Nash, the black African, is more Christian than Edward, who pretends to be the carrier of Christian dogma. Because of his hybridity, Nash sets a good example for true Christianity while the American Christian, Edward, violates it by holding slaves and by

sexually abusing children. For this reason, Nash "had apparently won the respect not only of the African natives, but of the free colored men from America, and of the few whites in the inhospitable clime" (7). Nash's faith in good will and afterlife makes him fully devoted to serve the needs of the missionary school he establishes no matter what effort it requires. Quite convinced that moral people should heartily serve the Lord, Nash is ready to bear with the heavy consequences of the humid weather and the raids of the native population:

> The initial work of clearing the bush, constructing shelters and building fortifications against native attacks resulted in a heavy toll of life. The wet and miserable climate, which between April and November could produce over two hundred inches of rain, ushered many to an early grave. (9)

Still, Nash is "positively bristled with the spirit of faith, courage and purpose" (7-8). These "initial hardships" make Nash "most determined to survive and pursue the task that he had been prepared for." So, "Neither climate nor native confrontation, disease nor hardship of any manner would deflect him from his proper purpose" (10).

Nash discovers Christianity has been taken advantage of to manage the natural deposits of the less technologically developed world and erase the cultural heritage of those people. However he knows Jesus Christ is a carrier of a dogma to be respected:

> It has taken my dark mind many years to absorb this knowledge, and while it would be true to assert that the man I love is Christ, and I love him as one might love an intimate, having no means to return to America, and being therefore bound to an African existence, I must suspend my faith and I therefore freely choose to live the life of the African. (62)

Thus, we know that going back to the religion and doctrine of the ancestors is Nash's procedure; nonetheless, we are sure that he does hold belief in Christ as an honorable and sacred human being. The Christianity that Nash utterly declines to embrace is way far from the Christianity he is still proud of. His perception of Christianity can be managed by Nash himself to add new practical cultural practices alien to the African culture but may participate in developing it. Phillips elaborates on the dualistic role of Christianity by saying:

> In a rather peculiar way Christianity was both oppressing and liberating the colonized. It was oppressing in the sense that it was an alien doctrine that was imposed upon a people. But it was liberating in that it gave people the opportunity to express themselves because it gave a certain literacy, and

> therefore it gave the capacity for self-analysis and self- expression. (Eckstein 35-36)

The positive-yet-negative aspects of Christianity appear clearly when Nash tutors the natives reading, writing, math, and geography after he has internalized the white ideology together with education.

Another example about the positive hybridization of cultures is Nash's employment of American tools to build his missionary school, to repair African plantation fields, and to improve the agricultural crops. He tries his best to exploit whatever skills he learnt in America and utilize them to improve the African community. Nash works on benefiting from the sources provided by the African land, and intends to tend these sources by using some tools brought from America. He does not only require some seeds but also a lot of missing items that are present in America but not in Liberia. He urgently asks Edward for:

> coffee, ginger, arrowroot and other materials that I will presently crop from my land. Good white shirting, shoes, stocking, tobacco, flour, port, mackerels, molasses, sugar, and a small flitch of bacon and other little trifles as you find convenient to send. (25)

His closeness to the Africans makes him realize that Africa is far from the accusations of darkness and ignorance. He begins to realize that even if Africans lack technological advancements in certain domains, they already, and before the Europeans or Americans, have developed a culture one can strongly be proud of. He realizes that African treasures can be cultivated by American technology and modernity so that they cooperate to the wellbeing of the new colony: whatever is true for the land is true for its people. This tells about the readiness of the African land to receive the modern advancement of America in order to have a better cultivation.

In conclusion, mimicry, double consciousness, and hybridity are all terms that meet in the character of Nash Williams to express a positive correction of colonial ideology. Nash has come from the margin to displace the imperial center and share its space once by embracing a discourse it allies itself against and another by building up a new and hybrid identity patterned by culturally different adaptations. The terms blur in Nash's transformation into a natively African figure. However his Africanness is not pure as he and the third person narrator think; it is not totally native but hybrid. As a producer of "slippage" and "subversion," and as a "denied knowledge," Nash is the "dark body" with "two warring

ideals" that shows cultures can be one. In "The Pagan Coast" there is this persistence on being positively engaged in pouring into a hybrid cultural interplay that is innately capable because of its hybrid of collecting what belongs and what does not.

Nash's sophisticated personality makes him subject to the dynamics of interaction between cultures which have not been treated as equals. His journey is carried out to rectify institutionalized loss of esteem; to gather the scattered parts of a people and their identity; and to furnish the dislocated with a sense of belonging to a home. Most importantly, it is conducted to prove to the world that "Liberia is the star in the East" (18), thus performing the essence of Bhabha's hybridity and mimicry and Du Bois' double-consciousness.

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